Academic Disciplinary Differences In The Perceived Value Of The Community Of Practice Model

Alyssa Marie Hill
National Louis University

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Alyssa Hill

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education

Higher Education Leadership

College of Professional Studies and Advancement

National Louis University

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ACADEMIC DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

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Approved:
Chair, Capstone Committee  
Member, Capstone Committee  
Member, Capstone Committee  

Program Director

janice lynn nilson
Abstract

Through a multi-layered review of United States University, a gap in professional development for adjunct faculty was identified. To ensure that students’ are best supported in the online classroom, ensuring that faculty are provided with training around pedagogical and instructional skills aligned with the University mission is essential. The perceived value of the Community of Practice model was assessed to address the gap in faculty development through a mixed-methods convergent design study. The quantitative data and qualitative data were merged under the unidirectional framework for convergent design integration, and presented in a narrative discussion format. Themes which emerged included knowledge sharing, establishment of a community identity, and the preparation for full-time faculty roles. No statistical significant difference was found amongst the three disciplinary groups. The findings support that a Community of Practice model can address the unique professional development needs of an online-based adjunct faculty member.
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Chapter One: Institutional Review

Section one: Internal Context

History

United States University (USU) is a private, for-profit degree granting institution located in San Diego, California. USU was founded in 1997 under the former name, InterAmerican College (IAC), initially located in National City, California. The organization began as a small, non-profit educational institution with a mission to serve the needs of and provide opportunities to working professionals, Latinos, and the immigrant population. The founding purpose was to increase bilingual capacity in education and healthcare in the San Diego, Southern California region. The institutions initial academic profile included programs in health sciences, nursing, and education. As the only university in the San Diego area with a mission focused on serving primarily minority, immigrant, and underserved students” aspiring for a career in nursing, healthcare, or teaching, IAC was valued by the Southbay San Diego community (United States University College of Nursing, 2017).

A consistent obstacle in the history of USU were issues of financial exigencies that contributed to constant changes and challenges involving accreditation and ownership (United States University College of Nursing, 2017). In 2009, the institution received initial accreditation from WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), as well as its first change in ownership (United States University, 2017a). In 2010, the institution changed from non-profit to for-profit status and transitioned to a new institution name, United States University. By 2011, the onset of turmoil ensued as the institution found itself in a financially precarious position, which resulted in status of “accredited, on probation” designation by the regional accreditor. WSCUC determined that the institutional documentable progress toward compliance with
accreditation standards was insufficient (United States University, 2015). The areas of concern were the growth and enrollment of the academic programs, finances, institutional planning and strategic directions, and governance (Wolff, 2013). In the follow up site visit of the regional accreditor in 2013 it was found that the University was still in significant noncompliance of commission standards, and as a result USU maintained its “accredited, on probation” status. The university was allowed two years to address the recommendations of WSCUC before they returned for the 2015 site visit.

To address these concerns, a new administration was put in place and the development of a new strategic plan commenced (United States University, 2015). In 2014, USU went through a second change in ownership to Linden Group under Dr. Malysheva. In 2015, the WSCUC probation status was removed and was replaced with a “notice of concern”, as it was determined that the university made sufficient improvement (Petrisko, 2015). To assess whether the institution’s “notice of concern” can be removed, the accreditor scheduled a site visit to take place two years later, which was originally scheduled for fall 2017.

In May 2017, a change of ownership proposal was sent to the regional accreditor, as Mr. Mike Mathews of Aspen Group, Inc. (AGI) expressed interest in purchasing the institution. To maintain transparency through this process, Mr. Mathews visited the campus and employees of USU in March 2017 to confirm that negotiations for the purchase of USU were underway and that the mission, vision, and values of the university were to be perpetuated and reinforced. The USU core value of affordability was the focus of Mr. Mathews, as it aligned with his plans to implement the ability for students’ to earn a degree with little to no debt upon graduation (United States University, 2017b). The regional accreditor responded to the change of ownership proposal with the intent of scheduling a site visit to explore five areas: growth and management,
impact on the mission, governance structure, capacity to provide services, and finances (Davis, 2017). After a successful visit, on November 10, 2017,WSCUC approved the change in ownership, and rescheduled the site visit to assess the accreditation status to fall 2018 (Petrisko, 2017). The change of ownership was approved by the regional accreditor on November 10, 2017, and the acquisition was finalized on December 1, 2017 (Aspen Group, Inc., 2017; Petrisko, 2017). AGI, and CEO, Mr. Mike Mathews are now the current owners of USU.

**Academic Profile**

USU is divided into three colleges: The College of Business and Technology, College of Education, College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Each college has both bachelor and masters level programs. In addition, mirroring the concentrations within each program, undergraduate and graduate certificates are also offered to students”. Instructional delivery is offered online, onsite, and in hybrid format with an accelerated eight-week session in a semester based, year round, academic calendar.

The College of Business and Technology includes a Bachelor of Arts in Management, which has seven concentration options: general management, entrepreneurship, human resources, marketing, business intelligence, and finance. In addition, the College offers a Bachelor of Science in Information Technology with eight concentration options: business analytics, cyber security, computer networks, general management, robotics and artificial intelligence, systems administration, software development, and web design. At the graduate level, the College of Business offers a Master of Business Administration program, presented in both a 100% online as well as hybrid modality, which requires students” to attend classes on campus one weekend per month. The Master of Business Administration program provides eight concentration
options: general, finance, human resources, information technology, business analytics, international business, marketing, and project management.

The College of Education includes a post-baccalaureate teacher preparation program and a Master of Arts in Education program. The teacher preparation program is for students’ seeking a single, or multiple-subject teaching credential in California. The Master of Arts in Education offers nine concentrations in STEM Education (computer science and technology, math and engineering, natural science, or K-6 education), early childhood education, effective language instruction for English language professors outside of the United States, K-12 administration and leadership, and in special education.

Finally, the College of Nursing and Health Sciences offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing- RN to BSN program and a Bachelor of Science in Health Science which offers six concentrations: health services administration, gerontology, health data analytics, health education, healthcare administration, and health education. At the graduate level, the College offers a Master of Science in Nursing program, with the concentrations family nurse practitioner, health care leadership, and nurse educator (United States University, n.d.h).

**Enrollment**

The university reported 259 total enrollments in fall 2016, with 72 undergraduate and 187 graduate students’, and a large majority of students’ are classified as full-time. For the fall 2017 period, the University reported 429 students’, 99 undergraduate and 330 graduate. It is important to note that the National Center of Education Statistics only include first-time bachelor’s degree-seeking undergraduates in its reporting of retention rates. USU reported a 31% retention rate for fall 2016, which does not address the majority of its student body, which are graduate level students’ (The National Center of Education Statistics, n.d.). Currently, the Master of Science in
Nursing program has the highest enrollments by program, specifically in their Family Nurse Practitioner concentration, as reported internally by the student information system. As of April 2019, the internal student information system shows 1,089 active students’ enrolled at USU. As of August 2019, there were 1,486 active students’ at USU, with the projection of 350 new students’ starting every 8 weeks.

**Mission and Values**

The university mission has transformed over the years but has kept the founding principles that shaped the original purpose of the institution:

> “United States University provides professional and personal educational opportunities, with a special outreach to underserved groups. Through campus and online courses, the University offers affordable, relevant and accessible undergraduate and graduate degree programs and certificates in a supportive student-centered learning environment” (United States University, n.d.a)

The core values of the institution are: affordability, quality, integrity, diversity, inclusiveness, and lifelong learning. Explained previously in the change of ownership progression and current ownerships focus, the current operations in the areas of finance and funding options support these statements. The lowered tuition and payment plan option are indicators of affordability. The regional accreditation can be viewed as an indicator of quality. The representation of underserved minority student enrollment is an indicator of diversity (National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), n.d.). The open-enrollment admissions model can be viewed as an indicator to inclusiveness and accessibility. Combining these factors help to promote the overall mission and vision of the institution.
Shared Governance and Institutional Decision Making

**Shared governance.** Shared governance in higher education refers to the shared responsibility of decision making between an organization's administration, faculty, board of trustees, and where appropriate, students’ (American Association of University Professors, 2010). USU promotes a culture of community in its philosophy that shared governance is a fundamental component of a healthy academic institution – and an essential right and responsibility of a scholarly community (United States University, 2016a). The organization's statement of shared governance is as follows:

“The USU faculty provides a structure that includes an elected faculty governance body – the Faculty Senate – through which faculty and administrators work together to implement USU’s mission. United States University agrees with the American Association of University Professors’ recognition that shared governance allows United States University to benefit from the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of its Faculty and provides a structure that includes an elected Faculty governance body, the Faculty Senate, through which Faculty and administrators work together to promote United States University’s mission.

United States University is a complex entity. The tasks of governance must be apportioned and delegated within the structures approved by the Board of Trustees. The interdependence and cooperation of the administration, faculty and the Board of Trustees are essential to legitimate and effective governance.

USU supports:

- “The faculty’s fundamental role in making academic decisions.
- The protection of legitimate faculty aspirations.
The existence of clear and varied channels of communication that are understood by all constituents.

The implementation and preservation of academic standards.

The promotion of the welfare of the students” (United States University, n.d.).

The structure of governance at USU is a collaboration of decision making between administration and faculty. The faculty and administration serve as architects of the university mission, which is ultimately determined by the trustees. The creation of policies which support and guide the health of the institution is a shared responsibility across university administrators, faculty, and board of trustees (United States University, 2016a).

**Faculty involvement.** The formal participation of faculty in shared governance is through the Faculty Senate, which is a deliberative and collaborative body, with responsibility for furthering and protecting shared academic governance and faculty members' welfare. By virtue of faculty appointment, every faculty member at USU is also a member of the Faculty Senate, and will have specific roles determined by the sub-committee they are placed in. Faculty Senate affairs are all conducted through the Faculty Senate Executive Board and its standing committees, and the Faculty Senate is granted specific advisory and legislative authority as described in the Faculty Senate Constitution, with procedures described in the Faculty Senate Bylaws (United States University, 2016a).

Administration engages in substantive discussion with the Faculty Senate to determine the development and implementation of policies that will impact the welfare and work of faculty members. Finally, as an integral role in shared governance, faculty are also charged with the hiring of academic administrators and are responsibility for discussion budgetary decisions that will impact the faculty work and welfare (United States University, 2016).
**Staff involvement.** To represent the non-academic roles within the organization, staff are also incorporated in the United States University shared governance process through the participation in the Staff Senate. The Staff Senate was implemented at United States University with the purpose of providing employees a forum in which to foster positive staff relations for those who are not considered faculty and/or senior level management. The mission of the staff senate is to contribute to the advancement of the University by encouraging communications with, acknowledgement of and providing encouragement of a voice for the non-faculty and/or senior level management staff of USU. The executive board of the staff senate consists of staff representing various departments and segments of the university, including full-time and part-time employees, for a total of six members with appointment terms of one year (United States University, 2016b).

**Student involvement.** Bahls (2014) suggested that the involvement of students’ in shared governance can help to improve the overall process. Student involvement in shared governance is currently present in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences. Students’ are involved in program governance representing both the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and the Master of Science in Nursing by the participation of chosen student leaders in monthly faculty meetings. The student leaders provide feedback on student-specific issues and curriculum changes, and report back to other students’ via social media, email, and through posting in the internal Nurses Lounge professional platform (United States University College of Nursing, 2017). Bahls (2014) also found that when student leaders understand how decisions are made (and that they are made carefully), they are more likely to support implementation of the decisions.

**Academic decision making.** The Board of Trustees is the governing body at USU, and oversees the President, who is the chief executive officer and has authority over all university
affairs and activities. The Office of the Provost is in charge of the academic sector of the university, underneath the guidance of the Board of Trustees and the President (United States University, 2016a). Academic decisions are made first at the level of the Office of the Provost, to the President, and are finalized with the Board of Trustees.

From an organizational chart standpoint, the Provost oversees the Deans of the university (United States University, n.d.; 2016a). The Deans oversee their respective programs and the faculty within the respective college. For program specific decision making, the Dean's and program Lead Faculty are the lead members of the program academic committees, which include program review committee and curriculum committee (United States University, 2017c). Both of these committees will drive academic decision making in their respective areas, whether it involves program assessment or curriculum.

**Accreditation.** Accrediting bodies serve as another driving force in academic and curricular decision making within the institution. USU is regionally accredited by The WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), an agency that is reviewed periodically for renewal of recognition by the US Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) (United States University, n.d.a). United States University incorporated WSCUC core undergraduate core competency stands as part of the institutional learning outcome alignment. The competency areas adapted from WSCUC are:

- Written Communication
- Oral Communication
- Quantitative Reasoning
- Critical Thinking
- Information Literacy (United States University, 2017c).
Each of these areas are part of the institutional learning outcomes, as well as the program learning outcomes, and are each measured during the program learning outcomes assessment process and are integrated in the assessment rubrics. The incorporation of WSCUC standards illustrates the regional accreditors’ involvement in academic and curricular decision making, as it is a driving force behind the institutional learning outcomes, which impacts what is taught and what is measured across the programs.

To maintain the status with programmatic accreditors, the university must meet certain standards set by such accreditors. USU holds programmatic accreditation for programs within the College of Nursing and Health Sciences and the College of Education (United States University, n.d.b). The Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and Master of Science in Nursing program are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The Teacher Credentialing Preparation Program is currently assigned the status of accredited by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) (United States University, n.d.b).

**Internal Context Conclusion**

Viewing USU from an internal context, a depiction of how the university grew and overcame obstacles overtime is apparent. In analyzing the history, while USU has changed in its location, its model, in its ownership, and its accreditation, the one component that has remained is the mission to serve the underserved. While the definition of underserved has expanded over time, from the founding focus on providing educational opportunities to San Diego Latino(a) students’, to the current focus of providing opportunities to all students’ who are in need of an alternative to federal student loans, the main focus on the student has endured. For a different view, the external context and forces which impact the university will be discussed.
Challenges with For-Profit Model

USU is a for-profit, private educational institution. By definition, a for-profit college or university is one that is managed and governed by private organizations and corporations (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). While for-profit universities provide an additional education option for students’, and allows for flexible scheduling, year-round enrollment, online options, and small class sizes, there are many critics of this educational model (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). Literature on for-profit education influences a negative connotation on these institutions. Caterino (2014) described for-profits as the new basement floor of education, offering substandard educations at inflated prices and are more like a “financial instrument of neoliberal policies than educational institutions” (p. 590). Appel & Taylor (2015) described for-profit institutions as “American Dream Crushers” and “Factories of Debt,” to have failed students’, and that the model exists primarily to enrich its owners. Schade (2014) describes for-profits as having predatory practices that target vulnerable populations such as low-income individuals or minorities, and have low quality education. Furthermore, beyond the critics, reports and studies, such as by the National Consumer Law Center (2011) and The Education Trust (2010), have been conducted that provide data which highlights the challenges for-profit college and universities have with fraud, student debt and employability, and trustworthiness from the community.

USU has to face the negative perceptions of having a for-profit financial model while within the competitive environment of higher education. The ideas surrounding for-profit colleges and universities may impact a student’s decision to enroll at USU or an faculty members decision to teach at USU. The university’s sustainability and requirements to the regional
accreditation standards are highly dependent on enrollment and the revenue created by tuition, so ensuring it can provide evidence of quality to offset these negative perceptions is essential.

**Accreditation as an Indicator of Quality**

To speak to the quality of USU, in the midst of the negative perceptions of for-profit universities, the accreditation by a U.S. regional accreditor provides significant insight. The WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) is an agency that is reviewed periodically for renewal of recognition by the US Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). USU was granted candidacy in 2005 and was first accredited in 2009. WSCUC oversees public and private, non-profit and for-profit, colleges and universities throughout California, Hawaii, and the Pacific, as well as some institutions outside of the U.S. For context, large well-known public institutions hold WSCUC accreditation, such as those within the California State University System, and the University of California system, and prestigious institutions such as Sanford University and Pepperdine University (WSCC Senior College and University Commission, n.d.b).

WSCUC takes all three approaches to quality assurance as described by Browne et al. (2011), which includes assessment, audit, and accreditation. For the assessment approach, WSCUC requires the institution to provide information and data based on pre-set criteria. In addition, WSCUC requires a self-study, or self-assessment, to provide interpretation or analysis of the data they have provided. For the audit approach, WSCUC assigns a set team of commissioners to audit the self-study. The commission team will perform a site-visit, where they conduct interviews with leadership, staff, faculty, and students’, as well as audit files for evidence and verification that what had been reported in the self-study is actually true. The commissioner team will then develop a report which includes a recommendation for or against
accreditation of the school, which will then be sent back to the WSCUC agency. Under the accreditation approach, the agency (WSCUC) will make the final decision based on the commissioning team’s recommendations.

Under the lens of the Browne et al. (2011) approaches to quality assurance: accreditation, audit, and assessment, WSCUC fulfills the purpose of an external quality agency described by Brennan and Shah (2000), as the process yields for both qualitative and quantitative data that can be applied, interpreted, or analyzed can be used:

- “To improve the quality of higher education provision;
- To ensure accountability in the use of public funds;
- To inform funding decisions;
- To inform students’ and employers;
- To stimulate competitiveness within and between institutions;
- To assign institutional status;
- To support the transfer of authority between the state and institutions;
- To encourage student mobility;
- To make international comparisons” (as cited in Brown et al., 2010, p. 1-2).

Maintaining regional accreditation status requires a college or university to meet various standards. A regionally accredited institution indicates that the university is focused on a mission and goals for students’, is student-oriented and examines student performance continuously, maintains qualified faculty, collaboratively assess the quality of its education programs, and plans for the future. “A regionally accredited university is a statement to the broader community and stakeholders that it is a trustworthy institution for student learning and is committed to ongoing improvement” (Accrediting Commission for Schools Western Association of Schools
and Colleges, n.d.). With the support of the regional accrediting body, USU demonstrates quality to the students’, community, and various stakeholders. The task at hand for USU, however, is to maintain this accreditation.

