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"We Don't Work For Free": Tenured Faculty Engagement In Assessment Initiatives On A Unionized Community College Campus

Lauren Kosrow

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Submitted in partial fulfillment

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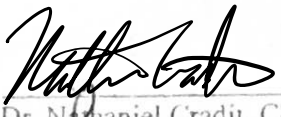

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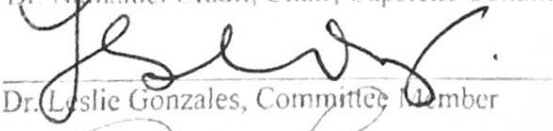

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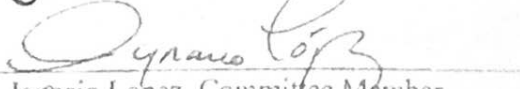

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ABSTRACT

This case study, including interviews and an analysis of institutional documents and faculty meeting spaces, examined what influences a tenured faculty member's decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College and what administrators can do to successfully engage tenured faculty in these efforts. Principal-agent theory offers an important and helpful framework for considering how senior leadership can engage tenured faculty in student learning outcomes assessment on this specific unionized community college campus. The findings of this study suggest that senior leaders must leverage both incentives and monitoring to successfully engage tenured faculty in institutional efforts to assess student learning outcomes. In addition, faculty and senior leaders in this case study spoke to the need for acknowledging the value of assessment work, demonstrating respect for faculty's engagement in assessment, and giving inherent meaning to what faculty do. The findings of this study have direct implications for collective bargaining agreements, tenure processes, hiring practices, and senior leaders' own behavior towards and relationship with tenured faculty. Specific recommendations for action are provided, as well as implications for further research.

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For my son, Asher.
(We did it.)

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Chapter 1: Institutional Overview

Higher education institutions across the United States are responding to increasing calls for accountability by the federal government, state governments, and both institutional and programmatic accrediting bodies by intensifying efforts to document evidence of student learning. College and university campuses face challenges to engaging faculty in assessment initiatives for a variety of reasons, including institutional type and culture. This chapter provides an overview of Midwest Community College, a pseudonym, and contextualizes the campus within its own institutional culture and the landscape of higher education, focusing specifically on the factors that impact faculty engagement in assessment of student learning. First, there is a discussion of the external context of the institution, which addresses the history, finances, and structures of community colleges. The following section addresses the internal context of the Midwest Community College, including the shared governance structure, academic leadership, and the faculty body. The subsequent section will discuss various challenges to faculty engagement in assessment of student learning, specifically the relationships between faculty and administration. Finally, this chapter closes with two central research questions, a definition of key terms, and the significance of the study.

Midwest Community College is an open-admission, public community college in the suburbs of a major metropolitan area and serves several demographically and culturally diverse towns and villages. Since its founding in 1964, Midwest Community College has been mission-driven, and the institution's commitment to student success fuels the strategic goals of the college. Midwest Community College has 99 full-time faculty, 503 part-time faculty, 296 full-time staff, and 288 part-time staff with seven collective bargaining units present on campus (Midwest Community College, 2019). In fall of 2019, Midwest Community College enrolled a

total of 10,692 unduplicated students (Midwest Community College, 2019). Among them, 44% were males and 56% were females. Twenty-six percent of students attended full-time, while 74% enrolled as part-time students. Midwest Community College’s students are diverse in age and race/ethnicity. Fifty-seven percent of its students are under the age of 24, while 43% are over the age of 24. The percentage of the student population identifying as a minority student has increased substantially over the last five years, from 51% in 2013 to 60% in 2019, with the increase coming from the college’s Hispanic/Latino student population (Midwest Community College, 2019). In 2011, the Department of Education recognized Midwest Community College as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, qualifying the college for Title V grants.

External Context

History of Community Colleges

The foundation of the modern American community college was established in the early twentieth century. The ideological roots for community colleges stem from the land-grant institutions formed in the late nineteenth century, which greatly expanded access to higher education beyond wealthy elites. From the turn of the twentieth century, community colleges’ commitment to open admissions and access to higher education has been of paramount importance (Ratcliff, 1994). Throughout their history, the missions of community colleges have been driven by open admission policies, affordable tuition rates, geographic accessibility, and curriculum adapted to the needs of the community (Bogart, 1994).

By the 1960s, the number of community colleges in the United States skyrocketed. In the fall of 1965 alone, 50 new community colleges opened, and by the end of the decade, 457 community colleges had been established throughout the United States. In addition, student enrollment increased from 1 million in 1965 to 2.2 million by 1970 (Jurgens, 2010; Vaughan,

1982). The rapid expansion has been attributed to the high birth rates of the 1940s and the rise in state support of community colleges (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2013; Jurgens, 2010). In 1942, state aid to community colleges accounted for 28% of institutional budgets; by 1986, state aid climbed sharply to 47% (Tollefson, 1994). Enrollment growth, especially in occupational programs, resulted in increased statewide coordination of community colleges (Tollefson, 1994).

Midwest Community College was founded in 1964, at the height of community college expansion and continues to embody the open-access mission of this institutional type. However, the substantive state resources and exponential enrollment growth that characterized the landscape of higher education in the 1960s is no longer the reality for many community colleges like Midwest Community College. The impact of external factors, such as state funding and enrollment trends, present challenges to internal operations and institutional decision-making at Midwest Community College.

Finances

Community colleges, specifically in the state of Illinois, were founded on a financial model in which costs are shared equally by state government, local property taxes, and the student in the form of tuition. At one point, many state institutions received 30% of their budget from the state (Brown, 2017). This financial model is changing, marked by significant reductions in public funds allocated to support higher education institutions and a shift of the burden to pay for higher education from the government to students and their families (Brown & Gross, 2015). Over the past 30 years, the trend in state appropriations for public higher education institutions has reflected a decrease in higher education as a policy priority in most states (Dar & Lee, 2014).

Overall, state appropriations to higher education institutions in Illinois have followed the national downward trend for the last several decades. Most notably, the state of Illinois

experienced a budget crisis from July 1, 2015 to August 31, 2017, which led to drastically reduced levels of state appropriations for higher education funding. The state’s budget impasse and the subsequent impact on appropriations for public higher education institutions presented a myriad of challenges for state institutions to navigate. As a result, higher education institutions generally, and community colleges specifically, increasingly rely on enrollment and, therefore, tuition dollars, to support the institution’s budget. At Midwest Community College, reductions in state funding coupled with declining enrollment and tuition dollars have severely impacted the institution’s ability to generate enough revenue to meet expenses in recent years.

As a community college, Midwest Community College relies on funding from the state, local property taxes, and tuition to meet total operating expenses and balance the institution’s budget. Recent changes in the financial model of Midwest Community College mirror larger trends in higher education, with significant reductions in state funds received. Due to the Illinois state budget impasse, which stretched over fiscal years 2016 and 2017, Midwest Community College received less than 30% of the state funds expected, which is reflected in the college’s net non-operating revenue (Midwest Community College, 2017). As a result, the college’s non-operating revenue only partially offset the operating loss and resulted in an overall decrease in net position of $6,662,231 (Midwest Community College, 2017). Higher education is the only major sector of the state budget that received less funding in FY 2018 than it did in FY 2002 (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2018).

Enrollment

While the institution has been forced to rely more heavily on tuition dollars to balance the budget, Midwest Community College has also faced declining enrollment for a number of years.

The total headcount of credit and non-credit students has decreased by 18% since Fall 2014 (Midwest Community College, 2018f; Midwest Community College, 2019).

Table 1

Fall term (10th Day) enrollment headcount, 2014-2019

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Student Headcount	12,943	12,645	12,389	11,791	11,627	10,592

Total student tuition and fees in FY17 was $333,000 less than the prior year, and the decrease was primarily due to decreased enrollment (Midwest Community College, 2017). The challenge for the institution is balancing the mission of the institution with the need for revenue. The mission of Midwest Community College as a community college drives the institution to keep tuition rates and local property taxes low in order to remove financial barriers and ensure its diverse community has access to higher education. As a result, the mission of the institution discourages pursuing large property tax increases or substantial increases in tuition to offset the lack of state funds. Failing to maintain enrollment numbers led to cuts in the institution's operational budget, reductions in the workforce, and decreases in department budgets in FY17.

Accreditation

Midwest Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. The HLC accredits degree-granting colleges and universities in 19 states that comprise the North Central region (Higher Learning Commission, 2018a). Midwest Community College was first accredited on March 22,

1972 (Higher Learning Commission, 2018b). The college is on the HLC’s Standard Pathway, which is a 10-year accreditation cycle with comprehensive evaluations taking place in Year 4 and Year 10. Its most recent reaffirmation of accreditation occurred in 2014. Midwest Community College’s Year 4 Assurance Argument was submitted to the HLC in January 2018, and its Year 4 comprehensive evaluation was completed in March 2018 (Higher Learning Commission, 2018b). Its next comprehensive evaluation and reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2024 (Higher Learning Commission, 2018b).