**Financial and Budgetary Considerations**

USU, as described in its historical development, has been entrenched in a negative financial position for many years, which has been the main issue of concern for its regional accreditor. The low enrollment numbers over the past years have prevented the university from achieving financial sustainability. As many other for-profit, private institutions, the source of funding at USU is highly dependable on student enrollments and tuition. A majority of the students’ at USU have used federal financial aid to fund their education. Currently, for proprietary institutions participating in Federal student aid programs, no more than 90 percent of revenue can come from Title IV Federal student loans and grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

A solution, however, has been presented, which was an integral piece to the proposal for the change in ownership. AGI is attempting to decrease the number of financial aid students’ with the implementation of a monthly payment plan, with the overall goal of providing students’ with the opportunity to earn a degree without federal student loan debt (USU, 2017). In the CEO of AGI, Mike Mathews’ book, *Let’s Change Higher Education Forever: A Debt-Free Solution for a System Gone Wrong* (2014), Mathews describes how American students’ have been underserved by the federal loan system as evidenced by the high student loan debt issue as well as by colleges and universities not being attentive to students’ unique needs and the absence of ongoing improvements to aid persistence.
AGI brought on an expanded goal of finding ways to help students’Integral to the mission of the university, it is important that underserved students’ are able to receive affordable education. Without affordable options, an entire generation of lower and lower middle class citizens will be in what Matthews (2014) considers to be “economic jail.” The term “economic jail” references the high student loan debt that students’ incur after graduating college.

AGI oversees two universities, AU and USU. USU adopted AU’s goal of economic responsibility “to offer tuition rates low enough that a majority of [its] students’ will not incur debt through utilization of federal financial aid, and ensure alumni [achieve] a return on investment [from their degree]” (United States University, 2017). AGI pioneered the monthly payment plan at AU in 2014 with great success. When the program was launched AU had 1,694 students’. Over three years, AU grew by 176% to 4,675 students’ as of April 30, 2017. Additionally, since May 2014, over 3,000 of AU’s students’ were using a monthly payment method, which now represents over 65% of the student body.

The success of the program at AU provides support that the implementation of the monthly payment plan option at USU will help to grow enrollments, which in turn will address the sustainability issue. USU has lowered the tuition rates for its education and nursing programs and has introduced a ‘pay-as-you-go’ monthly payment plan as of July 2017. The monthly payment plan is interest free, and allows for an alternative to student loans (United States University, 2017a;b). In addition, as of 2019, undergraduate tuition was lowered to $150 per credit for general education and $250 per credit for programmatic courses, which was about a 50-70% decrease from the previous tuition model. According to the internal student information system, of the 1,089 active students’, 733 are enrolled in the monthly payment plan as of April 2019.
Academic Disciplinary Differences in the Perceived Value of the Community of Practice

Marketing

As described above, the new ownership launched a new financial model to further the university mission of accessibility and affordability to the underserved student. The funding option of the monthly-payment-plan is also used as a marketing strategy, as is one of the institutional highlights which the outreach and admissions teams use to drive enrollment. Upon landing on the homepage for the USU, the words “Making College Affordable” are at the center focal point, adding a new slogan to the university name (United States University, n.d.l).

In addition to the new finance option for students’, AGI also executed USU’s strategic plan by applying the same organic enrollment strategies as they have to the sister school, AU. AGI took on a different approach than USU has used historically, managing “all internet advertising and lead generation efforts in-house with no plans to purchase third party leads.” AGI has direct publisher relationships with companies such as LinkedIn, Web MD, and Nurse.com, and is “operating its marketing similar to a highly sophisticated ad network.” AGI, by way of its in-house management of internet advertising and lead generation, was able to drop the cost of enrollment to below $1,000, in comparison to other universities whose enrollment costs land between $4,000 to $5,000 per student (United States University, 2017a;b).

AGI forecasts a similar growth in enrollments for USU as its sister school, Aspen University (AU). AGI plans to decrease the overall cost of tuition in addition to the implementation of the monthly payment plan option to all programs, and anticipates that enrollments will grow in response. USU’s enrollment prediction growth from the student body of about 300 students’ in the beginning of 2018 to an active student body of 5,000 students’ by the year 2021 (United States University, 2017a;b). AGI is increasing enrollments at a faster rate than has been seen in the history of USU. If it were to exceed the enrollment predictions, it would
certainly meet the strategic plan and regional accreditor goals and requirement of achieving financial sustainability and enrollment growth. In response, USU will need to ensure that staffing across all of the various departments is sufficient enough to support the growth in students’ to provide a high-quality educational experience.

External Context Conclusion

Section one explored the internal context and historical development of USU. Section two reviewed the external factors working for and against the future success of the university. With many factors setting potential obstacles to reaching the institutional goals, it is imperative that the University respond with thoughtful strategies, supported with data, to overcome such challenges. While organizational structures and solutions to the most pressing issues have been presented by the current ownership, it is now the responsibility of the people working within the institution to execute these strategies.

Section Three: Considerations of People

Student Body & Support for the Underserved

The National Center of Statistics (NCES) reports descriptive information on the types of students’ who attend USU. It is important to note that only undergraduate students’ are represented in the NCES reporting, and only make up 27% of the student population. Per the Fall 2016 report, 71% of the undergraduate student body are female and 29% are male. Regarding race and ethnicity, Latino(a) students’ represent the largest percentage of the undergraduate population at 26%, and following, 21% are White, 19% are Black or African American, 15% did not report the ethnicity, 7% are of two races or more, 6% are Asian, and 1% are non-resident students’. A large majority of undergraduate students’ enrolled at USU are 25 years of age or older, representing 83% of the student population.
Reporting from the student information system (SIS) not only provides current information, but also tells a story of growth in the past year, which may indicate that AGI has been successful in its intentions to increase enrollments at the university. The SIS reports 448 active students’ as of June 2018, residing in various states throughout the US. Of the 448 active students’, 345 are enrolled in the Master of Science in Nursing program, which is the first program AGI applied its marketing strategies to in 2017. Of the active student body, 365 students’ are linked to being internet leads. Finally, to describe the types of students’ enrolled at USU, 362 students’ were admitted with having already earned a college degree, nine came in with a general education diploma (GED), 69 having completed only high school, and seven with some college credit.

An integral part of the USU mission is to provide education opportunities to the underserved or nontraditional student. Choy (2002) defines the nontraditional student as one whose entry to college was delayed by at least one year following high school, is a single parent, is employed full-time, attends a postsecondary institution part-time, has dependents, is financially independent, and/or does not have a high school diploma. NCES defines a nontraditional student as being over the age of 24, has not received a standard high school diploma, has family and work responsibilities that may interfere with educational objectives, is an underrepresented in regards to race and ethnicity, and has family responsibilities and financial constraints (n.d.). USU students’ align with these definitions, as a majority of students’ are over the age of 25, have a gap in time since attending high school, some were admitted with a GED, are working full-time while attending school, and represent minority populations, as reported by the internal student information system. The open enrollment model, non-restrictive admissions policies, online modality, one-on-one advising model, and various funding options provide
broader opportunity to the nontraditional student to reach their educational goals by attending USU.

By completing a program at USU, students’ receive a degree recognized by a regional accreditor, and in some cases programmatic accreditors. In addition, according to an unpublished alumni survey from 2018, the majority of graduates are employed within six months of completing their degree, and are making over 50 thousand dollars in salary, with some making over 130,000 dollars a year. Many students’ reported that a pay increase occurred after the completion of their degree. Earning an education at USU goes beyond the internal value of obtaining a degree and knowledge in a preferred field of study, but is also connected to employment and financial benefits.

Faculty

According to NCES, as of fall 2016, USU reported 86 part time faculty, and 9 full-time faculty (n.d.). Faculty at USU are either defined as core faculty (which are considered “full-time faculty” on the NCES report), or adjunct faculty (which are considered “part-time faculty” on the NCES report). There are both full-time and part-time core faculty at USU. Full-time core faculty are salaried and hold 100% of academic and shared governance responsibilities. Part-time core faculty members are also salaried employees who hold 50% academic and shared governance responsibilities. Core faculty members are required to actively participate in the academic life of USU and be available to fulfill academic responsibilities to their colleges, programs, and students’. The primary responsibilities of core faculty include teaching, mentoring, advising, university and college governance, scholarship and creative contribution, professional service, and community service. In addition, core faculty are responsible for program assessment,
oversight of curriculum, maintaining programmatic accreditations and certifications, mentorship of adjunct faculty, and peer review of other faculty (United States University, 2016a).

Adjunct faculty members are only considered part-time employees when under a teaching contract. USU requests adjuncts to sign annual teaching contracts, not guaranteeing any course assignments during that year. Contracts are managed by the faculty support manager. The adjunct faculty do not have any formal shared governance responsibilities, or any roles in the curriculum oversight (United States University, 2016a). All faculty are considered part of Faculty Senate, including adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty are provided the option to attend Faculty Senate meetings, are able to share their thoughts and experience, however, adjunct faculty have no voting privileges or roles on Faculty Senate committees. Adjunct faculty represent the majority of teaching faculty at USU but are limited in their influence on governance.

Section Four: Key Missing Links

Adjunct faculty make up 90.5% of total faculty at USU (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). With such a high number of adjunct faculty in the classroom with students’, it is imperative that each member has the training and development to support the mission of the university. Lacking a training program may contribute to inconsistencies and misalignment within the academic sector of the university, which may negatively impact student experience and success. Supporting the targeted population of underserved students’ is the center of the university mission, and the adjunct faculty role is ever most integral to this notion. With all of the programs being either 100% online, or having a large online component, ensuring that the best practices in online instruction are also implemented is indispensable. This supports the need
to investigate training and development programs that would be beneficial to the adjunct faculty in the online environment at USU.

Currently, USU provides adjunct faculty with an orientation to the university course, as well as training for navigation and use of the learning management system. While various training courses will be implemented in the next year providing the knowledge on how to use the tools to be a successful online instructor, there is a gap in training concerning teaching practices and pedagogical support to enhance and develop the adjunct faculty in the online environment.

Different models of faculty development have been established and practiced in various colleges and universities (Samuel, 2016). The next step for USU is to investigate the different models and approaches to help the development of the adjunct faculty in order to promote quality learning and experience for its students’. As adjunct faculty vary in teaching experience and are able to collectively bring in different perspectives and advice, setting up a community in which they can share their personal knowledge, learn from each other, and discuss various topics regarding online teaching may be a beneficial way for USU to promote faculty development.

Section Five: Research Questions and Significance

A core function in USU’s adherence to its regional accreditor’s standards and alignment to its core mission will be providing adjunct faculty with the development opportunities necessary to promote excellence in online teaching. The majority of faculty across all USU programs are remote, adjunct faculty (NCES, n.d.). Core (full-time) faculty development at USU is currently defined by maintaining a certain teaching load and professional development, which is either attending a conference, training, or workshop, or by conducting research (United States University, 2016a). There are no faculty development measures currently applicable to adjunct
Enrollment is projected to grow from 500 to 5,000 in the next five years, and more faculty will need to be hired to support this growth (United States University, 2017b). If utilizing adjunct faculty continues as the trend at USU, action must be taken quickly to address the gap in development programs for adjunct faculty. The current faculty development definition at USU must be expanded to include adjunct faculty and enhanced with training applicable directly to online instruction. When reviewing development and training approaches for adjunct faculty, USU should consider that (1) different types of adjunct faculty exist and (2) preferred learning styles will vary across the different faculty. In order to achieve a high-performance measurement culture, leaders of organizations need to first be clear on where they are starting from, to inform where they want to go and the best route to take (Jones, 2014). Making intentional efforts to understand the adjunct faculty from a learning and social psychological perspective may influence a more effective approach. There are various topics to explore when attempting to better understand the faculty perspective, and one area of interest are differences in how faculty across the different academic disciplines perceive collaborative-based models of learning.

The Community of Practice (COP) model developed by researchers Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) as applied to higher education faculty, describes a group of people with a common practice that learn and share with one another within a specific domain (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). A COP has three components: domain, community, and practice. The domain refers to the common ground for sharing knowledge, the community is the social structure for interactions, and the practice refers to the specific knowledge which is shared, developed, and maintained within that community (Abigail, 2016). Research on the relationship between a COP
and faculty development revealed that COP’s can influence faculty’s application of knowledge, tools, and social relationships (Abigail, 2016; Lave, 1991).

Thus, to address the gaps in adjunct faculty development at USU the following research questions will be investigated:

1. What is the adjunct faculty perceived value of the community of practice model?

2. Is there a significant difference in perceived value of the community of practice model amongst adjunct faculty of different academic disciplines?

**Study Significance**

Highlighted through the multi-layered review of USU, a history of financial and accreditation challenges, reinforcement of the mission to outreach to underserved populations, and a hopeful future regarding growth and sustainability has been illustrated. With the potential growth of enrollment, ensuring that the targeted population of students’, defined as underserved, underrepresented, and non-traditional, are provided with a quality educational experience and preparation to enter or advance in their respective fields of work. The supporting functions and individuals which influence student success at USU must also be prepared and provided the tools to execute the vision and intent of the initiatives described.

Amongst the variety of individuals who interact and influence the student life-cycle, adjunct faculty remain a consistent key player and will directly influence the academic achievement component to the student experience at USU. Identified as a gap in the organizational structure at USU, faculty development and training does not currently exist beyond orientation to the university and technical training for the learning management system. To promote student achievement in academics, in special regard to the type of student most
prevailed at USU, adjunct faculty should be provided with pedagogical and instructional skills which align with the university mission.

To consider the differences, uniqueness, and preferred learning styles amongst faculty at USU, investigating the perceptions of a specific model of faculty development will help inform the University on how to best address the gap in faculty training. Faculty development programs for online education should be guided by faculty needs, both in content and format (Heasley & Terosky, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the perceptions of the Community of Practice (COP) model, will be assessed with the intention of seeking a possible solution for USU (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Research provides that faculty want a sense of community and collegiality around online teaching, specifically around issues related to teaching philosophy and professional identity and online education (Heasley & Terosky, 2015). In addition, as the adjunct online faculty are remote to the main San Diego campus, establishing a sense of inclusiveness or belonging is an important component of professional development (Bond, 2015). Through collaboration and sharing of resources, a COP can reinforce adjunct faculty needs for belonging, and may increase feelings of empowerment with regard to their ability to influence student success (Belford & Rossow, 2017). The COP for online adjunct faculty can serve as a common space to address the variety of needs for adjunct faculty and can provide a connection back to the university.

The findings of this study will help address the USU gap in faculty training for online adjunct instructors by providing insight on a particular model of faculty development which could be implemented if deemed as valuable by the faculty surveyed. The finding may also justify the need to consider disciplinary differences when implementing faculty development programs. In addition, to further the evidence of student support to the regional accreditor,
utilizing a faculty development model grounded in theory and research may be to the universities benefit. Beyond USU, the findings may also inform external institutions of higher education on a method to stimulate development of their own faculty. For institutions that have communities of practice already established, the findings may provide insight on the value added of these communities across the different academic disciplines. Providing research to support the uniqueness of individual adjunct faculty may initiate subsequent studies to explore differentiated approaches to the development of adjunct, online faculty.

While USU has unique features that have influenced both its successes and challenges, research has shown that adjunct faculty are becoming the majority in online teaching assignments in colleges and universities across the United States (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). Providing a common space for those with a common practice to share knowledge and discuss content specific to their common field of work may be applicable to adjunct faculty across all types of higher education institutions.

Conclusion

A holistic description of United States University under an internal and external context has been provided. In the development of the university since its founding, there have been challenges and multiple changes to the structure, location, and leadership. However, the core mission of the university, which is to provide educational opportunities to underserved students’, has been maintained. To continue to strive towards the mission, with the progression of growth of students’, all key operators of the system must have the tools to grow as well.

Adjunct faculty are a major influencer of the student life cycle at USU. Quality instructors are a predictor of student success and faculty development in higher education is a salient component of positive instructional outcomes (Belford & Rossow, 2017). USU can
benefit from exploring methods to faculty development in regards to teaching and learning, and
considerations of adjunct faculty differences and preferred learning styles will guide USU to the
appropriate approaches. In the process of this study, it is my hope to ascertain if the
implementation of a community of practice can be a viable solution.
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Introduction

Remote, adjunct faculty make up the majority of all teaching faculty across all USU programs (NCES, n.d.). Core faculty development at USU currently embeds support for professional development, however that does not extend to those in an adjunct faculty position (United States University, 2016a). Faculty development measures applicable to adjunct faculty do not currently exist outside of the university orientation and learning management system training course provided during onboarding. Student enrollment is projected to grow from 500 to 5,000 in the next five years, and more faculty will need to be hired to support this growth (United States University, 2017b). If utilizing adjunct faculty continues as a trend at USU, ensuring that adjunct faculty development programs and opportunities at USU are developed with specific training applicable to online instruction is essential to support the growth in student enrollments. Literature on adjunct faculty, faculty development, and the Community of Practice (COP) model will be reviewed to support the implementation of a faculty development model at USU that considers the uniqueness and differences of its adjunct faculty members.

Key Terminology

To assist in the variability of classifications of the terms “adjunct” faculty and “online” education across higher education institutions, the definitions for the purpose of this study will be provided:

**Adjunct faculty.** The interchangeable terms, ‘adjunct’, ‘part-time’, ‘contract’, ‘contingent’ faculty have all been used in higher education literature and can all be described as ‘… individuals who are temporary, non-tenure track faculty employed less than full-time’, and
who are teaching at the tertiary level and is not in the tenure stream; are employed by the university on an as needed basis. (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 3; Baslseiro, Hecht, & Maxey, 2016; Garth-James, K & Hollis, B, 2016).

**Online education.** The term Online refers to being controlled by or connected to a network or computer system, such as the Internet (Online, n.d.). Distance education describes a learning experience and pedagogical model in which the instructor is physically in a different location than the student. Online education can be viewed as a form of distance education, which was developed to expand higher education opportunities to more diverse communities (Brooks, Casino Jr., & House-Peters, 2019). The Babson Survey Research Group/Online Learning Consortium defines online education as course/program that is taught 80% or more online (Clinefelter, Magda, Poul, 2015).

**Adjunct Faculty**

To best understand the subjects of this study, contemporary trends, psychological considerations such as needs and motivations, and classifications related to adjunct faculty will be discussed. The intent of providing a view of adjunct faculty through various lenses is to support the notion that adjunct faculty are a unique group of educators comprised of both similarities and differences in comparison to other classifications of faculty and in comparison to each other individually.