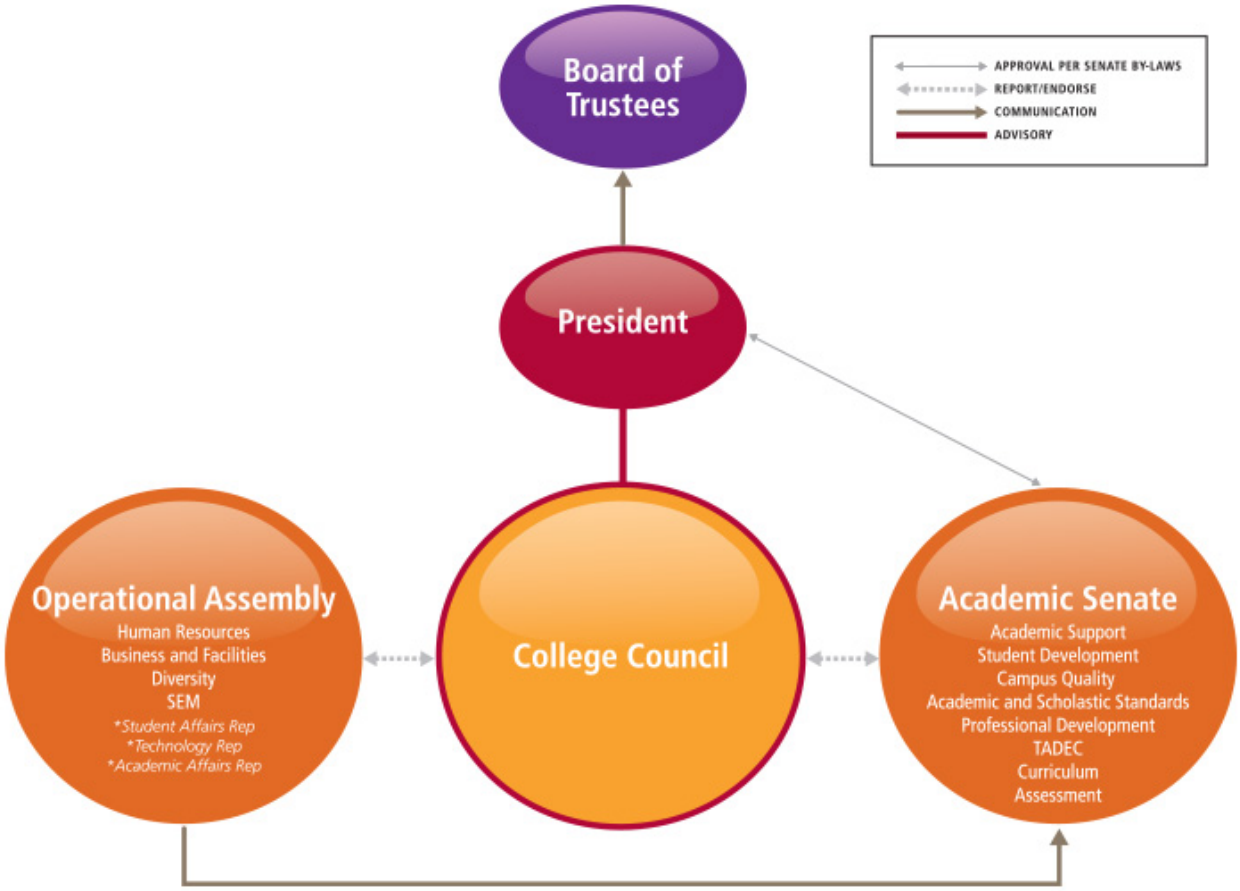
Internal Context

Shared Governance

In addition to several external factors, a number of internal dynamics and structures impact the campus milieu. The model of shared governance in higher education institutions refers to a partnership between administration and faculty that promotes collaboration, shared decision-making, and accountability within the institution (Messier, 2017). Midwest Community College has defined shared governance as “a collaborative decision-making process that recognizes the role and responsibility of each Midwest Community College stakeholder, values the unique expertise and contribution of each individual, delineates well-defined channels of communication and avenues of formal and informal authority, empowers individuals in the decision-making process, and moves the college forward to achieve its mission” (Midwest Community College, 2018c, p.104). Figure 1 illustrates Midwest Community College’s shared governance structure, which provides the framework and communication channels necessary for campus-wide input on institutional decision-making.

Figure 1

Midwest Community College shared governance structure



Midwest Community College is governed by a board of trustees made up of seven members of the community, publicly elected for six-year terms, who represent the voters of the district, and one student representative, elected by the student body for a one-year term. The college’s board of trustees holds monthly meetings that are open to the public (Midwest Community College, 2018c). The president of Midwest Community College is the chief executive officer of the institution. Appointed by and accountable to the board of trustees, the president is responsible for developing a strategic vision, communicating the mission of the institution, and sharing the institution’s goals with the campus community. As the executive administrator, the president is in charge of setting the institution’s strategic priorities and shaping

campus culture (Pierce, 2014). Communication and messaging from the board of trustees and senior leadership plays a critical role in campus culture and impacts how shared governance operates within a local context.

Midwest Community College’s central shared governance body is the college council. Chaired by the president, the council serves as an advisory body and provides multiple viewpoints on college-wide initiatives, including strategic planning, accreditation, and student success. Council membership includes elected representatives from across all employee groups and facilitates communication on institutional matters across its represented employee groups (Midwest Community College, 2018e). The college council meets monthly and hears reports from the two arms of the shared governance structure, the operational assembly and the academic senate. The college seeks input on non-academic policy and procedure through the operational assembly, which is concerned with building consensus on issues related to campus operations, facilities, and student services (Midwest Community College, 2018e). The academic senate is the academic arm of the college’s shared governance structure and is designed to promote collaboration between faculty and administration on academic matters (Midwest Community College, 2018b). The academic senate meets monthly and hears reports from all eight subcommittees.

Academic Leadership

At Midwest Community College, leadership for the academic affairs of the college is shared across faculty and administration. The chief academic officer is the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who reports directly to the president of Midwest Community College. The office of the vice president provides leadership, oversight, and support to the Division of Academic Affairs, aided by the newly created position of associate vice president of Academic

Affairs and Workforce Development. There are five schools within the Division of Academic Affairs: Adult Education, Arts and Sciences, Business and Technology, Continuing Education, and Health Careers and Public Services. As of Fall 2019, Midwest Community College had 111 active degree and certificate programs, and all credit programs are offered through the schools of Arts and Sciences, Business and Technology, and Health Careers and Public Services (Midwest Community College, 2019). Each school is led by a dean, and each of the academic departments is led by a department chairperson or a program coordinator.

Faculty

The American Association of University Professors (1966) emphasized the importance of meaningful faculty participation in institutional governance, advocating for shared responsibility and cooperative action among governing boards, administration, and faculty in the areas of planning, communications, facilities, the budget, and hiring a new president. In matters relating directly to carrying out the teaching mission of an institution of higher learning, the statement recognizes that members of the faculty should exercise primary responsibility by virtue of their academic expertise (AAUP, 1966). Although the board of trustees has ultimate authority for the institution, the faculty should have primary responsibility for curriculum, methods of instruction, research, and faculty status. Giving faculty a voice on these matters is critical to academic freedom (Messier, 2017). Nonconcurrence with the faculty judgment should occur only in rare instances and for compelling reasons (Gerber, 2015). At Midwest Community College, the individuals who comprise the faculty body, as well as the dynamics between faculty and administration, impact how these ideals function within a specific institutional context. The following sections describe the Midwest Community College faculty and contextualize these individuals within the larger institutional culture.

Demographics

There are 602 instructional faculty within the Division of Academic Affairs at Midwest Community College, 99 full-time faculty and 503 adjunct faculty (Midwest Community College, 2019). Reductions in state funding along with declining enrollment and tuition dollars have resulted in a decreasing number of full-time faculty and a high adjunct-to-full-time ratio. The college's faculty numbers since 2014, as reported in its fall fact sheets, are provided below.

Table 2

Full-time and part-time faculty, 2014–2019

	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
FT Faculty	104	15%	106	15%	100	14%	97	14%	99	15%	99	16%
PT Faculty	606	85%	625	85%	590	86%	616	86%	548	85%	503	84%

In its self-assessment leading up to the Higher Learning Commission's mid-cycle review in March 2018, the campus community determined that the college's decreasing number of full-time faculty and high adjunct-to-full-time ratio presented a challenge to the institution (Midwest Community College, 2018c). A team of faculty and staff evaluated this issue and recommended that the college increase full-time faculty through a five-year plan to bring the full-time to part-time ratio closer to 1:3. In its response to the community regarding this recommendation, senior leadership acknowledged the importance of this issue, as well as its desire to only promise what it can realistically execute (Midwest Community College, 2018c). In the meantime, senior leadership has dedicated resources towards improving its professional development offerings for

adjunct faculty, including the development of the Adjunct Teaching, Learning, and Success (ATLAS) program (Midwest Community College, 2018c).