**Trends.** Three interconnected trends in higher education will be explored: (1) the consistent increase of adjunct faculty presence in the online classroom, (2) the steady increase of online education student enrollment, and (3) for-profit education’s role in the increased usage of adjunct faculty in online education (American Association of University Professors, n.d.; Allen & Seaman, 2017; Magness, 2016). More than 50% of all faculty appointments in United States
higher education are adjunct faculty. As emphasized by Dailey-Hebert, Donnelli-Sallee, Mandernach and Norris (2014), “budgetary constraints and the availability of a lower-cost pool of adjunct faculty make it unlikely that colleges and universities will reverse the current dependence on part-time faculty” (p. 2). Although adjunct faculty are defined as part-time instructors, most are teaching the equivalent to a full-time course load (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). Cost control, flexibility to fill gaps in course coverage, and a demand for a more diverse set of roles also drive the use of adjunct faculty in two and four-year institutions (Kezar, 2013; Yakoboski, 2014; Yakoboski & Foster, 2014).

Federal data reveals a continual growth in online enrollments in postsecondary education across the United States, although overall growth in enrollments overall in higher education has declined (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). Online education has grown exponentially over the past fifteen years, and adjunct faculty have been a vital component (Clinefelter, Magda, Poulin, 2015). Adjunct faculty, many of whom work professionally in their field outside of academia, can provide the latest expertise to students’ in applied and specialized career fields (Blanchard et al., 2010).

Across many two and four-year institutions, research has revealed lack of differentiation between policies designed specifically for on-campus adjuncts and online adjunct faculty, an increasing responsibility of course design upon adjuncts, and inconsistent professional development for adjunct faculty (Clinefelter, Magda, & Poulin, 2015). The implications of the trends involving adjunct faculty in higher education are concerning, as student learning can be impacted, not due to the quality of the adjunct instructor, but rather due to the conditions adjunct faculty face such as those described above (Yakoboski, 2016).
While the adjunct faculty model has been maintained by market trends, increased online enrollments, and budgetary restrictions, Mangnes (2016) finds that the rise of for-profit institutions between the 1990’s and 2011 is the main cause for the increased reliance on adjunct faculty. Most for-profit institutions do not have a tenure system but rather, a population of 90% adjunct faculty, using more adjunct faculty to teach courses in comparison to traditional institutions (Mangnes 2016; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). Literature has also shown that online faculty teaching at for-profit institutions have unbundled teaching roles and rankings, are expected to possess online course facilitation skills and knowledge of learning management systems, and have expectations linked to priority goals of evaluating students’, managing student and course load, and developing courses (Garth-James & Hollis, 2016). In addition, the partnerships with for-profit companies offering services such as enrollment, student support, and curricular and instructional design and the high cost of such services has placed an increasing pressure on instructional costs forcing many institutions to further their use of adjunct faculty for the benefit of having an inexpensive, contingent teaching workforce (Brooks et al., 2019).

With the growing reliance on adjunct faculty, and in order for institutions of higher education to best support the adjunct faculty in their work with students’, a clear understanding of the unique characteristics, backgrounds, and needs of adjunct faculty will be essential (Mandernach et al., 2015). Making intentional efforts to understand adjunct faculty from a learning and social psychological perspective may influence a more effective approach.

**Needs, motivations, and barriers.** Based on self-determination theory, the researchers BrckaLorenz et al. (2018), found that autonomy, competence, and relatedness positively predicts autonomous motivation, and in turn, autonomous motivation predicts greater use of effective
teaching strategies. Other motivation factors of adjunct faculty include internal and external influences such as students’, the university environment, self-satisfaction and gratification, professional goals of becoming a full-time faculty member, information sharing (Williamson, 2014). In order to optimize motivation for faculty, institutions of higher education should offer professional development opportunities and avenues for faculty to interact and connect with other faculty members (BrikaLorenz et al., 2018).

Polin (2010) finds that isolation is an issue for those in the field of education as adjunct faculty tend not to be involved in professional communities. The use of innovative online technologies for the purpose of providing collaborative professional development can help combat the sense of professional isolation of educators (Ferry, Herrington, Herrington, & Kervin, 2006). Establishing a sense of inclusiveness is an important component of professional development (Bond, 2015). Adjunct faculty want a sense of community and collegiality around online teaching, specifically around issues related to teaching philosophy and professional identity and online education (Heasley & Terosky, 2015). Faculty development over the years has focused primarily on one preferred type of pedagogical approach (problem-based learning) within only one discipline (medical education) but has failed to address the need to provide a variety of pedagogical approach’s applicable across different disciplines (Meyers, 2014). Overall, pedagogical training is limited at many institutions (Clinefelter, Magda, and Poulin, 2015).

McElhany’s and Wickersham’s (2009) study on faculty barriers to online teaching reveals that faculty have concerns regarding efficacy of the online format specifically to the subject matter, limited student-faculty interaction, ability to effectively conduct assessments, and the level of student technology literacy and student perceptions that online courses were less
challenging that face-to-face. From the administrator view, interviews revealed that barriers to faculty in online education included: faculty preparedness, support and resources, course quality, communication, technological infrastructure, and faculty development. Preparedness related to a faculty members ability, and the support they receive from the institution, to make the transition to online teaching and online course development. The institution plays an integral role in ensuring faculty are well supported when transitioning to the online environment. In regards to faculty development, administrators emphasized that the most appropriate faculty development format should involve tailoring to the specific discipline and/or skill level of the specific faculty member (McElhany & Wickersham, 2009).

Classifications. Research in the last decade has cautioned against the idea that all adjunct faculty are a homogenous population, as evidenced by the differences amongst faculty in areas such as what motivates them as well as in their backgrounds in teaching (Wagoner, 2007; Mandernach et al, 2015).

Adjunct faculty classifications. The following classifications were prescribed by researchers Crosby & Schnitzer (2003) and Mandernach et al. (2015):

1. The Philosopher is a candidate who is likely not professionally employed in the field in which she is degreed.

2. The Traditional Teacher may have a wealth of instructional experience in the classroom as both a full time and adjunct instructor at different institutions.

3. The Moonlighter is employed full time at another institution yet is seeking adjunct work to supplement her salary.

4. The Full-Time, Part-Timer is an online adjunct employed at several institutions and can be described as specialists, experts, or professionals who have full-time employment
outside their part-time teaching responsibilities. They teach as a means of sharing their expertise, networking, and contributing to the field.

5. **The Administrator** is typically an internal institutional employee.

6. **The Graduate** is a candidate who has recently graduated from an advanced degree program and is seeking their first teaching position.

7. **The Seeker** is looking for a full-time faculty position at a higher education institution, using the adjunct position as a stepping-stone.

8. **The Retiree** is a candidate who is seeking part-time work.

The diverse types of faculty described by Crosby and Schnitzer (2003) and Mandernanch et al. (2015) support the need to consider that the adjunct faculty at USU will have varying levels of needs. Just as personalized learning and preferred learning styles vary amongst students’, differences may also occur amongst faculty. It is essential for educators to recognize that adults have different learning styles and that instruction should be tailored to the characteristic ways that adults prefer to learn (as cited in Kharb, Jindal, Samanta, & Singh, 2013). There is a need to customize adjunct faculty development training and services as a function of the uniqueness and variability of the online adjunct faculty population (Bedford, 2009; Bedford & Miller, 2013; Kanuka, Jugdev, Heller & West, 2008; Milliken & Jurgens, 2008; Mandernanch et al. 2015).

**Academic disciplinary differences.** Faculty within a higher education institution are not a homogenous group and will display differences in various domains. Specifically, faculty within academic disciplines or fields of study have also been shown to display differences in comparison to each other. One area of particular interest that has not yet been studied is differences in how faculty across the different academic disciplines prefer to learn. Of the many approaches to learning, collaboration has been deemed as an instructional methodology that
addresses the targeted needs of learners and is one most suited for diverse learners and teachers and those who are technologically sound. Collaboration also helps to promote a sense of community (Hector-Mason & Tibbetts (2015).

Research is plentiful to support the notion of differences between academic disciplines. The way in which academic work is organized, the relationship of academics to knowledge, the relationship of students’ to academic faculty, as well as the types of knowledge students’ are expected to attain about their specific discipline or field of study are all influenced by academic disciplinary differences (Jones & Kemp, 2007). Prosser and Trigwell (1999) described discipline differences as a contextual influence which affects teaching and learning. Holden, Lewis, and Ross (2012) argued that there are disciplinary differences in how academics approach research and collaboration. Differences between academic disciplines have been identified in a multitude of areas and perspectives.

Academic disciplines have been classified into groups and typologies by various researchers. Jones (2012) identified models which have received the greatest empirical attention over the years, including those of: Becher (1994), Biglan’s (1973), Hagstrom (1964), Hargens (1975), Lodahl and Gordan (1972), and Smart et al (2000). All of the models of classification schemes have centered around the idea that individual academic disciplines have different levels of paradigmatic development, based on their level of consensus. In terms of level of agreement with best practices of research within their field, high paradigmatic disciplines have high levels of agreement, while low paradigmatic disciplines have lower levels of agreement (Jones, 2012).

The research on academic disciplinary research is extensive, but according to Jones (2012), the disciplinary classification theory and models of both Biglan (1973) and Smart et al. (2000) serve as the underpinning of the research as a whole.
Anthony Biglan (1973) identified similarities in attitudes and behaviors amongst individuals within the same academic discipline, and based on these commonalities, developed an empirically studied, three-dimensional classification scheme which has become part of standard universal academic language (Jones, 2012; Simpson, 2015). The groupings of disciplines defined by Biglan (1973a,b) are defined as: hard/soft dimension, the applied/pure dimension, and the life/non-life dimension. The hard/soft dimension was based on levels of consensus and paradigmatic development, whereas the applied/pure dimension and the life/non-life dimension are both based on the applicability of “scholarship engaged in and the level to which scholarship in a given field involves the study of life” (Jones, 2012, p. 16). Many extensions to Biglan’s research were conducted over the years to add on disciplines not considered in the original study, such as the addition of nursing as soft/applied/life (Stoecker, 1993). Table 2.1 describes the disciplines aligned to three dimensions of Biglan’s (1973a,b) model.

Table 2.1.

*Biglan’s (1973) Three-Dimensional Classification Scheme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pure</th>
<th>Hard</th>
<th>Life system</th>
<th>Soft</th>
<th>Life system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonlife system</td>
<td>Life system</td>
<td>Nonlife system</td>
<td>Life system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Entomology</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Political science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Microbiology</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Zoology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied</td>
<td>Civil engineering</td>
<td>Agronomy</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Educational administration and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer science</td>
<td>Dairy science</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical engineering</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agricultural economics</td>
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|

Vocational and
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Smart et al.’s (2000) model of classification was developed specifically in the context of the higher education community. Under the framework of Holland’s (1973, 1997) Theory of Occupational Classification, and the socialization hypothesis that faculty will create environments for students’ which align to the goals and ideals of their respective academic disciplines, Smart et al. (2000) continued to investigate academic discipline differences by conducting several studies. From his research and application of Holland’s (1973, 1997) framework, a classification model specific to faculty in higher education was developed, illustrated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Academic Discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>Biology and life sciences, economics, geography, math/statistics, physical sciences, finance, aeronautical engineering, civil engineering, chemical engineering, astronomy, earth science, pharmacy, anthropology, ethnic studies, geography, and sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Architecture, fine arts (art, drama, music), foreign languages, English, music, speech, theater, and environmental design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Ethnic studies, home economics, humanities (history, philosophy, religion, rhetoric), library science, physical and health education, psychology, social sciences (anthropology, political science, social work), education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>Business, communications, computer/information science, law, public affairs, journalism, marketing, and industrial engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Jones (2012) also provided a review of research that illustrates academic disciplinary differences in teaching beliefs and practices, leadership and departmental functioning, as well as evidence of academic disciplinary differences at institutions outside of the United States.

Neumann’s (2001) review of literature demonstrated a strong influence that academic disciplines have on academic beliefs, teaching, and on students’, and discussed a need for a greater systemic
study on the academic disciplines regarding their effect on learning and teaching in higher education. Neumann (2001) also proposed that a discipline-based development for faculty can not only inform about instructional strategies and skills, but also may encourage the exchange and evolution of beliefs about the discipline and how faculty within communicate with students’.

The collection of literature and research provides support of faculty academic disciplinary differences, and the models and theories can guide the current research of investigating faculty development preferences specific to these disciplines.

**Faculty Development**

**History.** The historical evolution of faculty development shows shifts in focus and what was deemed important for faculty in particular periods of time. From the 1950’s to 1960’s, defined as the age of the scholar, there was a focus on research skills and productivity. The 1960’s to 1970’s, described as the age of the teacher, had a particular focus on the improvement of teaching skills for faculty. In the 1980’s, the age of the developer, was characterized by the recognition of the expertise of the faculty developer and how such efforts helped to extend and formalize faculty development programs. In the 1990’s, the age of the learner, there was a shift of focus from teaching to student learning in higher education (Sorcineli et al., 2006). Finally, the current times have been described as the age of the network, as encouragement of interdisciplinary and collaboration across faculty, as well as the integration of Internet resources and technology into the classroom has become the focus of the past two decades (as cited in Meyers, 2014).

**Research surrounding faculty development.** Faculty development in higher education in the present time includes but is not limited to: orientations, workshops, brown-bags, and attendance of discipline related conferences. The assumption of faculty development is that
improving teaching skills will improve student learning. “Faculty development in online teaching is a critical foundation for quality online teaching” (Meyer, 2014).

Under the premise that faculty should be able to 1) effectively respond to the constantly changing classroom demands if they are well-informed by educational and learning research, and 2) have opportunity to learn, practice, and reflect on a collection of teaching strategies and skills, Condon et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate the effects of faculty development on student learning. The researchers uncovered a direct relationship between the amount of faculty development and improvements in teaching. Adjunct faculty were most likely to attend and participate in faculty development opportunities, compared to tenure or full-time faculty members, but were mainly motivated by the hope to have teaching contracts renewed, and were also cautious to implement the skills learned in the classroom in fear of negative student evaluation results. The results of Condon et al. (2012) study did not reach statistical significance but did indicate two trends: faculty development focused on teaching lead to higher student performance and learning results, and faculty status, because of job security, impacted an adjunct faculty member’s willingness to incorporate new skills into the classroom.

Investigating the impact of training of university professors on their teaching skills, researchers Coffey & Gibbs (2004) found a statistically significant change within faculty members who participated in a training program dedicated to becoming student and learning-focused instructors, compared to the group of faculty who did not participate in the training. Meyers (2014) extensive review of literature found that faculty development focused on instructional design has helped faculty to understand various pedagogies centered on student learning and the associated technologies to implement such pedagogies.
Researchers Bates et al. (2013) examined the motivations of full and part-time faculty to seek development and found that the preferred model of faculty development contributed to a variety of preferences amongst types of faculty. The researchers also found that faculty, in order to improve their teaching skills, were likely to attend faculty development offerings from the institution, but the obstacles to attending were mainly time and competing priorities. Understanding the motivations of faculty and considering the incentives of participating in faculty development is essential (Bates et al., 2013).

**Examples of faculty development.** Numerous higher education institutions across the United States have implemented faculty development programs. Central Michigan provides online mentoring and teaching resources, as well as provides weekly tips. The University of Central Florida provides a 70-hour faculty development course. The University of Colorado developed a “Web Camp”, which is a week-long workshop focusing on instructional design and hands-on-training. Capella University utilizes the META (Mentoring, Engagement, Technology, and Assessment) model. Colorado State University, based on Bloom’s taxonomy and systems theory, used master learning to create online courses for faculty. Finally, the community of practice approach was used at Florida Atlantic University (Meyers, 2014).

**Faculty Development Theory**

Research, development, and implementation of faculty development within institutions of higher education has benefitted from the use of adult learning theories (Meyers, 2014). Framing faculty development research within educational and/or adult learning theories can provide the necessary reciprocal foundation of teaching and learner central to faculty preparation (Bradley et al., 2013). When seeking to understand adjunct faculty to best support their needs, utilizing theory in those attempts would yield an alignment with best practices for faculty development.
Andragogy. Andragogy, a term coined by Knowles (1975, 1980), emphasizes that adult learners find importance in: pursuing learning that has personal importance, such as professional development or learning about a personal interest, having something that they are motivated to learn, learning something that provides immediate usefulness, and having self-directed opportunities to learn. Andragogy theory, or the art and science of helping adults learn, assumes that adults move from dependency to self-directedness as their learning matures, will draw on past experiences to aid in learning, is ready to learn when they assume a new role in life, and is motivated to learn by internal factors (American Institutes of Research, 2011). Adult learning is the process by which knowledge, skills, and attitudes are developed and behavior is changed. Each adult learner and the condition in which they learn is unique (Knowles et al., 2011). The concept of andragogy further supports the premise that faculty, as adult learners, will have different motives which directly impact how they learn.

The focus of faculty development in higher education has transformed over time, from centering on the scholar identity and research, moving to a learner-centered approach, arriving to the current times of integrating technology and networking (Meyers, 2014). Research and literature surrounding faculty development has pointed to the large benefits it has towards quality instruction and student experience. Overall, the research supports the consideration of theory-based faculty development models when introducing a program into a University. Theories of Community of Practice and Situated Learning will serve as the theoretical framework of this study.

Community of Practice Theory (COPT). Adjunct faculty, especially those teaching remotely from the campus, should not function in isolation, but rather, the University and those charged with management of faculty should promote collegial interactions between full time and
adjunct faculty, as it will help to foster a teaching community. Creating a space dedicated to faculty for collaborative opportunity and professional exchange is one of the ways to build a teaching community within a higher education setting. Focusing the discussions and topics on learning outcomes and quality instruction is essential, as adjunct faculty are integral to the teaching and learning process (Crosby & Schnitzer, 2003; Roueche et al, 1995).