Academic Freedom

Academic freedom implies “freedom for faculty and students to work within a scholarly community to develop the intellectual and personal qualities required of citizens in a vibrant democracy and participants in a vigorous economy” (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2006). It also includes the responsibility of faculty members to establish goals for student learning, to design and implement curricula, and assess student learning. Giving faculty a voice on these matters is critical to academic freedom (Messier, 2017). Midwest Community College’s public documents explicitly support academic freedom for faculty, which is formally codified in board policy 6050, academic freedom, and the full-time and part-time faculty contracts. Midwest Community College offers faculty members freedom to express themselves within the boundaries of the course content. Course content is developed by the faculty, approved by the college curriculum committee, ratified by the academic senate, and adopted by the board of trustees. The college allows faculty to develop all course material and have complete academic freedom in the classroom. Faculty members are also allowed to choose how to deliver content as long as the delivery method does not contradict the approved course outline, which serves as the course’s master syllabus.

Tenure Process

The tenure system at Midwest Community College is a three-year process that requires faculty to demonstrate excellence in teaching, service to the college, and service to the community through a final tenure portfolio that is reviewed and approved by senior leadership and the board of trustees. This process is designed and driven by senior leadership; at this

institution, the tenure process is viewed as the means by which new full-time faculty become acclimated to the college’s processes and structures. Tenure-track faculty are evaluated by the chair or coordinator of the department, as well as the dean of their division, each semester while on the tenure-track. In addition to regular evaluation, faculty are required to participate internal professional development activities and expected to engage with professional development opportunities outside of the institution. A strong tenure portfolio includes evidence of sustained commitment to student success outside of the classroom, such as serving as an advisor to a student club or organization, volunteering for various enrollment and retention efforts, or participating in faculty advising. Finally, tenure-track faculty are expected to display service to the larger community, such as the development of partnerships with and creation of outreach activities for local elementary, middle, and high schools or skills-based workforce development opportunities for community members. Upon completion of their tenure portfolio, faculty are recommended for tenure by the department chair or coordinator, with final approval given by senior leadership and the board of trustees.

Challenges to Faculty Engagement

Although a variety of internal and external factors influence college operations and institutional decision-making, the people within a higher education institution shape the campus culture. Institutional culture comprises the shared assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors held by members of the institution, and, when it is not successfully navigated, the campus culture can become a barrier to implementing change (Lick, 2002). This section more closely examines specific components of the campus culture that pose challenges to engaging tenured faculty in the shared governance of the institution and, specifically, student learning assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College.

Faculty Award System

The criteria outlined for tenure at Midwest Community College clearly encourages faculty to engage in areas of institutional priority and focuses faculty efforts on advancing the mission, vision, and strategic goals of the institution. However, after a faculty member receives tenure, the absence of a promotion structure does not foster a culture of continuous improvement and investment in institutional goals. Faculty at Midwest Community College are only distinguished by their employment status: adjunct, full-time temporary, tenure-track, or tenured. Midwest Community College does not have a promotion structure in place that allows faculty to move up in job title or pay grade depending on years of service, achievements, or demonstrated growth. In addition to the negotiated yearly raises, the institution only awards faculty additional pay increases upon completion of specific amounts of graduate-level credit hours, as outlined in the faculty contract’s salary schedule (Midwest Community College, 2015). The pursuit of education beyond a master’s degree can be aligned with Midwest Community College’s mission of academic excellence, but it does not support any other area of the institution’s mission, vision, and strategic plan. The institution, students, and larger community benefit from more highly educated faculty, however, there is no direct correlation between additional graduate credit hours in any discipline and the institution’s planning documents (Midwest Community College, 2014).

Currently, the misalignment between what the institution promotes for tenure and what it monetarily values post-tenure does not encourage faculty to continue to engage in areas of institutional priority or improve in the areas of teaching excellence, service to the college, or service to the community. The absence of a promotion structure at Midwest Community College discourages continued engagement in institutional initiatives and participation in shared governance. According to Diamond (2002), what an institution requires at tenure time in the way

of productivity and merit speak volumes about its values and priorities. The same is also true post-tenure. Any important strides toward achieving institutional goals will come from faculty involvement, and it is the role of academic leaders to ensure faculty’s energy and passion are invested in areas of institutional priority through careful structuring of the faculty reward system to align with the mission, vision, and strategic plan of the institution (Diamond, 2002). At Midwest Community College, the criteria outlined for tenure encourages activities that support these institutional goals, but the absence of a promotion structure does not foster a culture of continuous improvement and investment in institutional goals.

Faculty Union

The faculty union at Midwest Community College is the exclusive negotiating representative for all full-time faculty, and the union collectively bargains for the terms of the faculty contract, which is typically negotiated every three years. Most significantly, the salaries, conditions of employment, and faculty benefits of full-time faculty at Midwest Community College are collectively bargained for and governed by the faculty contract. The full-time faculty contract delineates other labor relations issues, such as the faculty evaluation process, conditions for dismissal, and grievance procedures. In addition, the faculty contract codifies the institution of tenure according to the Public Community College Act of 1965, which requires a tenure system within the Illinois community college system and explicitly protects the academic freedom of faculty within the classroom. The contract also mandates involvement in the institution’s shared governance structure by requiring each full-time faculty member to join an academic senate subcommittee (Midwest Community College, 2015). The presence of a faculty union on campus and the terms of any negotiated agreement impacts the campus culture and

plays a role in how faculty engage within the shared governance structure at Midwest Community College.

Shared Governance Structure

The shared governance structure at Midwest Community College is marked by a culture clash between faculty and administration. Shared governance has long been a topic of institutional debate and tension, extending nearly 30 years into the college’s past. This is a deeply rooted institutional challenge that cannot be addressed simply through shared governance structure changes; acutely human factors, such as interpersonal dynamics between departments, employee groups, and individuals at the college, drive the college’s inconsistent progress in this area (Midwest Community College, 2018c). More recently, the institution’s conversations around these challenges have begun to focus more on institutional culture and communication rather than on specific shared governance structures and membership (Midwest Community College, 2018c).

During the Higher Learning Commission’s 2013 comprehensive visit, the visit team noted a lack of communication in the institution’s shared governance structure. Following the college’s last comprehensive visit in 2013, the institution was required to submit a monitoring report regarding issues pertaining to governance. In that report, the college was required to submit documentation that demonstrated a systematic review of its shared governance committees and subcommittees, an integrated mode of communication, decision-making, and planning processes between the leadership bodies that is evaluated and shared by stakeholders, and the improvements in the views, support, and participation of the college council by internal stakeholders. The team also noted that two existing policies enacted by the board appeared to conflict with the delegation of day-to-day management to the president and administration

related to hiring practices and institutional travel. In response, Midwest Community College filed a monitoring report with the Higher Learning Commission detailing revisions made to the board policy regarding hiring practices and outlining a process by which the travel policy would be reviewed and revised (Midwest Community College, 2018c). In addition, Midwest Community College reviewed its shared governance structure and process, recommended changes, and implemented a new shared governance model, represented in Figure 1 at the beginning of this chapter, at the start of FY 2015.

Uncertainty and Mistrust

As a result of the 2015–2017 Illinois state budget impasse, Midwest Community College cut the operational budget, placed a hiring freeze on open positions, did not renew positions, negotiated tough labor contracts, and reorganized the institution’s reporting structure multiple times. All employee groups were asked to meet increasing demands with a smaller staff and fewer resources. Without transparent communication within the campus community, periods of financial constraint and uncertainty fostered resentment and mistrust while lowering employee engagement. This sentiment was reflected in the institution’s self-assessment leading up to the Higher Learning Commission’s mid-cycle review in March 2018. The campus community recognized a continued need to build trust between employee groups and promote a work culture where employees are encouraged to engage without fear and feel respected and valued (Midwest Community College, 2018c).

Senior leadership’s propensity to make decisions that impact faculty without engaging in collaborative decision-making, building consensus, or seeking faculty input continues to fuel mistrust, frustration, and tension across decades. In 2006, Midwest Community College made headlines in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* after the full-time faculty union unanimously

voted no confidence in the college’s president for shutting faculty members out of the institution’s decision-making processes. This action was ignored by the board of trustees, who continued to express strong support for the president, who continued to serve in her role until her retirement in 2014. Most recently, in spring of 2019, the president and the board of trustees announced the appointment of the vice president of academic affairs, the institution’s chief academic officer, without input from faculty, which created tension between administration and the faculty union (Romain, 2019; Bybee-Schier, 2019). This is the second individual in a row that the board has hired to fill the position of chief academic officer without conducting a search process, posting the position publicly, or eliciting input from faculty. This type of action by senior leadership has eroded relationships, communication, and respect within the shared governance structure.