The Community of Practice (COP) model, developed by anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), describes a group of people with a common practice that learn and share with one another within a specific domain (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). A COP has three components: *domain, community, and practice*. The *domain* refers to the common ground for sharing knowledge, the *community* is the social structure for interactions and relationship building which enable members to learn from one another, and the *practice* refers to the specific knowledge which is shared, developed, and maintained within that community (Abigail, 2016; Wenger-Trayner, 2015). The combination of the three components, domain, community, and practice in parallel cultivates a COP. The essential functions of a COP are social interaction, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation, and identity building (Li et al., 2009). A COP is formed by or for practitioners who engage in a collective learning process and who share a concern or passion, all within a shared domain of human endeavor. Learning within a COP involves a change in a person’s identity, a re-negotiation of the meaning of an experience, and is a social formation of a person (Dorfler, Eden, & Pyrko, 2017).

The COP model has been used in various settings, such as within the government, in education, associations, the social sector, and in international development. Practitioners within a community develop their own practice through participation in various activities, including problem solving, requesting information, seeking experience, reusing assets, coordination and
synergy, discussing developments, documenting projects, and mapping knowledge and identifying gaps (Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Different forms of the COP exist, including but not limited to practiced-based, task-based, and knowledge-based communities (Polin & Riel, 2004). Furthermore, an educational COP focused on pedagogical reform has been shown to be successful (Gehrke & Kazar, 2017).

Based on the work of Polanyi’s (1966) model of human knowledge, Dorfler et al. (2017) connected the concept of indwelling as the drive force of learning within a community of practice. Indwelling is a trans-personal process through which individuals learn together and from each other in practice, which results in these individuals becoming more competent practitioners (Polanyi, 1966). Indwelling interlocking involves individuals’ who are engaged in thinking and will guide each other through their own understanding of the same problem. Dorfler et al. (2017), using the idea of indwelling, developed the concept of thinking together, which is a form of sharing tacit knowledge, and emphasizes the development of learning partnerships and sense of community that occurs when individuals’ indwelling is interlocked. The concept of thinking together is the key to what makes a COP thrive and explains why mutual engagement of members within the community is imperative, so much that, if thinking together ceases within a COP, then the COP stops functioning (Dorfler et al., 2017).

**Situated learning theory.** Situated learning theory explains how the COP model works under a theoretical lens, as it views knowledge as being situated in authentic contexts, and learning as being influenced by the activity, context, and culture (Abigail, 2016; Lave, 1991). Situated learning, a form of practice-based theory influenced by Ortner’s (1984) developments in anthropology, views learning in terms of trajectories of membership and construction of personal identity within a community of practice (Hodge, 2014). Learning is socially constructed by way
of four interconnected concepts: practice, community, meaning, and identity. Social learning involves experiencing, belonging, becoming, and doing. Research has suggested that practice is socially situated within the academic environment which implies that the existence of communities are locales of practice (Warhurst, 2008). Lave and Wenger (1991, 1998) provide that a community is therefore an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge: individuals cannot learn without belonging to something and learning is inevitable when participating in a social practice, or belonging to a community (Warhurst, 2008).

Wenger and Lave (1991) found that the participation in a social practice constitutes the general process of learning. The researchers focused on the connection between learning and participation, which underpins the relationship between learning and identity. Wenger and Lave (1991) also distinguish newcomers, or those new to the field of practice, as those going through “legitimate peripheral participation,” which is the movement towards becoming a full member of the COP and a fully competent practitioner, by participation of sets of tasks and activities (Hodge, 2014). Learners are viewed as active participants, and through increased involvement in a COP, will transform to becoming more skilled. As a community member transforms, the community will change (Abigail, 2016).

**COP impact on faculty.** Abigail’s (2016) extensive review on research and literature regarding the COP relationship to faculty development revealed that the COP model can influence faculty’s application of knowledge, tools, and social relationships. As a result of an evaluation of the COP’s within the University of Wisconsin-Madison, it was found that participants had strong, positive reactions to the COP’s, were able to build their capacity to learn through reflective practices, demonstrated a change in behavior involving feeling more confident, inspired, engaged, and committed. Overall, the evaluation of the COP’s revealed both
overt results, including new tangible products and improved state of affairs, as well as covert results, such as positive changes in behavior, a developed shared language, and faster and deeper collaborations (Laursen, 2015).

Different levels of value have been demonstrated for participants of COP’s in an educational setting (Cambridge et al., 2014). The immediate values include educators feeling less isolated, receiving immediate help and support, providing advice or encouragement, and engaging in professional conversations with other instructors. The potential value of COP’s includes knowledge, resources, and relationships which can be deemed useful for participants. Potential value includes deepening knowledge, gaining broader perspective by deprivatizing practice, increasing self-confidence and sense of professional identity, expanding professional network connections, and increasing trust in the members within their collective community. The applied value of participation in a COP involves application of new practices and changes in current practices by applying knowledge, resources, and relationships. The realized value of COP’s for educators are improvements in outcomes as a result of application, including improving learning and communication within an education institution, as well as producing knowledge and products which influence district, state, and national educational policy. Finally, the reframing value of being a member of a COP comprises a change in an understanding of success. Members of a COP may rethink their views on specific practices and key issues in education as a result of high-quality dialogue. In addition, participants may be inspired to move beyond their responsibility of serving just their students’ to taking on leadership roles to support professional learning throughout their institution as well as attempt to influence public policy which affects conditions for faculty across the nation (Cambridge et al., 2014).
Lifecycle of the COP model. Gehrke and Kazar (2017) describe the five stages within the life cycle of the COP: 1) Potential, 2) Coalescing, 3) Maturing, 4) Stewardship, and 5) Transformation. The first stage, potential, is characterized by an informal group becoming interested in an important topic and the idea of forming a community is introduced. During this stage, the potential of forming a community develops as the informal group begins to view their personal interests and issues as something that could be discussed at the communal level. The goal of the second stage, coalescing, is to create interest and establish the value of the domain. The coalescing stage involves individuals launching the COP and beginning to find value in the engagement and learning with others. Maturing, stage three of the life cycle, occurs once the COP begins to grow and the members become involved in active learning, joining activities, and the development of standards of interaction within the COP. Stage four, stewardship, involves community members finding ways to sustain energy and momentum, renew interest, and continue to recruit for new members. The stewardship stage is a balance between remaining focused and creating new avenues to bring in new ideas and energy. Finally, stage five, transformation, describes the tension between sense of ownership and openness to new ideas that either allows for creation of a new focus and new membership, or causes the COP to cease existence due to the participants’ feelings of lack of relevance or necessity (Gehrke & Kazar, 2017).

Designing a COP. When taking on the task of creating and designing a COP, Cambridge et al. (2014) suggested the following considerations for community focus:

- What is the purpose of the community?
- Who is the core audience?
- How will members participate?
What value does the community add to the members’ practice?

In addition, Cambridge et al. (2014) suggested the following key questions regarding leadership and stakeholders:

- Who will be the leaders of the community?
- What will be the roles of the leader’s?
- Who are the key stakeholders?

Considering the role of resources is also suggested by Cambridge et al. (2014);

- What role will resource’s play?
- How will resources align with the community’s focus?
- Who is responsible for contributing resources?
- How will quality resources be vetted?

Cambridge et al. (2014) provides the following considerations of adapting technology:

- How can technology be leveraged to support the community vision?
- What is the learning curve for members of the community?
- What issues with technology can members’ encounter?

Finally, essential questions regarding formative evaluation and learning analytics should be considered (Cambridge et al., 2014):

- How will success be defined in terms of the COP?
- How will success be measured?
- What data is most useful, and how will data be analyzed?
- How will data be reported?
Research has indicated that educator participation in a community of practice can positively influence happiness and teaching effectiveness, however, a clear vision for the community, skilled implementation, and careful planning is essential (Cambridge et al., 2014).

Cambridge, Kaplan, and Suter (2005) provide a guide on creating a COP based on their experience working with various organizations. All design choices regarding both technical and social architecture must be derived from the community purpose. The purpose of the community should be focused and directly tied to the institution’s mission and should be defined in terms of the benefits to and needs of the community stakeholders. The four areas of activity that the purpose can be categorized in are: developing relationships, learning and developing practice, carrying out tasks and projects, and creating new knowledge (Cambridge et al., 2005).

The first area of developing relationships must include activities of developing trust, mutual respect, reciprocity, and commitment. Once relationships are established, members should be given opportunity to learn and develop their practice based on an existing body of knowledge and be encouraged to develop a collective product or participate in deep learning experiences that can be integrated into their own work. To carry out tasks and projects, the community should be given opportunity to take action collectively and be given the tools to produce resources for developing their practice. Finally, members of the community should be encouraged to create knowledge and move beyond current practice to explore and innovate the cutting edge of the domain (Cambridge et al., 2005).

Once the purpose of the community is defined, the goals, vision, and mission should also be communicated to the participants. In addition, the major topics of community content and learning goals should be identified, and related activities that will generate energy within the community should be planned. How members communicate and interact should be explained,
and external resources for knowledge sharing to support the community should be identified and integrated. Finally, roles and social structure should be considered and communicated to the group members. Once a community has been established, to promote growth, facilitation and communication must remain consistent, a sharing of individual and community success should be encouraged, and new opportunities for members to play new roles, and experiment with activities should be provided (Cambridge et al., 2005).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to 1) understand the adjunct faculty perceived value of a COP and 2) determine if any differences exist between adjunct faculty of different academic disciplines. While the benefits of a COP in a virtual setting for online adjunct faculty development support the consideration of a COP as a faculty development model at USU, it is also essential that adjunct faculty feel a sense of value and trust, and affiliation to the organization (Dolan, 2011). The institutions support and interaction with the adjunct faculty outside of the COP may also impact the faculty’s perception of the model.

While chapter one warrants a need for a faculty development model, the review of literature revealed the heterogeneous nature of adjunct faculty, supporting the purpose of seeking if differences exist between how faculty of certain disciplines value a collaborative model of development. The literature on faculty development provided an understanding of the origins and maturity of faculty development over time, the impact of faculty development on postsecondary educators, as well as a view of faculty development through a theoretical lens. The COP model was also defined and the underlying concept, theoretical framework, lifecycles, and value to faculty development was revealed through the review of literature.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The institutional review presented in chapter one highlights the need for an examination of faculty development opportunities best fit for online adjunct faculty, which make up the large majority of the teaching faculty at USU. Chapter two explores the literature surrounding adult learning theory, adjunct faculty, and the community of practice model, revealing a need to examine differences amongst adjunct faculty in relation to preferred methods of faculty development. In order to promote excellence in teaching and student success at USU, ensuring the needs of adjunct faculty are met is critical. The study seeks to both understand and reveal significant differences in the adjunct faculty perceived value of the community of practice. To address the research questions, chapter three will detail the methodology, structuring the study with a rationale of chosen approach, situating the study in the context of paradigmatic roots, and concluding with a full description of the study design.

Study Methodology

Mixed methods of the convergent design will be employed in order to not only understand if a significant difference exists, but to also gain deeper knowledge and reveal any unique patterns. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) describe quantitative research as a seeking of explanations and predictions that will generalize to other people and places (as cited in Thomas, 2003). Qualitative research, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), is an interpretive, naturalistic approach which attempts to make sense of phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (as cited in Thomas, 2003). The central premise of a mixed-methods approach is that the mixture of both qualitative and quantitative approaches will provide a better understanding of the research problem than either of the two approaches alone (Creswell, 2011).
Convergent design, or concurrent triangulation, allows a researcher to first gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative data separately, with the intention of then merging the two sets of data to interpret the results. The convergent design model places equal weight of importance to both data sets and can provide a more thorough understanding of the adjunct faculty perception of value (Creswell, 2011). This design “enables the reader to join complementary quantitative and qualitative results to develop a more complete understanding of a phenomenon” (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 77). For this study, both of the sets of quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed separately, then will be joined and interpreted together. Figure 3.1 illustrates an example of the convergent design model, but is important to note that surveys and interviews are not the sole methods of the mixed methods design.

Figure 3.1. Example of four-step process in the convergent design (Creswell, 2011)
The study seeks to identify a significant relationship, which by definition is best answered through quantitative analysis, however, the study would also benefit from the addition of contextual information collected through qualitative methods. Both of these approaches form the foundation of the study design, with the intent of obtaining perceived value data from the participants involved and using a multi-layered analysis to respond to the overarching inquiry. The quantitative data can directly respond to the research question, however the qualitative data collected may enhance the study further as the purpose overall is to directly apply to practice. The rationale to utilizing a convergent design is that the results will help justify a need for change in the area of faculty development at United States University (USU).

Paradigmatic roots

In educational research, the term paradigm has been used to describe a researcher’s worldview – or the perspective, thinking, school of thought, or set of shared beliefs which informs the meaning of research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A paradigm is composed of four elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology, and axiology, all which comprise the basic assumptions, beliefs, norms, and values within a paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Epistemology can be described as the knowledge within the world, or how we come to know something (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). Ontology is concerned with assumptions made in order to believe something makes sense or is real (Scotland, 2012). Methodology refers to the methods, design, approaches, and procedures that are planned in order to find something out (Keeves, 1997). Finally, axiology refers to understanding concepts of right and wrong, and involves the consideration of ethical issues in the research planning process (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).
The current study was designed and will be administered under the lens of the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding the subjective world of human experience, making an effort to interpret what the subject is thinking or the meaning they are making of the context (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The goal under this paradigm is to understand an individual’s interpretation of the world around them, and the fundamental tenet of interpretivism is that reality is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The interpretivist paradigm displays certain characteristics:

- An admission that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of an individual
- A belief that realities are socially constructed and that there are multiple realities
- An inevitable interaction between the participants and the researcher
- An acceptance that context is vital for knowledge and knowing
- A belief that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in any pursuit of understanding (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Morgan, 2007).

The interpretivist/constructivist paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology, as well as a balanced axiology. A subjective epistemology assumes that a researcher will make meaning of the data through their own cognitive processing and will construct knowledge socially. A relativist ontology assumes that a researcher will believe that any situation studied encompasses multiple realities which can be explored through human interactions. A naturalist methodology assumes that the researcher acts as a participant observer and will utilize data gathered through multiple sources. Finally, a balance axiology assumes that the research outcome will reflect the researchers’ values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).
The interpretivism paradigm is the underlying assumption for the current research study. The purpose of the research inquiry is to construct knowledge about academic faculty differences through the reality and lens of the faculty participants. It is the multiple perspectives from the faculty members that will guide any observations, analysis, and findings. Ensuring a true alignment in regard to the role and beliefs of a researcher conducting a study under the interpretivist paradigm is an essential component.

**Validation criteria.** Educational research scholars have accepted Guba’s (1981) suggestions of criteria for internal and external validity and reliability for the interpretivism paradigm. The criteria includes: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The criterion of credibility refers to the extent data and data analysis are trustworthy or authentic or the researcher’s ability to investigate the question. The criterion of dependability refers to the ability of observing the same outcome under similar circumstances. It has been argued that since the interpretivist paradigm usually deals with human behavior studies, and since human behavior is continuously contextual and variable, the criterion of dependability is specialized under this view. Rather than viewing it as being able to repeat the exact study and yield very similar results, dependability under this premise more refers to the researcher’s ability to make inferences and interpretations from their own construction of meaning (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The criterion of confirmability refers to the extent in which the findings can be confirmed by others in the field. Finally, the criterion of transferability refers to a researcher providing enough contextual data so that readers can relate those findings to their own contexts (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The four criterions will guide the studies assurance of validity, reliability, and dependability. In addition, the four criterions relate to the purpose of the study in that the findings will be used to provide considerations for the institution of study in relation to faculty development.
Furthermore, the findings can also inform other institutions on faculty perceptions of collaborative learning as a developmental tool as well as to contribute to the limited literature regarding differences amongst faculty of various academic disciplines.

**Survey Research Methodology**

Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study design will be achieved using an electronic, online survey. The survey method is generally utilized to obtain perspectives about the present condition of what is studied (Thomas, 2003). Surveys can describe trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a population, and it is used for the purpose of learning about the group being studied more than it is to infer cause and effect. Creswell (2008) outlined many advantages of surveys for research purposes: ability to administer in a short time, ability to be dispersed without geographical limits, and ability to canvass participants anonymously. Administering an electronic, online survey allows for immediate delivery, tracking, return of results to a single repository, and eliminates transcription error (Nonnecke & Preece, 2003). Furthermore, survey data is self-reported, collecting information on what the participants think, which is exactly what the study seeks to accomplish.

Different types of surveys in research exist, each serving a different purpose. The cross-sectional survey design best aligns with the needs of this study, as it allows for a collection of data in one point in time to examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices. In addition, cross-sectional surveys also measure community needs as well as can be an instrument for program evaluation (Creswell, 2008). This study intends to measure a point in time, and a cross-sectional survey is best fit for obtaining the value perception data needed to answer the research question. The current study seeks to see if there is a significant difference in how faculty of different academic disciplines perceive the value of a community of practice model as a form of
faculty development. The study is interested in how the faculty perceive this model in the current time period and current state of online education. A cross-sectional survey will allow for a present-day view of the perceptions of online faculty, aligning well with the intent of the study.

While the survey method is considered a quantitative approach to collecting research data, the analysis of the survey results will include both quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey will include both rater-scale and open-ended questions. The responses to the rater scale will be analyzed using quantitative statistical methods in order to reveal if any significant differences exist amongst different academic disciplines. The responses to the open-ended questions will be analyzed using qualitative content analysis methods in order to reveal if any trends or patterns exist, providing an additional layer of context.

Andrews, Nonnecke, and Preece (2003) discuss that electronic surveys should be designed to support multiple browsers and platforms, prevent multiple submissions, have an adaptive or logical manner of question presentation (if necessary), provide opportunity to save before submitting (for over 50 questions), collect both quantified and narrative type question answers, and have the ability to provide automatic feedback (“thank you”) upon completion (p.3). Web-based surveys fit all criteria listed. Research has suggested to use web-based surveys rather than email-based, as email surveys can be altered by the respondent. Web-based survey software, such as Google Forms or Survey Monkey, can allow for automatic data import into an Excel sheet or database, which prevents alteration by the respondent as well as eliminates transcription errors. Web-based surveys can also apply paper questionnaire design principles and provide technical ease to design and implementation (Andrews et al., 2003).