Adverse Accreditation Actions

Since its initial accreditation in 1972, Midwest Community College has received multiple adverse actions from the Higher Learning Commission. In the summer of 1992, the HLC placed the college on probation a second time because of governance problems between the trustees and its president (Mitra, 1992b). At the same time, the ICCB scheduled a site visit to investigate whether the board was interfering with the college`s day-to-day operations (Mitra, 1992a). After its most recent reaffirmation of accreditation in 2014, Midwest Community College was required to submit an interim report on governance the following year, as well as embedded monitoring reports on resources, planning, institutional effectiveness, and assessment. These additional monitoring reports were submitted in 2016 (Higher Learning Commission, 2018b). Following its Year 4 comprehensive evaluation in March 2018, HLC requested a focused visit in April 2020 on assessment of student learning and use of data.

Focused Visit on Assessment of Student Learning

Following the Higher Learning Commission’s mid-cycle review of Midwest Community College in March 2018, the accreditation team observed that, although the college has made some progress in its assessment of student learning since its last visit, significant gaps remain in its assessment process for general education and program-level assessment, particularly in the use of assessment data for program and general education improvement (Midwest Community College, 2018d). The HLC will be returning to Midwest Community College’s campus in April 2020 for a focused visit on the work done in these two areas.

Midwest Community College was notified of the HLC’s focused visit on assessment of student learning in the wake of a tough contract negotiation with the full-time faculty union. During the summer of 2018, the faculty union attempted to leverage the inclusion of contractual language in the negotiated agreement that required faculty participation in assessment work for a higher annual salary raise over the life of the contract. When senior leadership and the faculty union could not agree on terms during negotiations, the faculty union voted to accept a lower annual raise without the addition of contractual language around assessment work. Both administrators and faculty have since acknowledged that the climate surrounding this contract negotiation was particularly contentious, which is discussed further in Chapter 4. As a result, the faculty union leadership took a vocal stance against any full-time faculty participation in assessment initiatives without additional compensation. However, the assessment committee—as the faculty-led standing committee of the academic senate within the institution’s shared governance structure tasked with directing assessment initiatives—is leading the institution’s efforts in improving the college’s assessment of student learning in preparation for the focused visit in April 2020, and faculty participation is essential for meeting the requirements for the

visit. Without robust engagement on the part of the tenured faculty body, Midwest Community College could be placed on probation as a next step in escalating action by the institution’s accrediting body. Regardless of the results of the focused visit, senior leadership must find a way to establish a sustainable culture of assessment within the institution for the long-term health and benefit of the college, its faculty, and, ultimately, its students.

Research Study and Questions

This case study seeks to create a roadmap for how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. Central questions in this investigation include:

1. What influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College?
2. How can senior leadership successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus?

Many assessment professionals have written on different approaches and actions senior leadership can take to make faculty involvement in assessment initiatives more likely, including accessibility and timeliness of data, staff capacity and support, time, and organizational culture and leadership (Hutchings, 2010; Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Suskie, 2014). However, these approaches must be implemented within a specific institutional context. The kind of assessment work needed for Midwest Community College’s focused visit requires not only faculty participation but committed leadership. This case study is concerned with how senior leadership at Midwest Community College can leverage future contract negotiations and institutional resources or modify their own behavior and interactions

with faculty to successfully engage tenured faculty in this work, as well as other institutional efforts in the future.

This study is focused exclusively on tenured faculty. While the partnership of adjunct faculty in assessment work is critical, the barriers to participation, reservations, and motivations for adjunct faculty are outside the scope of this investigation. Tenured faculty are the heart of a higher education institution and leaders of the college’s academic affairs. As a tenured faculty member, part of the tenure process is making a long-term commitment to an institution and becoming invested in its success. In addition, the longer careers of tenured faculty at one institution truly shape a college’s culture. As a result, adjunct faculty are not in the scope of this inquiry.

In addition, this research study is interested in senior leadership positions at Midwest Community College. At Midwest Community College, there is a clear line, delineated even by the location of the offices, between senior administrators, such as the president and vice presidents, and “B level” positions, such as deans. There are administrators at this level who are beloved by faculty and have collegial, successful working relationships. However, they are not in the position to make decisions at the institutional level that truly impact culture and engagement. This research study is interested in how senior leadership, namely the president and vice presidents, can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives and move the needle on the institution’s culture.