Once the survey construction is completed, a pilot test with ten faculty will be conducted for reliability and validity purposes. A pilot test helps determine if the participants can
understand the questions in the survey and are capable of completing the survey. The feedback from these participants will be incorporated into the final version of the survey (Creswell, 2008). The data obtained during the pilot testing will not be incorporated into the final sample for the study.

**Data Collection Plan**

**Participants.** Adjunct faculty employed under the 2019 adjunct pool contract at USU will be asked to participate in the study. There are currently 155 remote adjunct faculty representing the College of Business and Technology, College of Education, and College of Nursing and Health Sciences at USU (United States University, n.d.). All of the adjunct faculty members either teach online or both online and on-campus at USU. According to the USU Adjunct Faculty Handbook, the academic qualifications for an adjunct faculty position includes:

- Terminal degree appropriate for program from a regionally accredited or equivalent institution
- Three to five years relevant work experience
- An appreciation of the vitality of the scholar-practitioner model of instruction
- Familiarity with higher education, curriculum planning, best teaching and administrative practices
- Dedication to the ongoing and systemic assessment of student learning
- Commitment to curriculum planning, the adoption of best teaching and administrative practices,
- and/or a record of teaching excellence
- LMS experience (whenever applicable); understanding of the various methods of learning
- Demonstrable commitment to student support (p.9).
For the purpose of the study, the adjunct faculty will be categorized into groups based on their academic discipline. The academic disciplines represented in this study will be business and technology, education, and nursing/health sciences.

**Permissions.** Several individuals and groups will need to grant permission before the study commences. An email letter will be sent to the various parties including the purpose of the study, the amount of time needed to collect data, the amount of time required by the participants, and how the data will be utilized, as suggested by Creswell (2008). Permission, or informed consent, will need to first be obtained by the Institutional Review Board of the university in which the researcher attends (National Louis University) and to the university in which the researcher wishes to collect the data from (United States University). Finally, permission from the group of participants used in the study will also need to be obtained. Obtaining informed consent helps to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals participating in a research study. Obtaining permission is not only a requirement of the informed consent process but is also an ethical consideration and practice. Ensuring confidentiality of the participant personal information throughout the research process provides privacy to the participants (Creswell, 2008). Assurance of confidentiality will be accomplished through the means of not disclosing the names of the participants in any areas related to this study, and ensuring that the data is protected through encryption. The informed consent for this study is presented in Appendix A.

**Recruitment process.** The participant life cycle in the current study includes the recruitment of participants to represent the target population, and an administration of a survey for the purpose of collecting data to address the research question.
Participants. A contact list of both personal and university email addresses of USU active adjunct faculty will be obtained. The target population of the current study are online adjunct instructors at USU across all academic disciplines. The sample used for the study will be a subgroup of the target population. It is integral for this study to have representation of all academic disciplines within USU. A convenience sampling approach will be utilized due to the small population of adjunct faculty at USU. Convenience sampling involves using participants that are willing and available to be studied. For cross-sectional survey design, the larger the sample, the more participants can be deemed as representative of the overall population to reflect their beliefs, attitudes, trends, and practices (Creswell, 2008).

Details of Communication. The researchers USU email account will be used for communication to help promote credibility. The account will be used to send and receive all related communications during all components of the data collection process, starting from recruitment through to any final communications once the data collection period concludes. The integrated applications such as Google forms and Google sheets will be leveraged for the data collection process.

Once the pilot study concludes and any adjustments to the survey are made, an email communication will be sent from the researcher’s USU email account to each of the adjunct faculty inviting them to participate in the study. The communication will include an introduction of the researcher, information on the study, and an electronic informed consent. If the faculty member elects to participate, they will be directed to click on a link within the email which will open up the survey on a new browser tab. The first page of the survey will serve as an electronic informed consent. The form will not allow the participant to proceed unless they sign the
informed consent page. The participant will be given the choice to decline and close the survey at this or any point if they choose.

**Survey design.** Research was conducted to identify studies related to assessing adjunct faculty perceived value. While a study with the exact parameters was not located, research on perceived value has been conducted in various settings. For the current study, questions obtained from various studies will be used to form a questionnaire with the purpose of addressing the research question. Based on the review of literature, three categories have been identified to provide a holistic view of the USU adjunct faculty perceptions, including demographics, classification of adjunct type, and perceived value. The quantitative questions will be presented as a rater-scale, and the qualitative questions will be in the form of open-ended questions.

**Demographics.** Demographics describe characteristics of a population, and in research, can show how representative the sample is of the target population (Salkind, 2010). The current study will consider the research of Fernandez et al. (2016) on comprehensive and inclusive approaches to demographic data collection. Shifting cultural norms and a society becoming more diverse in accepted categories makes it necessary to change demographic data collection accordingly. Adding new or refining current categories or dimensions helps to develop measurements that accurately represent the phenomenon or experience being studied. To create demographic measures that allow participants to identify in a non-normative and holistic manner, the researchers recommend:

- ensuring anonymity by avoiding asking questions that create identifiable records,
- avoid creating perceived bias such as stereotype threat by placing demographic questions at the end, and
balance efficiency with accuracy by collecting demographic data consistent with a theoretical framing of social identities (Fernandez et al., 2016)

The demographic variables relevant to the study will be identified and presented in the questionnaire using the suggestions provided in Fernandez et al. (2016).

*Adjunct classification.* The second section of the survey will utilize research of Crosby & Schnitzer (2003) and Mandernach et al. (2015) in order to collect information on how the participants self-identify using the prescribed adjunct faculty classifications. The questions will be adapted from Bergmann’s (2011) study on adjunct faculty. Both the demographic and adjunct classifications sections of the survey can serve as independent variables when analyzing and interpreting results, as well as for considerations of future research. Finally, data collected in section one and two can be used to support the overarching purpose of the study which is to better understand the adjunct faculty of USU to make recommendations to the institution regarding faculty development.

*Perceived value.* Two studies have been identified to best support the formation of the third quantitative section of current study questionnaire regarding perceived value:

1) **Alves, H. (2010):** Researcher Helena Alves (2010) sought to better understand the components and measurements of the concept of value. In the course of her investigative study, Alves (2010) developed a measurement tool for perceived value for higher education using a unidimensional approach. Value can be viewed as a tradeoff or comparison between benefits and sacrifices. Five dimensions of value were proposed to measure perceived value: functional value, social value, emotional value, epistemic value, and conditional value. These dimensions were used to develop four survey question focuses for measuring perceived value: 1) how it relates to a
person’s future goals, 2) if it is worth the trade-off of quality/time spent, 3) how it compares with alternatives, and 4) how it relates to the person’s emotions. The instrument used for this study utilizes these variables for the questions asked in the survey, specially addressing:

a. Perceived value of a COP in relation to the participant’s future goals.

b. Perceived value of a COP in relation to the trade-off of time spent.

c. Perceived value of a COP in comparison to other faculty development models.

d. Perceived value of a COP based on emotion.

2) Jayakumar, G. & Sulthan, A. (2014): To reveal the employee perception on training and development programs, researchers Jayakumar and Sulthan (2014) employed and tested models of employee perception and offered suggestions to their industry on how to improve such programs. As a component of their models, the researchers assess for the perception of value using four of the questions on their survey, two of which, as Alves (2010) proposed, assess perceived value in relation to the trade-off of time spent. The other two components used to assess perceived value of training and development in this study is 1) the relation to its practical use on the job and 2) if it will provide learning that will help them get rewarded or a promotion. The questions used in Jayakumar & Sulthan (2014) were modified to the appropriate context for the current study to align with USU faculty teaching expectations, specifically addressing:

a. If participation in a COP would positively impact their ability to assist with student questions
b. If participation in a COP would positively impact their ability to assess student work

c. If participation in a COP would positively impact their ability to engage with students’ in the discussion boards

d. If participation in a COP would increase their overall confidence in teaching

To provide qualitative context and better investigate the research question, open-ended questions will be placed throughout the survey. The participants will be asked directly if they prefer an online, collaborative-based faculty development over other methods and will be asked to describe how they prefer to receive information and how they prefer to develop online teaching skills. In addition, to uncover deeper layers to perceived value, under the construct of Holbrook (1999), the participants will be asked how valuable a COP experience would be for their own professional development. Finally, to build upon the responses in the rater-scale section, the participants will be asked how important collaboration is to them in their own practice as well as if they currently feel part of the USU community. The matrix below, Table 3.1, displays the relationship of the studies research question overarching themes and the alignments between the questions asked in the survey.

Table 3.1

Matrix of Research Themes Aligned to Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question Themes</th>
<th>Aligned Survey Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme #1: Demographics</td>
<td>26, 27, 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme #2: Adjunct Classification</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme #3: Perceived Value</td>
<td>9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strategies for Data Analysis

Following the convergent design, the two sets of data (quantitative and qualitative) will be first analyzed separately to make meaning of the data, then the results will be merged for
interpretation in relation to the research question. Under the quantitative lens, the responses from the rater-scale questions will be collected, exported to an Excel spreadsheet, and saved as a CSV file. Using the R software, the data will be imported to obtain descriptive statistics. A statistical model for differences between groups will be used to test for significance. ANOVA, or the analysis of variance, is a statistical model used to compare several means/more than two conditions (Field, Field, & Miles, 2012). ANOVA can provide a statistical test of significance between groups of faculty representing different academic disciplines and their perceived value of collaborative faculty development.

For the qualitative data collected in the open-ended questions of the survey, a coding process will be employed to reveal any themes or patterns in relation to the research question. Due to the nature of the electronic, online survey environment, the qualitative responses will be automatically transcribed and imported into an Excel worksheet. The data from the Excel worksheet will be transferred into a Word document and saved as a plain text file (.txt). The plain text file will be imported into the R Qualitative Data Analysis (RQDA) software for coding and analysis. RQDA is a package within the R system. Through the coding, themes will be identified, which are similar codes aggregated together which form a major idea in the database (Creswell, 2008). Descriptions of the themes will be provided in relation to the research question through a narrative discussion.

To ensure trustworthiness and authenticity in the analysis of data, strategies of triangulation and member checking will be used to validate the qualitative and quantitative accounts. Triangulation, which is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, will be used to enhance the accuracy, as well as the robustness and comprehensiveness of the study. Already embedded in the design of the study, using more than
one method can better shed light on a phenomenon, and using mixed methods helps to facilitate deeper understanding (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Methods triangulation, also embedded in the design of the study, will speak to the consistency of findings generated from the two different methods of collecting data, the qualitative open-ended-questions, and the quantitative Likert scale questions which make up the survey instrument. Once data is obtained and assessed, a matrix of findings and the sources that the data was obtained from, to reflect the triangulation process will be provided in chapter four. Finally, the process of member checking will be used, which involves asking one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the report (Creswell, 2008).

**Limitations and Delimiters**

While the possible contribution of this research may deepen the understanding of adjunct faculty perceived value, the consideration that it stands as one of the few studies in this area is essential. Limited research on faculty perceived value of communities of practice also limited the available instruments to assess the research focus. To validate the findings of this study, it will be important for other research in this area to continue.

A limitation of the current study is the sample size. Creswell (2008) suggests a sample size of 350 for survey type research studies, however, the current adjunct faculty body at USU falls short of that number with 151 active faculty as of the beginning of 2019. Ideally, the current study would benefit from a larger sample of adjunct faculty to collect data from as it could be better representative of the population, however, the institutional study and review of literature call for an immediate need to assess this area. It could be possible to replicate the study once the institution grows larger in size over time or at other institutions of higher education.

Additionally, a limitation of this study is the unequal representation of faculty across academic disciplines at USU. As the largest program at USU is the Master of Science in Nursing,
it also represents the largest group of adjunct faculty. The unequal amounts of faculty representing each of the disciplines in the institution can be viewed as a limitation, as more faculty to represent each of the areas could contribute to stronger results.

**Positionality**

A discussion of positionality of myself as the researcher in relation to the current study is essential to ensuring validity. I currently work directly with all of the adjunct faculty at USU. In my role as the academic services coordinator/faculty support manager within the Office of the Provost, I am involved with and manage every stage of the adjunct faculty lifecycle. This includes hiring and onboarding, training, writing and managing their teaching contracts, course assignments, payroll, consulting, all the way through to the point of them renewing contracts for the following year. The adjunct faculty are aware of my involvement and influence on their positions at USU, which may influence how they choose to respond to the study questionnaire. Ensuring confidentiality of their responses will be vital, and providing a statement in the informed consent indicating that their involvement in the study will have no impact on their employment with USU.

Another consideration of positionality in relation to myself as the researcher to the current study are my various roles involving adjunct faculty I have had while employed at USU. I became a part-time adjunct faculty member while also in the full-time role as academic advisor at USU, before moving to my current position at the institution. This identity influenced my research topic choice, as first working with faculty as a student advisor and advocate, then experiencing the role as an adjunct faculty, to then becoming involved with faculty management provided a holistic view, prompting me to conduct further research in this area. As an academic advisor, I was immersed into the student views on and experiences with the adjunct faculty. As a first-time adjunct faculty member, I was able to experience the types of resources and support
provided by the institution. Finally, as the academic services coordinator/faculty support manager, I am involved in all aspects of the adjunct faculty experience at USU and have listened to many personal accounts describing their needs. The collection of these experiences, in addition to the institutional study, brought the gap in faculty development at USU to my attention and helped form my interest in pursuing this study.

Finally, my positionality in regard to my personal philosophy of higher education was also a major influencer in pursuing this study. All of my efforts in this field, whether it be towards practice or scholarship, share a common driving force surrounded by my passion for student education achievement and success, with a further focus on the “non-traditional” student. I believe that the role teaching faculty have in the quality of education a student receives is so closely intertwined that an equal weight of importance should also be placed on the development of faculty. Online education provides an alternative option for some, but for others is the only option for education due to time and money restraints or other personal responsibilities which prevents one from attending classes on a campus. I find it to be a disservice to the student if an institution does not ensure that faculty have the tools to best teach and demonstrate the learning outcomes of any particular subject. While there are numerous strategies to increase faculty development for online teaching but not one exact right answer that applies to all, the purpose of this research is to explore one empirically supported route in hopes of promoting excellence in teaching and demonstrated efforts towards fulfilment of the mission at United States University.

**Conclusion**

Chapter three has provided a comprehensive illustration of all steps and actions taken in order to complete the current study. First, methods of inquiry and the convergent design were discussed under the theoretical lens, including insight into the studies' paradigmatic roots. Next, a description of the instrument used and plan for data collection was provided, with a depiction
of the target population for the study. Finally, the intended analysis strategies are described in relation to the two methods of collecting data and the chapter concludes with insight into the limitations and positionality of the researcher. The overall plan, or methodology, has been presented to serve as guidelines for conducting the data collection and analysis portion of the current study.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Integration

Introduction

This chapter will cover the data analysis and integration of the current study. The study seeks to both understand the adjunct faculty perceived value of the community of practice (COP)
model and determine if a significant difference exists between faculty representing three academic disciplines. In response to the need to address regional accreditation requirements and the gap in professional development for the adjunct faculty of USU, the purpose is to both inform the implementation and enhancement of faculty development initiatives and programming as well as to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the adjunct faculty perspectives. While the previous chapters have situated the research problem into the context of USU and provided a review of literature to guide the development of the methodology and design of the study, chapter four will present the results by way of narrative discussion under the lens of the unidirectional framework for convergent design integration (Fetters & Moseholmm, 2017). In order to create a holistic illustration of the faculty participants, developed through a review of relevant literature, three main components were identified and will serve as the main sections of this chapter: demographics, adjunct classification, and perceived value.

**Demographics**

Of the 176 adjunct faculty invited to participate in the study, 73 responses were received. Of the 73, four participants did not respond to the majority of questions resulting in the decision to reduce the sample to 69 total. The ages of the participants ranged from 31 years old to 74 years old, with an average of 49 years of age. Participant data was grouped based on their respective colleges within USU, the College of Business and Technology (COBT), the College of Education (COE), and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CONHS). For the purpose of clarity, participants from COBT will be referenced as ‘business faculty’, COE as ‘education faculty’, and CONHS as ‘nursing and health science faculty’.

When asked to report their gender identity (Table 4.1.1) and ethnic group (Table 4.1.2), respondents were provided an open answer option rather than pre-selected categories to select
from. While the study’s variables for analysis did not focus on gender or ethnic groups, the choice to allow for free-response aligns with the overall purpose of better understanding the participants from their own perspectives and allowing them to describe their identity under these two categories.

Table 4.1.1

*Gender Identity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Identity</th>
<th>Rate of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Female”</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“She”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Woman”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Male”</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cisgender Male”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1.2

*Ethnic Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Rate of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American; Black; Black/African-American</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian; Caucasian-American; White; Non-Hispanic-White</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian; Asian-American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic; Hispanic Mexican-American</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian and Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adjunct Classification

The adjunct classification inquiries provided insight into how the participants self-characterized their professional identities. This section allows for further context into the uniqueness of the faculty participants. The participants were asked to report their years of experience in adjunct teaching, their highest earned degree, if they had a full-time job outside of their adjunct position at USU, if they held other adjunct teaching positions outside of USU, and the primary reason why they work as a part-time adjunct faculty. An option to explain “other” reasons as to why they work as a part-time adjunct faculty was provided to the participants, and the responses are reflected in table 4.7.

Table 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Adjunct Experience</th>
<th>All Participants</th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 or more</td>
<td>15.28%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>11.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>36.29%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>11.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5</td>
<td>26.39%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer than 2</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>7.96%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Earned Degree</th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>27.78%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
<td>26.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D., Ed.D, or</td>
<td>69.44%</td>
<td>76.47%</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
<td>71.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other terminal
degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>73.61%</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
<td>80.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.39%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>19.05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5

Other Adjunct Positions Outside of USU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>70.59%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.56%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>61.54%</td>
<td>64.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6

Primary Reason Why Participants Pursued Adjunct Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>All participants</th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>COE</th>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prefer part-time work</td>
<td>4.17%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to obtain a full-time teaching position</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>9.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already have a full-time job</td>
<td>20.83%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>28.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need part-time work to fit the demands of personal life</td>
<td>26.39%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31.94%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
<td>23.81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reasons for Adjunct Teaching Open Response Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COBT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoy the students’ and helping them learn.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m retired. For a number of years I worked full time and taught as an adjunct (did teach full time at one point). Now I just enjoy teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To continue teaching, interacting with students’ and learning even though I have otherwise retired”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I like teaching and it fits with my schedule”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Take pride in assisting future scholars achieve their goals and keeping my academic skills sharp.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Teaching experience”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoy working with preservice teachers”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoy providing instruction to adults.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I like teaching and providing information to others”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I enjoy cobbled together several part time jobs as I can earn more than at one single full time job. Also, it is nice to be exposed to a variety of processes, policies, student types, subject matter opportunities, and philosophies across institutions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was a full-time online professor but lost job due to the university’s restructuring and saving money. So, now I need to earn through part-time teaching and with the hope that I will get a full-time teaching job online soon.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I want to pursue a full-time position at USU”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I love to teach and prefer master’s students’. I plan to teach for USU as an adjunct faculty member on a consistent basis.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Enjoy teaching”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was asked by a friend if would help as I have experience in online nursing education”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“personally not ready for full retirement so this keeps me active”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Online”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To give back to nursing”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Opportunities to teach subject I have an interest in”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Enjoy teaching and it provides library access.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like to retire from my full-time job at the hospital and work solely as a distance-learning professor, and travel the world.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Value

As prescribed by the convergent design of the study, the quantitative results and qualitative findings were first analyzed separately by way of statistical testing and thematic coding, respectively, then were merged together to identify areas of convergence and divergence, as well as to comprehensively address the research question. Under the unidirectional framework of convergent design integration, the data was merged for comparison, using the qualitative findings to provide a more in-depth understanding of the quantitative results.

For the quantitative data, in order to test if a significant difference exists between the respondents of the three groups, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed for questions related to perceived value. Then, to identify common themes in the qualitative data, the coding method was utilized. As a result of coding the qualitative data, themes were identified and categorized as either:

- direct responses related to perceived value,
- value tangibles, which are benefits that are a result of the situation, or
- preferences in relation to the mode in which the professional development program is provided.

Statements from each of these thematic categories will be intertwined with the quantitative results to both highlight areas of agreement and/or incongruence, and to enhance the depth of insight into the participant perspective.

The statistical results and thematic findings are then aligned under the dimensions identified during the survey design phase: “epistemic value”, “functional value”, “trade-off of time spent”, “social value”, “emotional value”, “comparison to alternatives”, and “future goals”. Additionally, data retrieved from both the quantitative and qualitative sections that directly inquired about value or importance are categorized generally as “perceived value”.
Direct Inquiries of Perceived Value

Participants were directly asked, by both quantitative and qualitative means, to report their perceived value of training and development for online teaching, collaborating with faculty outside of their discipline, and engagement with faculty in an online environment. Data was collected by means of Likert scale questions as well as two open-response questions directly related to perceived value.

**Online teaching training and development.** Participants by way of a Likert scale rated the level of importance of having training and development for online teaching and pedagogies.

Table 4.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Importance of Training and Development Related to Online Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-</td>
<td>0.9361</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4681</td>
<td>0.7041</td>
<td>0.4982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-</td>
<td>43.8755</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.6648</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.8116</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was not a significant difference in the responses between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in regards to online pedagogy training and development at \( p < .05 \) level for the three conditions \( [F(2, 66)=0.7041, p=1.4982] \).

**Multi-disciplinary collaboration.** Participants rated the level of importance of collaborating and engaging with faculty outside of their discipline.

Table 4.10

*Importance of Collaboration and Engagement with Faculty in Outside Disciplines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>42.50%</td>
<td>37.50%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Importance of Collaboration and Engagement with Faculty in Outside Disciplines*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>(F) Statistic</th>
<th>(P)-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>1.6135</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8068</td>
<td>0.9928</td>
<td>.376003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>53.6328</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.8126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55.2464</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of importance of collaboration with other faculty at the \( p < .05 \) level for the three conditions \( [F(2, 66)=0.9928, p= .376003] \). Consistent with this
statistical analysis, participants across all three groups found multi-disciplinary collaboration with faculty to be important.

**Business Faculty**

“I love learning from others and putting together hybrid ideas.”

“Yes, because we don't exist in a bubble and many other industries and disciplines can augment current knowledge”

“Yes - collaboration with practitioners is helpful because it combines real time and theory.”

**Education Faculty**

“Collaboration is so important to developing a teaching approach that benefits all learners. It helps me to see things from various points of view and not limit instruction to what I know and understand.”

“yes- collaboration is the key to success just as it is to the students’ in our program- within my discipline would be most beneficial”

“Yes, collaboration is key because it allows us to learn from one another, and refine and enhance our craft.”

**Nursing and Health Science Faculty**

“I find it to be very beneficial to collaborate with other professionals, from a variety of disciplines, as both nursing and teaching require a community to be successful.”

“Yes, as a Nurse Practitioner collaboration is an important part of my practice. No one provider can be expert at all aspects of patient care, the same holds true for educators.”

“Yes, by collaborating with other practitioners, it is important to learn how other faculty members teach and whether they were successful in their methods. Students’ benefits from shared collaboration.”

**Connecting with faculty in an online environment.** The final direct inquiry requested participants to report their perceived value of having an opportunity to connect and engage with USU faculty within an online platform.

Table 4.12
Perceived Value of the Opportunity to Connect with USU Faculty in an Online Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Moderately Important</th>
<th>Slightly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>56.25%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>58.33%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>52.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Value of the Opportunity to Connect with USU Faculty in an Online Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>1.3672</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6836</td>
<td>1.01696</td>
<td>.367375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>43.6917</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.6722</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45.0588</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the value of connecting and engaging in an online environment with other USU faculty at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=1.01696, p= .367375].

Qualitative responses from Business Faculty regarding how important an opportunity to engage with other USU adjunct faculty were mixed, with half indicating that it would be of value to them, while the other half indicated that it would not be of value to them.

Table 4.14

Business Faculty Responses Indicating Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements Indicating Value</th>
<th>Statements Indicating Low Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
“highly valuable. I believe that knowledge sharing and community is the only way to consistently grow both as a faculty member and an institution. Also, it strengthens confidence and skills in aspiring full-time faculty which serves as a source of training and development.”

“I am willing to participate in any aspect of professional development in my area of study; however, I am not interested in general engagement if the process is designed to take away academic freedom. For example, learning and hearing about new ideas is always good but as a professor, by skills learned along with my proven effectiveness as an online professor comes from learning from my students’ and their needs based on classes I teach. From experience in similar cases as suggested in this case, all I have seen them do is have attempts for someone to tell me how to teach my classes.”

“It would be valuable to get other perspectives and tips from faculty who may have encountered different situations.”

“It would not very valuable. As an adjunct who works at multiple universities, each seems to require more and more outside classroom work and it is becoming overwhelming and most does not seem to directly benefit me.”

“It would provide confidence, new and relevant ideas and perspectives, find out what is going on in various industries”

“Marginal. Have found little value in this over the years. If it is done in person, that is a different matter.”

Education faculty also had mixed results, although the majority of respondents indicated that collaboration with other USU faculty would be of value to them, while a few of the respondents reported that the opportunity would be of low value.

Table 4.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Faculty Responses Indicating Value</th>
<th>Statements Indicating Low Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“It would be extremely valuable because it would make me more aware of best practices and provide me with a platform to ask questions to answer situations that I may have.”</td>
<td>“I really am an auto-didactic learner and prefer autonomous vs. community engagement with professional development. So... I may be an anomaly. As an introvert, I really prefer to go it solo. That is one of the reasons I am drawn to online teaching.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very beneficial to determine how staff balances their time, uses the online learning</td>
<td>“I would say moderately important. I feel pretty confident in my abilities, but would</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


classroom program (often I am unsure of all its capabilities) and how interactive they are on a daily basis.”

always say I can learn more from others. There are a few areas I could see getting other ideas from peer faculty would be valuable, but because many of us most likely have a full time position elsewhere, collaboration can be difficult to engage in.”

“It would be extremely beneficial because I personally feel that I would be able to learn from others.”

“I am new to USU, so I would not be comfortable doing this as of yet.”

Finally, Nursing faculty, all with the exception of three, indicated that collaboration with other USU faculty would be of value to them.

Table 4.16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements Indicating Value</th>
<th>Statements Indicating Low Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Very valuable. I believe knowledge is power and by engaging with other faculty, you can learn from them.”</td>
<td>“As a master teacher with 35 years of teaching under my belt I have lots I could share but as a semi retired educator the rest of the engagement is not that important”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The ability to engage and learn from adjunct faculty would be very valuable.”</td>
<td>“It would be distracting from my primary practice and not provide any value.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very high. I think having an environment to ask questions and share experiences with colleagues would be helpful for all”</td>
<td>“No. I work full time and teach online as an adjunct at the invitation of the university. Anything outside of the classroom would push me away from the university.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Epistemic Value**

**Knowledge Acquisition.** Perceptions involving epistemic value were obtained both quantitatively and qualitatively. Participants rated their level of agreement with the statement: “A community of practice would increase my knowledge of online teaching pedagogies and best practices, and how to apply them in the classroom.”

Table 4.17

| Perceived Relationship of Community of Practice and Knowledge Acquisition |
Table 4.18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>5.1597</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5798</td>
<td>2.89661</td>
<td>.062258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>58.7824</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>0.8906</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63.942</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the statement regarding an “increase in knowledge” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=0.9928, p=.376003]. In agreement with the quantitative analysis, when asked how valuable the opportunity to directly engage and learn from other USU faculty would be, a common theme found across all groups was the value tangible of “knowledge sharing”, which included statements indicating epistemic value. Grouped together under the thematic category of “knowledge sharing” were statements such as “sharing of ideas”, “new ideas”, “learning together”, and “learning from each other”. While the participants from the College of Education and College of Nursing made more
positive statements, those from the College of Business had a mix of both positive and negative responses. Evidence of such statements are reflected in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19
Evidence of Perceived Epistemic Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>“I love learning from others and putting together hybrid ideas.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It would be valuable to get other perspectives and tips from faculty who may have encountered different situations.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It's important to collaborate with those outside of a discipline to get some possible new solutions to old problems, or to recognize problems previously unrecognized.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Having the opportunity to learn from and engage with other USU faculty would not be very valuable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I am not sure because this is a new concept. However, I feel that most of the work that we accomplish is individual and based on the topics that we teach; therefore, the benefits may be minimal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Marginal. Have found little value in this over the years. If it is done in person, that is a different matter.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| COE  | “It is always helpful to learn from others who have more experience and receive direct feedback for situations others have encountered. Overall, it makes for a stronger faculty.” |
|      | “It would be extremely beneficial because I personally feel that I would be able to learn from others.” |
|      | “Sharing "best practices" is always a valuable opportunity to learn.” |

| CONHS | “It's valuable as you share the knowledge, skills and expertise so each one will learn from each other.” |
|       | “I believe it is important to continuously improve, learn new instructional skills, and enhance your pedagogical strategies with other members of the faculty.” |
|       | “Very high. I think having an environment to ask questions and share experiences with colleagues would be helpful for all” |

Functional Value
Both quantitative and qualitative data aligned to the category of functional value are sub-categorized as either applicable to their professional practice or their ability to support students’.

**Application to Professional Practice.** Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on the statement: “Having the opportunity to participate in an online community of USU faculty would be valuable to me in my current practice.”

Table 4.20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>5.0603</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5301</td>
<td>2.05796</td>
<td>.12278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>81.1426</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.2294</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>86.2029</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the statement regarding “student questions” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=2.05796, p=.12278].

**Ability to Support Students’**. Responses related to supporting and teaching students’ in the classroom were further categorized as their ability to answer student questions, engage in the discussion boards, and assess student work.

**Answering Student Questions.** Participants were asked if participating in a COP would allow them to better answer student questions.

Table 4.21

*Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Ability to Answer Student Questions*
Table 4.22

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline-Perceived Relationship between Participation in COP and Ability to Answer Student Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>3.6361</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.818</td>
<td>1.7074</td>
<td>.189248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>70.277</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.0648</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.913</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the statement regarding “student questions” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=1.7074, p=.189248].

Discussion Boards Engagement. Participants were asked if participating in a COP would help them be more effective in engaging with students’ in the discussion boards.

Table 4.23

Perceived Relationship between Participating in a COP and Discussion Board Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the statement regarding “discussion board engagement” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=2.49022, p= .090651].

**Assessment and Feedback.** Participants were asked if participating in a COP would help them be more effective at assessment and providing feedback on student work.

Table 4.25

**Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Assessment Abilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-</td>
<td>5.597</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7985</td>
<td>2.49022</td>
<td>.090651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-</td>
<td>74.171</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.1238</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79.768</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.24

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Relationship between Participating in a COP and Discussion Board Engagement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-</td>
<td>5.597</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7985</td>
<td>2.49022</td>
<td>.090651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-</td>
<td>74.171</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.1238</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>79.768</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Assessment Abilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>3.7408</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.8704</td>
<td>1.76137</td>
<td>.179789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>70.0853</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.0619</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.8261</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the statement regarding “student assessment and feedback” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=1.76137, p=.179789]. The qualitative data aligned with “functional value” referenced personal value tangibles, or personal benefits that are a result of the experience, the respondents ability to better support students’, scholarship and research benefits, and the transmission of their professional practice into their teaching. In agreement with the statistical analyses, the participants across all three groups discussed the functional value of engaging and collaborating with and learning from other faculty.

Table 4.27

Evidence of Perceived Functional Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>“I believe collaboration with other faculty is important, especially when dealing with students’ in person”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“There may be transferable skills that you can gain from having knowledge of other disciplines that you can bring into your own practices as a faculty member.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes - collaboration with practitioners is helpful because it combines real time and theory.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Collaboration with other practitioners is important when it comes to”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>presentations/scholarly writing” and to “keep up with regulations and changing laws.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It would be extremely valuable because it would make me more aware of best practices and provide me with a platform to ask questions to answer situations that I may have.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very beneficial to determine how staff balances their time, uses the online learning classroom program (often I am unsure of all its capabilities) and how interactive they are on a daily basis”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I prefer to learn from my peers rather than an outside guest speaker because my peers have the knowledge and experience of using D2L and understand our student population. Online teaching encompasses cultural sensitivity as well as content knowledge and USU has a diverse adjunct staff with many years of experience in different fields.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, because practitioners have different levels of skills and expertise that should be shared to improve teaching and learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Collaboration with other practitioners outside of my field is not required or will not directly help me in my field but can indirectly help me in my field. For example, I collaborated with faculties from Environmental Science in another school and through it I learned all sorts of statistical techniques that can be used in such studies; I was collaborating with other faculties about assessing students’ and then learning about student assessment, data collection, data evaluation. So, through all such collaborations, I learn, get to publish research papers and network. Thus, collaboration with others is important to me personally.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This interaction would improve my ability to become a better instructor”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Having access to other faculty members would allow me to have a network to throw out a scenario to ask for feedback, such as, &quot;I have repeatedly told the student to use Brainfuse, they refuse to do so and have the same issues week after week. What next?&quot;”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It would be very helpful as I need some tips in being more efficient at grading, and I feel an online community of practice could share their tips.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Collaborating with faculty makes me more effective in my practice roles.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think people with an education background could give a lot of helpful insight.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, by collaborating with other practitioners, it is important to learn how other faculty members teach and whether they were successful in their methods.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived Value as Trade-off of Time Spent

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on: “The time spent participating in an online community of USU faculty would be time well spent.”

Table 4.28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trade-Off of Time Spent</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>20.00%</td>
<td>52.50%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.29

One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline-Trade-Off of Time Spent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>4.5548</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2774</td>
<td>2.17259</td>
<td>.12196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>69.1843</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.0482</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.7391</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated the level of agreement on the time spent at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=2.17259, p=.12196]. Time spent or the trade off of time for
value was not mentioned frequently in the qualitative data set, but rather, the notion of time as a barrier to professional development overall as reflected in the statements below:

**Business Faculty**

“It would not very valuable. As an adjunct who works at multiple universities, each seems to require more and more outside classroom work and it is becoming overwhelming and most does not seem to directly benefit me.”

**Education Faculty**

“I would say moderately important. I feel pretty confident in my abilities, but would always say I can learn more from others. There are a few areas I could see getting other ideas from peer faculty would be valuable, but because many of us most likely have a full time position elsewhere, collaboration can be difficult to engage in.”

**Nursing and Health Science Faculty**

“I am required to engage with, learn from, and share my expertise in my other adjunct positions. I would value the option to participate with USU but do not want it to be required as my time is limited and I have access to resources from other institutions.”

**Social Value**

With the intent of obtaining perspectives related to social value, participants were asked by means of a Likert scale if participating in a COP would make them feel more a part of the USU community. Additionally, qualitative data related to social value are integrated into the analysis.

Table 4.30

**Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Sense of Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>69.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>52.50%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.31
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Sense of Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>6.1691</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0845</td>
<td>2.58676</td>
<td>.082878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>78.7005</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.1924</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84.8696</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated their level of agreement with the statement regarding “feel a part of the USU Community” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=2.58676, p=.082878]. In the qualitative data set, the category “social value” included statements involving relationship building and community. Reflected in Table 4.32 and in agreement with the statistical analysis, participants across all three groups made positive statements indicating social value.

Table 4.32

Evidence of Perceived Social Value

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>“Collaborations with other faculty would be highly valuable. I believe that knowledge sharing and community is the only way to consistently grow both as a faculty member and an institution.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“For me, it is more about being part of a community than it is learning from one another. I have been in online higher education for a long time.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>“Engagement with USU faculty would strengthen professional relationships and foster collaboration between USU faculty and myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“An opportunity to engage with other USU faculty will be very important because it will be an opportunity not only to learn but also to network and form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
even friendship.”

“There is a feeling of isolation because you are given a course to teach and at the completion of the session, you are asked your availability for the next course and then move on. Being a part of a community will greatly enhance productivity and the feeling of connection to the university and others.”

“It could be very beneficial, depending on the level of involvement from others in the community. My experience with many of these online communities is that many people join, but very few engage, and so the benefit is limited.”

**Emotional Value**

Inquiries related to confidence and enjoyment are categorized under the lens of emotional value.

**Confidence in Teaching.** Participants were asked to consider if participating in a COP would make them feel more confident in teaching.

Table 4.33

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>17.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.34

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Sense of Confidence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated their level of agreement the statement regarding “confidence” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions \([F(2, 66)=1.45074, p=\, .241774]\).

**Enjoyment.** Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on the statement: “I would enjoy participating in an online community of USU faculty”

Table 4.35

*Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Sense of Enjoyment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>6.25%</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>18.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>55.00%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.36

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline-Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Sense of Enjoyment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>2.9193</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4596</td>
<td>1.46978</td>
<td>.237633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in how they rated their level of agreement of the statement regarding “enjoyment” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions \(F(2, 66)=1.46978, p=.237633\).

References inferring emotional value did not appear in the qualitative data collected, with the exception of one Business Faculty:

“[Participating in a COP] strengthens confidence and skills in aspiring full-time faculty which serves as a source of training and development.”

Comparison to Alternatives

Participants were asked if, compared to other autonomous forms of faculty development, learning within an online community of USU faculty can provide better value.

Table 4.38
Perceived Value as a Comparison to Alternative Professional Development Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>38.46%</td>
<td>46.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>5.00%</td>
<td>2.50%</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>15.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.39
One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Value as a Comparison to Alternative Professional Development Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>2.6553</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3277</td>
<td>1.31474</td>
<td>.275485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>66.649</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1.0098</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69.3043</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in their responses related to comparing alternative models at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=1.31474, p=.275485]. The qualitative data set did not include any statements referencing a comparison to other modes of faculty development models, with the exception of the open-responses to the question regarding their preference in mode and delivery of professional development, which is discussed later in the chapter.

**Future Goals**

Participants were asked if having the opportunity to participate in an online community of USU faculty would help to achieve future goals.

**Table 4.40**

*Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Achievement of Future Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COBT</td>
<td>5.88%</td>
<td>17.65%</td>
<td>23.53%</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
<td>11.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COE</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>30.77%</td>
<td>53.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONHS</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>7.50%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>47.50%</td>
<td>12.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.41**

*One-Way Analysis of Variance of Participants Responses by College/Discipline- Perceived Relationship between Participation in a COP and Achievement of Future Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F Statistic</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between-treatments</td>
<td>Within-treatments</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5053</td>
<td>80.1324</td>
<td>86.6377</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2527</td>
<td>1.2141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.67902</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.076091</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was not a significant difference between faculty amongst the three different Colleges/Disciplines in their rating of the statement regarding “achievement of future goals” at the p<.05 level for the three conditions [F(2, 66)=2.67902, p=.076091]. References to “future goals” only appeared in the College of Business and College of Nursing and Health Sciences data sets, but were absent from the College of Education. The “future goals” category included statements involving personal “growth” and “self-improvement”.

Table 4.42

Evidence of Perceived Relation of COP Participation to Future Goal Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COBT</th>
<th>CONHSS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I believe that knowledge sharing and community is the only way to consistently grow both as a faculty member and an institution. Also, it strengthens confidence and skills in aspiring full-time faculty which serves as a source of training and development.”</td>
<td>“It give value to our success and career. It would provide additional opportunities of growth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It grows skills and knowledge outside your own discipline making you much more well-rounded as an instructor”</td>
<td>“I believe it is important to continuously improve, learn new instructional skills, and enhance your pedagogical strategies with other members of the faulty.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Also, it strengthens confidence and skills in aspiring full-time faculty which serves as a source of training and development”</td>
<td>“It would be valuable to my professional development to learn from other online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
faculty, as it would provide another forum for growth. It is often helpful to hear other experiences and find new resources that might not otherwise be discovered.”

“Collaborating with faculty in other disciplines helps me to grow and connect”

*No applicable data

**Collaboration as required by the discipline**

A common reference to collaboration being a required function within the discipline was mentioned frequently by the Nursing and Health Sciences faculty. While the theme did not fit in the aforementioned categories, the frequency in which it was cited made it relevant to include in the data analysis chapter, as it provides insight into academic disciplinary commonalities and differences as well as enhances the overall understanding of the adjunct faculty perspective and needs in the position.

“I find it to be very beneficial to collaborate with other professionals, from a variety of disciplines, as both nursing and teaching require a community to be successful.”

“As a Nurse Practitioner collaboration is an important part of my practice. No one provider can be expert at all aspects of patient care, the same holds true for educators.”

“Collaboration with other practitioners in and outside my practice discipline is necessary in order to better serve my patients, or students’. Collaboration and expert opinion in other disciplines outside of my knowledge may develop my knowledge base and help change my treatment plan, or reinforce my practice.”

“Collaboration is key to quality and continuity of care these days”

“Absolutely, as a health care provider, collaboration with other practitioners is a life-line to your success in practice.”

**Preferences and Considerations in Mode of Delivery of Professional Development**

The final open-response question allowed the participants to report their preferred mode of delivery of professional development. A notable difference in preferences did not appear amongst the faculty across the three disciplines, but rather, similarities across all disciplines were present. However, for the purpose of further informing the development of such programming at
a higher education institution, common themes are discussed. While many faculty noted various types of training modes that they prefer such as “classroom-based”, “webinar”, “conferences”, and “in-person meetings”, the most common consideration mentioned across all disciplines was the need for faculty development programming to be asynchronous, with flexibility in time options:

**Business Faculty**

“My preference is for training and development to be offered asynchronously - I need the flexibility”

“I prefer self-paced, asynchronous training in my role as an adjunct. As an adjunct, we are paid so very little and given so little consideration. As such, any demands on my time that are not remunerated feel like an encroachment. Provide more opportunity and financial commitment and I will reciprocate by organizing my time to align with those commitments made to me.”

**Education Faculty**

“Asynchronously is my preference. I enjoy the adjunct faculty position because I can, like my students’, pace my time according to my personal schedule.”

“I prefer asynchronous activities that can be done when convenient”

“I prefer it the way it was done at USU -- at our own pace; to the point training about USU’s mission, history, values, using the LMS. I do not like trainings that are time constrained; graded strictly. It will also be nice if faculties are paid some money for the training.”

**Nursing and Health Science Faculty**

“I prefer online asynchronous training as I can participate in my own time.”

“I prefer to work at my own pace.”

“I prefer asynchronous online direction for training. I can progress at my own pace and refer back to a section if I need to refresh my knowledge.

Additionally, faculty frequently reported the importance of mode and content options:

**Business Faculty**

“I prefer to have multiple options and then choose what is best for the time.”
“Both facilitated / live and self paced - a combo is good for experience, learning and Schedules.”

**Education Faculty**

“I prefer professional development delivered in multiple ways, including on-site and web-based trainings. It would be beneficial to use the tools that we use for instruction to provide professional development.”

“I prefer multiple modalities”

**Nursing and Health Science Faculty**

“The online environment can feel one dimensional, using multiple methods: written, face-to-face and web media.”

“Zoom meetings, videos, quick reference guides.”

**Conclusion**

The data analysis process, as guided by the convergent mixed methods nature of the design, involved a separate analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data sets. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed to obtain the statistical analysis and to test for significance in the difference between the responses of faculty amongst the three disciplines: Business, Education, and Nursing and Health Sciences. As a result of the statistical analysis, a significant difference was not found between how the faculty amongst the three disciplines perceived the value of online collaboration with faculty in a community environment.

From the qualitative end, the coding process was enacted to identify common themes in the written, open-response data collected in the survey. The themes were first categorized into three groups: direct responses related to perceived value, value tangibles, and preferences in faculty development program mode and delivery, then were further categorized with the ‘dimensions of value’ to allow for thoughtful integration with the quantitative results. Integration of the two data sets were then compared to identify areas of convergence and divergence.
The purpose of pursuing a mixed methods convergent design was to enhance the level of context to better inform the research question. The qualitative data helped to both confirm the statistical analysis of the quantitative data as well as helped to provide the participants thought-process behind their reported perceptions. The intent of the study is to better understand the adjunct faculty to best serve their professional development needs as well as to address the limited research in academic disciplinary differences in perceived value. The convergent design provided insight into this purpose, and further discussion on its implications to the field of higher education will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

At the commencement of the current study, the institution was under pressure to ensure compliance to accreditation standards, specifically those needing to be addressed in an upcoming site visit to determine the status of the University. At that time, the institution was under a “notice of concern” with its regional accreditor, and providing evidence of student support across the institution was a major focus. While there are many factors involved in what student support entails, the role of faculty is crucial. Research shows that the absence of faculty involvement and buy-in can limit the ability to successfully implement student success initiatives, as faculty are at
the center of student success (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Therefore, ensuring the faculty are provided with professional development and support structure to enable them to provide excellence in teaching is imperative.

Through a gap analysis, the lack of faculty development programming was identified, particularly for those represented by the majority group of faculty at USU, *adjunct faculty*. Aligning with the trends in higher education identified by Clinefelter, Magda, & Poulin (2015), USU adjunct faculty, beyond their teaching roles, are also actively involved in curriculum development, assessment of student and program learning outcomes, and governance, but are not afforded the professional development to support those additional academic responsibilities. Therefore, to ensure the adjunct faculty members are able to both effectively support student learning and maintain other academic responsibilities, an evidenced-based approach to faculty development programming is essential. To achieve this and to yield the optimal results, making the efforts to first understand the needs, barriers, and characterizations of the intended audience is essential. When implementing faculty professional development programming, a review of literature emphasized the need to 1) consider the uniqueness of faculty members, both individually and by discipline and 2) ground the programming within evidenced-based practices. Situated learning theory and community of practice theory served as the guiding theoretical frameworks. While the Community of Practice model fits well into the current structure of USU being an online-based institution with primarily remote faculty, it was essential to assess its appropriateness through the eyes of the audience it is intended for. Obtaining the perceived value of the audience will provide insight into their future involvement and buy-in of a program, as well as may provide considerations for how the program is designed. Therefore, in order to obtain a holistic and comprehensive understanding of their perceived value of a Community of
Practice model, specifically through an academic disciplinary lens, a mixed-methods approach was taken. Mixing methodologies provided greater validity and credibility through the triangulation of findings, a more complete account of the area of inquiry, contextual understanding, and a diversity of perspectives (Caraceli, Graham, & Greene, 1989; Bryman, 2006).

The mixed-methods convergent design allowed for multiple sources of data first to be separately analyzed, then merged together to find areas of agreement, disagreement, and overall to provide further context that may not be present if a singular approach was taken. Once data was collected through online surveys, analysis was conducted both through quantitative measures to test for significant differences amongst the three academic disciplines as well as through qualitative measures to identify major themes within the data. The final chapter will serve as a discussion of the findings, in connection to the research questions, to the current literature and state of the field, and to recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Results and Findings

The dimensions which define perceived value in the current study were informed and developed through the literature of Alves (2010) and Jayakumar & Sulthan (2014). The researchers in both respective studies viewed value as a tradeoff or comparison between benefits or sacrifices, and applied that view as a premise in their development of tools to measure perceived value. The dimensions of perceived value adapted from their work were applied to the current study in both the survey design and analysis phases, and in the final discussion phase, the dimensions will guide the emergent themes in response to the overarching research questions. In addition to direct inquiries for perceived value, the dimensions include: epistemic value, functional value, social value, emotional value, trade-off of time spent, and future goals.
From a quantitative end and in direct response to the research question, there were no statistically significant differences found amongst the business, education, and nursing and health sciences faculty in how they perceived a collaborative model of faculty development. However, supporting the notion that faculty are not a homogenous group, while not statistically significant at p<.05, the quantitative data did show that faculty varied in their reported perceptions, and differences were present across the three disciplinary groups. Additionally, the mixed methods design of the study granted further insight beyond the quantitative data collected, supplying the rationale behind some of the participant’s thinking.

**Adjunct Faculty Professional Identity**

The demographics and adjunct classification sections illustrate the self-reported professional identities of the adjunct faculty at USU, as well as serves as the foundational evidence to support that the adjunct faculty members will vary in their years of experience in adjunct teaching, levels of education received, and motivations for adjunct teaching. These differences, stacked amongst the typically unseen variables such as their abilities and competencies related to teaching at the college-level, online teaching, and the alignment with USU teaching qualifications and standards, are all to be considered when making decisions on that population's behalf. For example, 59% of the Nursing and Health Sciences faculty and 46% of the Education faculty have had 5 or less years of experience in adjunct teaching, in comparison to 61% of Business faculty who have 11 or more years of experience. Those differences in years of experience may influence the types of professional development offered, as an instructor who is in their second year may have different needs than a more seasoned faculty in their 20th year of teaching. However, as one participant expressed, “as a master teacher with 35 years of teaching under my belt I have lots I could share.” The community of practice
approach would allow for multiple topics to be explored to serve the varying needs of faculty, leveraging the knowledge of the experienced faculty that are willing to share.

**Knowledge Sharing**

The most prevalent theme which emerged from the qualitative data set was the perceived benefit of knowledge sharing amongst their collegial peers. Reflective of epistemic value, faculty across all three disciplines noted the ability to acquire knowledge, share ideas, and learn together as rationale behind their perceived value. Participants’ reported that collaboration with other faculty members “would be valuable to get other perspectives and tips from other faculty” and that it “is important as you continuously improve, learn new instructional skills, and enhance your pedagogical strategies with other faculty”. While the Education and Nursing faculty qualitative responses supported the benefit of collaboration as a development tool, the Business faculty were mixed in their reported perceptions. A portion of the Business faculty did cite the ability to share knowledge as a benefit, but most felt that the opportunity would “not be very valuable” noting that there would be “minimal benefits” in that the work of faculty is “individual and based on topics that they teach.” From a quantitative end, 17% of the Business faculty strongly disagreed or disagreed that participation in a COP would increase their knowledge, in comparison with 0% of Education faculty and 7.5% of the Nursing faculty. While the Business faculty did not statistically differ from the reports of the Education and Nursing faculty regarding knowledge acquisition, the differences in their perception emerged within the qualitative data collected.

Furthermore, from a functional value lens, two themes emerged related to the value of learning with faculty within the context of a COP: the application to their professional practice and the ability to support students’. Closely tied to epistemic value, the knowledge gained
through the experience may have a practical and functional application. As shown, there was not a significant difference in how the participants perceived participating in a COP in relation to their current practice, or how they engage and assess students’. The qualitative data supports the statistical analysis in that the reported responses across all three groups were plentiful in their similarities. Faculty found that collaborating in a multi-disciplinary COP can provide “transferable skills to bring into one’s own practice as a faculty member”, can “combine real time and theory”, “can make them more effective in their practice roles”, and can contribute to their scholarly pursuits. Additionally, faculty cited the benefit of obtaining insight into how their adjunct faculty peers work with students’ in a variety of situations, how other faculty “balance their time”, and they find that “practitioners have different levels of skills and expertise that should be shared to improve teaching and learning.”

While faculty were aligned in how they perceived participation in a COP in its relation to its functional benefits, both in their professional practice and in how they support students’, differences were present in their perceived epistemic value, as the Business faculty indicated to having no to low personal value in their statements related to this dimension. One of the essential functions of a COP is knowledge sharing and creation (Li et al., 2009). The implementation of a COP can support the need for faculty to share knowledge for the purpose of their own development, providing an online-based environment to easily share the tricks, tips, and other relevant information that can be applied to their teaching practice, but it is important to also consider that collaborating in this sense may not be of value to some which may impact their willingness to participate.
Community Identity

The quantitative and qualitative data converged under the domain of social value, as adjunct faculty across all disciplines agreed that participation in a COP would make them feel more a part of the USU community. A participant expressed that in addition to knowledge sharing, “community is the only way to grow both as a faculty member and as an institution”. Practice is socially situated within an academic environment, thus communities within such environments can serve as locales of practice (Warhurst, 2008). Implementing an environment for a COP to grow at USU could promote social learning, providing the technological means to connect individuals of common practice, regardless of proximity, within a virtual community environment. Learning and knowledge are viewed as being embedded in cultural practices, and it has been argued that knowledge can be described as the integration of “practice” and “community” (Wenger & Lave, 1991, 1998; Constant, 1987). Furthermore, knowledge being embedded in practice infers that the practitioners are key holders to the knowledge of their field, as they create, examine, and validate the knowledge associated with their practice. If the intent is to increase knowledge surrounding best practices of online teaching at USU, as knowledge is socially constructed, a community of practitioners with the shared practice of teaching could act as a catalyst for achieving that goal.

Moreover, a COP platform may help to combat the isolation that many remote adjunct faculty face (Polin, 2010). A participant stated that “as an adjunct faculty, there is a somewhat a feeling of isolation. [The opportunity to join a COP] would create an environment of inclusiveness” and can “enhance productivity and the feeling of connection to the University and others”. Creating a sense of inclusiveness has been shown as an essential component to professional development (Bond, 2015).
Finally, additional institutional benefits may arise from an established faculty COP. Over time, active participants within such communities have shown to develop a group membership identity, moving beyond tangential participation to the adoption of the central practices of the group (Lave and Wenger, 1998). The learning within the community can translate to practices in the classroom, positively influencing the overall student experience. Research has shown that online faculty desire community, collegiality, and the ability to establish their professional identities as faculty (Heasley, 2015). In the case of USU, and any other post-secondary institution with a mission central to supporting students’, it is of much value to have faculty whom align their professional identities to communities which promote best practices in teaching. The USU adjunct faculty perceived social value paired with the COP foundation being deeply rooted in social learning theory coupled with research demonstrating the models direct benefits to faculty and students’ highly supports the model as a viable option to implement at USU.

**Preparing Adjunct Faculty for Future Roles**

Although not as prevalent as the previously discussed themes, perceived value in relation to one’s future goals emerged in the data set through participant statements regarding personal growth and improvement as faculty members. Research on adjunct faculty shows that their teaching performance and willingness to participate in professional development offerings is closely tied to their professional goal of obtaining full-time teaching positions (Williamson, 2014; Condon et al., 2012). Confirming this notion, participants expressed a USU COP could “strengthen the confidence and skills for aspiring full-time faculty members”, and statements regarding the goal of obtaining full-time professorship were found across all three disciplinary groups of the study. Motivations rooted in career goals should be considered by the leadership
and administration of USU. First, providing opportunity to accelerate the adjunct faculty towards their professional goals can have high epistemic and functional value, and could be accomplished through evidenced-based, quality professional development programming. Secondly, providing such opportunity can demonstrate the University’s investment into and value of the adjunct faculty member, promoting a sense of community and inclusivity, and possibly loyalty. Finally, while dependent on the financial and human capital directions and needs within the institution, the faculty assignment, promotion, and reward system may also be reviewed to ensure pathways for those to grow within their roles as faculty. Preparing adjunct faculty for future full-time roles at the institution or even externally, within the context of quality professional development programs, may also help publically characterize the institution as a center of teaching excellence, further attracting quality students’ and academic personnel.

Comparison to Alternatives

Under one angle, the value of something can be understood through the comparison of it to its alternatives. There is a wide diversity of typologies and modes of delivery for faculty professional development, and while finding a perfect one-size-fits-all approach is not realistically feasible for a diverse audience, allowing the faculty to express their preferences can serve as informed guidance towards building programming around their needs. No significant statistical differences appeared from the analysis of how the participants within each discipline perceived an online COP in comparison to other forms of faculty development. The majority of participants were either undecided or agreed/strongly agreed that a COP could provide better value than other models. When asked to report their preferred modes of delivery, responses ranged between the individual participants, regardless of their respective disciplinary group.
Preferences in mode of delivery varied from classroom-based to webinars, seminars, and conferences. While some faculty noted quick reference and visual guides, videos, and quick topical meetings, others maintained that their preference is face-to-face, in-person based. The most prevalent emerged finding, however, was the need for multiple options in time and content. Stressed across faculty representing all three differences was the need for asynchronous options to allow for flexibility in the time they choose to participate. The adjunct faculty want to be able to align the professional development training “according to their personal schedule” and “when it is personally convenient”. Additionally, many prefer choices in the content being presented.

The high demands of adjunct faculty in the classroom, along with balancing other academic responsibilities, a full-time job in their field, and adjunct faculty teaching assignments at other institutions, all present a barrier to their ability and willingness to fully engage in faculty professional development. The participants expressed that rewards, such as increased compensation overall or stipends for their participation, along with training’s that benefit their professional career, such as those that provide CEU’s, would increase their value in the professional development program. These findings confirm Bates et al. (2013) examination of adjunct faculty motivations, in that the faculty preferred model of professional development and the obstacles of time and competing priorities may impact their willingness to attend. Understanding how mode of delivery and time options may impact the success of faculty development programming should be considered. These implications may also inform how the University corresponds with faculty on any matter. To enumerate, when introducing new information that requires faculty’s involvement, such as new standards or processes, it may be beneficial to communicate in multiple forms, such as through written email, quick guides with visual support, short videos, and live (recorded) meetings to give an open forum to discuss.
Significance of Findings

While grounding the survey questions around the dimensions of perceived value indirectly accumulated information from multiple angles to comprehensively understand the participants’ relation to the topic, directly inquiring about value and importance added an additional layer which yielded a notable observation. In questions categorized as direct inquiries to perceived value, the respondents demonstrated more similarities than differences in how they rated the personal value in receiving training related to online teaching, engaging with faculty in disciplines outside of one’s own, and in the opportunity to collaborate with other faculty in an online environment. In these instances, the responses from faculty across all three groups were consistent with the statistical analysis, in that they all found online pedagogical training and multi-disciplinary collaboration as personally valuable and important. However, when indirectly asked about perceived value under the lens of one of its dimensions, the differences between the disciplines became more apparent. Overall, the data shows more instances where Business Faculty strongly disagreed with the statements indicating personal value from multiple lenses, whereas the responses from both Education and Nursing and Health Sciences faculty displayed more commonalities across the dimensions. In reflection of the significance of the study’s findings, two main points in relation to this observation will be discussed.

First, the findings align with Biglan’s (1973) academic classification system, supporting the notion of academic disciplinary differences, as education and nursing are typically grouped as soft-applied-life fields, while business is considered a hard or soft-applied-nonlife field. As research provides, there have been observations of academic disciplinary differences in reward or stratification systems, the structure of communication, social control mechanisms, and other epistemological aspects, but lack of research in psychosocial characteristics. The current study
addresses a gap in research with the intention of furthering the scholarly community towards developing empirically based theory on disciplinary differences. Implications for the institution of study, USU, includes the need to consider academic disciplinary differences already present in the field to allow the appropriate integration into faculty development programming. For example, the Nursing faculty deem collaboration with other practitioners as requisite for success within the discipline. Ensuring faculty professional development programming supports this specification is indispensable, and assessing other disciplines under this view should be included in this endeavor. Once the academic disciplinary considerations are identified, integration into the faculty development programming can promote multidisciplinary access and sharing of transferable information and skills.

Secondly, adjunct faculty should inform the development of offerings through the expression of their needs. There is not a unidimensional approach for faculty development, just as adjunct faculty are not a monolithic group. The research conducted through the current study provides that there is a need to provide differentiated offerings of faculty development, with special consideration of the audience being served. USU faculty varied in their views of preferred modes of delivery and perceived value on collaboration for professional development, and lack of presence of their preferences in a faculty development program may impact their inclination to actively participate (Bates et al., 2013). Differentiation of methods used can be applied within a COP environment, affording choices to faculty on how they wish to receive information. The core feature of a COP of learning and sharing of current practices could be represented through a variety of means to include but not limited to, discussion boards to share through written expression, the posting of articles, images, videos, and other resources. For those who do not wish to actively participate, access to discussions and resources shared could allow for
autonomous engagement. Additional features could also be added to include a place for administration to post content related to teaching and classroom expectations, training on technology systems, access to live and recorded meetings, self-paced training, and conference materials. Formatting the COP in this manner will allow for the asynchronous collaboration, flexibility, and content diversity needed as expressed by the audience, leaving opportunity for the COP to grow organically into a holistic program designed through the unification of both faculty and institutional needs.

Institutional Recommendations

Although the adjunct faculty members are tied closely to the learning experience of the institution’s main stakeholders, its students’, through a gap analysis the population was found to have one of the largest unaddressed needs. In true pursuit of the mission to provide quality educational opportunity to the underserved, leadership and administration must place equal weight of importance towards the establishment of evidenced-based support structure for those who are front-line in conducting the educational experience. To support student achievement, it is important to assess how involved faculty are in the implementation of student achievement initiatives. Involvement includes both the inclusion of faculty in the decision-making along with the consideration of faculty development needs to support such initiative. Reflecting on the current USU faculty teaching expectations which call for the ability to navigate the unique aspects of online teaching and effectively promote student learning through applying best practices, it is necessary to have an alignment of support provided to the online teaching skills expected.

Furthermore, it should be considered that implementing professional development programming as suggested through the current study may infer a shift of increased responsibility
amongst the leadership and administration involved in the life cycle of faculty. This shift involves budgetary considerations and financial commitment, as it may call for additional academic personnel and staff, membership to academic and professional associations which can provide access to empirical resources, or a purchase of technology services or systems to provide the training environment. To truly attain the mission of supporting students’, it will require the buy-in and full support of leadership across all institutional functions. Howbeit, the long-term outcomes of this approach, specifically for the next regional accreditation reaffirmation visit in the upcoming year at USU, may yield more desirable results and betterment of the student experience overall.

**Recommendations for Future Work**

A statistically significant difference was not found between how faculty across the different disciplines perceived the value of a COP, but the differences within the qualitative data amongst faculty both within and across disciplines supports the need for future research. It is possible a broader sample set may yield statistical outcomes that align closer to the qualitative findings. A sample size that is less than ideal for the study may prevent extrapolation of the findings and may increase the chance of assuming a false premise is true (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). Replicating the study at USU once the faculty pool becomes larger is recommended as seeking continuous improvement in programming could be informed through the inquiry of those the programming is attended for. The approach of understanding perspectives and other psychosocial factors of the audience and integrating these internal considerations with research in the field should be maintained for future implementation of programming for faculty.

Recommended future research emerged through the analysis and discussion of the data collected through the current study. The dimensions of perceived value established through the
research of both Alves (2010) and Jayakumar and Sulthan (2014), provided the foundation for examining the perceived value of USU adjunct faculty members. Of the dimensions, all except one emerged through the qualitative inquiries: emotional value. Emotional value as a dimension to measure perceived value could further be explored to assess its appropriateness as a measurement for the study. Its lack of appearance in the open-response sections may be influenced through a variation of factors, as it may be that the survey questions intended to align with emotional value could be further clarified, or possibly the sample size limited its presence in the data set. A replicated study with a larger sample could be conducted to provide the needed depth to understand the significance of emotional value as a dimension of adjunct faculty perceived value.

As discussed, one intent behind the study is to contribute to the gap in research related to psychosocial differences amid academic disciplines and to advance the scholarly community towards the establishment of a theoretical framework. The continued pursuit of related research to broaden and expand the current state of knowledge is essential. It may be of interest to modify the current study to allow for self-identification of academic discipline, which may add sub-disciplinary categories, such as accounting or finance, to determine if the responses still align with each other under the overall umbrella of the major discipline, such as business. Furthermore, in acknowledgement of the essence of mixed methods design, it is also recommended to continue to answer the research question through different methodologies. A replicated study through different means of inquiry can be conducted to assess similarity of outcomes to the current study. Structured interviews can be a qualitative measure that may provide contextual depth.
In addition, the adjunct faculty professional identity and demographics data collected through the current study exhibited differences which may serve as variables of inquiry in future research related to this topic. For example, a comparison of academic disciplines based on years of experience in adjunct teaching, highest degree earned, or adjunct classification typology may provide additional considerations to support the professional development endeavor within USU. Beyond USU, the current study may also have implications to other post-secondary institutions and to the professional field of higher education. The study can be replicated at other sites, to address possible gaps in professional development, or to compare to the outcomes of the current study.

Finally, a major tenant of the COP model is that practice is situated in authentic contexts within communities and learning takes place through legitimate participation in the norms of that community (Lave and Wenger, 1991, 1998; Constant, 1989). While the current study sought to assess a COP as a viable option for faculty development at USU, future research can reveal methods of ensuring authenticity in the experiences provided within an online COP for faculty. Research in this area can help 1) identify best practices in the field by discipline, 2) establish routes to integrate the best practice into authentic experiences within a COP, and 3) assess how such practices are reflected and how they can be transmitted into the academic curriculum to promote authentic student learning for success in their respective fields of study.

**Conclusion**

During the timeline of the current study, the institution which served as the site of data collection, USU, moved through a series of accreditation related events, leaving behind the history of financial and enrollment challenges, arriving to a state of sustainability and a current, active accreditation status. The current state of the institution has increased the student
population from 448 students’ in June 2018 to approaching 2,000 students’ in April 2020. The population of students’ demands for the appropriately scaled support structure to promote student success. Faculty have been identified as essential to the success of students’ at USU, and adjunct faculty have been shown as the far majority of that population. Highlighted through an institutional study, presented in chapter one, was a significant gap in professional development programming directed towards adjunct faculty. Through a review of research and literature, reflected in chapter two, adjunct faculty who teach online remotely to campus have been shown to have unique, individual and academic disciplinary needs related to online teaching pedagogical skills, as well as other psychosocial considerations which present a barrier to their personal and professional growth. Community of Practice theory and situated learning theory served as the theoretical frameworks of the study, emphasizing that knowledge is situated in authentic contexts through the connection of four concepts: practice, community, meaning, and identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991, 1998). The COP model as a means of providing professional development has been shown to have positive impacts on faculty’s application of knowledge, tools, and social relationships. To assess the viability of a COP as a faculty development initiative at USU through the attainment of adjunct faculty perceived value, a mixed-methods convergent study was designed, as detailed in chapter three. The computation of significant differences through one-way ANOVA, the analysis through thematic coding, and the integration of those data sets were represented in chapter four. In conclusion to the current study, a discussion of the results and findings in relation to the original research questions and implications for the field has been provided in the final chapter.

Themes which emerged through the inquiry of USU adjunct faculty perceived value included knowledge sharing, establishment of a community identity, and the preparation for full-
time faculty roles. Through the discussion of the research outcomes and review of preferences expressed, considerations and recommendations for USU were provided, summarized below:

1. The adjunct faculty at USU have unique perspectives which may be influenced through individual and disciplinary elements. The perspectives may influence their work with students’ in the classroom and adherence to institutional expectations. Leadership and administration have a centralized role in ensuring the faculty are conjoined in the mission of the University.

2. Student success and faculty development initiatives should be aligned, to ensure the expectations of teaching in the online classroom are supported through professional development offerings.

3. The audience perspectives should be considered and combined with evidence-based practices, promoting a data-informed approach within the institution.

4. Establishing a COP, then programming it to address the variety of needs of both faculty and the institution may have both financial and human capital considerations, but may yield for desirable outcomes which provide a previously absent leg of support to University’s assurance of mission achievement.

The COP model has much to offer the diverse needs of the adjunct faculty at USU. It may provide for those seeking knowledge acquisition and growth as an adjunct faculty member, to those merely seeking connections and community. Confirming the previous work of Cambridge et al. (2014), the COP provides both immediate value, such as addressing isolation concerns, timely advice or encouragement from peers, and professional conversations within and outside of one’s discipline, and potential long-term value, such as professional identity development and relationship formation. A COP at USU can be personalized to fit within the expressed
preferences of the USU faculty, creating an environment that allows for multiple options in time, participation methods, model of delivery, content, providing the opportunity for collaboration as well as for autonomous, self-guided engagement. Dedication to the success of students’ is grounded in the investment of excellence in teaching, as student success is contingent upon an effective learning experience facilitated by a well-prepared and supported faculty member.

Through evidence guided professional development for faculty, excellence in teaching can be threaded into the core fabric of the institution.
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Appendix A
Informed Consent

Title: “Faculty perspectives on faculty development”

The following information is being provided to you to assist in your decision to participate in the present study. You should be aware that you are free to decide to not participate or to withdraw at any time. The purpose of this study is to understand online adjunct faculty perspectives on faculty development. Data will be collected using an online survey which includes rater-scale and open-ended questions. Your survey responses will be the only data collected in this study. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions before participating or during the study. I would be happy to share my findings with you after the research is complete. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation is being able to contribute to a body of research related to your field of teaching in the higher education environment.

Please sign this consent form. You are signing it with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures.

____________________________________        _____________________
Signature                                   Date

Alyssa Hill, doctoral student, National Louis University | ahill@usuniversity.edu
Appendix B
Survey Instrument

1. How many years total have you been working as a part-time adjunct?
   a. 16 or more
   b. 11 to 15
   c. 6 to 10
   d. 2 to 5
   e. Fewer than 2

2. What is the highest degree you have attained?
   a. Bachelor’s
   b. Master’s
   c. Ph.D, Ed.D, or other terminal degree (e.g. M.B.A., J.D., DNP, M.D.)
   d. Other (Please describe) _______________________

3. How many classes did you teach at USU as part time adjunct faculty during the 2018-2019 academic year?
   a. 2 or fewer
   b. 3 to 5
   c. 6 to 10
   d. 11 to 15
   e. 16 or more

4. At USU, which college did you primarily teach in?
   a. College of Business & Technology
   b. College of Education
   c. College of Nursing & Health Sciences
5. Which type of courses did you teach most often?
   a. Undergraduate general education
   b. Undergraduate core and/or specialization courses
   c. Graduate core courses
   d. Graduate specialization courses

6. Did you have a full-time job separate from your part-time adjunct teaching?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7. Did you have other part-time adjunct positions outside of USU?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. What is the primary reason you work as a part-time adjunct?
   a. Prefer part-time work
   b. Want to obtain full-time teaching job
   c. Already have full-time job
   d. Need part-time work to fit with the demands of my personal life
   e. Other (Please describe) _______________________

A ‘community of practice’ is an informal group of individuals with the common interest of a particular practice. A Community of Practice in the higher education context could be faculty members with the common practice of ‘teaching’, collaborating, engaging, and learning with and from each other within an online platform or environment.

9. As an adjunct faculty member, how important is it for you to have training and development opportunities related to online teaching?
10. How important is collaboration and engagement with other faculty to you?
   a. Very Important
   b. Moderately Important
   c. Slightly Important
   d. Not Important

11. For the purpose of support and development, how valuable would an opportunity to connect and engage with other USU faculty in a community online environment be for you?
   a. High
   b. Moderate
   c. Low
   d. None

Rate your level of agreement of the statements below:

12. Having the opportunity to participate in an online community of USU faculty for the purpose of development would be valuable to me in my current practice.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
13. Having the opportunity to participate in an online community of USU faculty for the purpose of development would help me to achieve future goals.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

14. The time spent participating in an online community of USU faculty would be time well spent.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

15. Compared to other autonomous forms of faculty development, learning within an online community of USU faculty can provide better value.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
   c. Undecided
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly Disagree

16. I would enjoy participating in an online community of USU faculty.
17. Being able to engage with other USU faculty within an online community environment would allow me to better answer student questions.

a. Strongly Agree  
b. Agree  
c. Undecided  
d. Disagree  
e. Strongly Disagree

18. Participation in an online community of USU faculty could further educate me on online teaching pedagogies and best practices, and how to apply them in the online classroom.

a. Strongly Agree  
b. Agree  
c. Undecided  
d. Disagree  
e. Strongly Disagree

19. Engagement and professional development opportunities with other USU faculty could help me be more effective at assessment of student work and providing feedback.

a. Strongly Agree  
b. Agree
c. Undecided
d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

20. Engagement and professional development opportunities with other USU faculty could help me be more effective in engaging with students’ in the Discussion Boards.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
c. Undecided
d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

21. Being a member of a USU online adjunct faculty community would make me feel more confident in teaching.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
c. Undecided
d. Disagree
e. Strongly Disagree

22. Being a member of a USU Adjunct Faculty Community of Practice would make me feel more a part of the USU community overall.
   a. Strongly Agree
   b. Agree
c. Undecided
d. Disagree
23. For the purpose of professional development as an online adjunct faculty, how valuable would being able to directly engage, learn from, and share your own expertise with other USU adjunct faculty be for you?

24. How do you prefer to receive training and development regarding online teaching?

25. Is collaboration with other practitioners in and/or outside of your discipline important to you in your own practice?

26. How do you describe your current gender identity? *Please specify*

_____________________________ OR I prefer not to answer

27. What is your age in years? *Please specify* _______________ OR I prefer not to answer

28. Which racial and ethnic group(s) do you identify? *Please specify*

_____________________________ OR I prefer not to answer