Significance

This study will facilitate a greater understanding of how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. The necessity of assessment is documented across the field of higher education, and

engagement in student learning outcomes assessment practices is a mark of quality higher education institutions (HLC, 2014; Kuh et al., 2015; Suskie, 2014). Faculty play a critical role in adopting and institutionalizing assessment practices on college campuses, and faculty involvement in assessment is often described as the key to using assessment data to positively impact student learning (Hutchings, 2010). Higher education leadership is acutely aware of the importance of faculty ownership and involvement in assessment in advancing institutional assessment initiatives (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). Assessment literature can inform potential actions senior leadership can take in order to make faculty involvement in assessment work more likely; however, these actions must be informed by the specific institutional type and culture in order to be successful.

This case study provides a deeper understanding of what barriers exist to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives and offers a more nuanced perspective of what it means for senior leadership to leverage institutional structures and relationships to more successfully engage faculty in assessment of student learning. Although there are a variety of factors that influence decision-making related to assessment of student learning within a higher education institution, this case study is particularly concerned with the people who shape the campus culture and the interpersonal dynamics which influence faculty engagement in institutional assessment initiatives. The experiences, stories, and perspectives of faculty and senior leaders at this unionized community college can inform decision-making at other institutions and have important implications for community college administrators, tenured faculty and union leaders, assessment officers, and future researchers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will explore the landscape of shared governance literature, focusing specifically on scholars who examine how shared governance processes play out in a community college context and discuss challenges to effective shared governance within this type of institution. Next, this chapter will examine the development of faculty unions on community college campuses and the impact collective bargaining can have on shared governance and institutional relationships. In addition, this chapter discusses the increasing accountability for documenting evidence of student learning in higher education and the need for collaboration between senior leadership and tenured faculty to do this well. Finally, this chapter will provide a brief introduction to principal-agent theory, its core concepts, and how this framework can be helpful for thinking through the complicated dynamics between faculty and senior leaders on unionized community college campuses.

Shared Governance

In higher education, the term governance refers to the structure and process of decision making a college uses to address internal and external issues (Amey, Jessup-Anger, & Jessup-Anger, 2008; AGB, 2017; Campbell & Bray, 2018; Kater, 2017; Messier, 2017). The model of shared governance in higher education institutions is a partnership between administration and faculty that promotes collaboration, shared decision-making, and accountability within the institution (AGB, 2017; Messier, 2017, Olson, 2009b; Simplicio, n.d.). An effective shared governance model strengthens the institution by providing a mechanism for meaningful engagement and creates a structure for a variety of viewpoints and ideas to be represented within the decision-making processes of an institution (AGB, 2017; Kater, 2017; Messier, 2017; Olson, 2009b). This model requires high levels of trust from both faculty and administrators in order to

work together effectively, negotiating strategies and policies that best serve the institution and its students (Cain, 2014; Favero & Bray, 2005). The model of shared governance is deeply rooted in the origins of higher education institutions; however, local culture and beliefs can profoundly impact the way the shared governance process plays out within an institutional context, specifically within a public, two-year, unionized environment (Birnbaum, 1988; Kater, 2017; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Lee, 1991; Schuster, Smith, Corak, & Yamada, 1994). Kezar and Eckel's (2004) comprehensive review of shared governance literature indicated there is significant need for scholarship to focus on the human dimensions of governance and to more closely examine the cultural issues that impact participation in shared governance work.

Role of Faculty and Leadership

Academic engagement in the shared governance structure of a college or university is essential to the vitality of the institution (Favero & Bray, 2005; Gerber, 2015; Shinn, 2014; Taylor, 2013). In the mid-1960s, the "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" was issued jointly by the AAUP, the ACE, and the AGB; these three organizations affirmed the critical role of faculty within the shared governance process and explicitly indicated that faculty should have primary oversight in the areas of teaching and learning (AAUP, 1966). The National Education Association (NEA) takes a similar stance, affirming that faculty should participate in the governance of their institutions and have primary responsibility around instructional matters (NEA, 2006). In addition, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) affirms the expectation for faculty engagement in the governance process in its criteria for accreditation, describing the shared governance relationship as one in which the governing board delegates day-to-day management of the institution to the administration and expects the faculty to oversee academic matters (2014). Scholars, professional organizations, and accrediting bodies have reached a

consensus that faculty should have a central role in determining the content and character of an institution’s academic programs and curricula (AGB, 2017; Amey, Jessup-Anger, & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Balkun, 2011; Garfield, 2008; Kater, 2017; Messier, 2017; Shinn, 2014). Although notoriously difficult to achieve, higher education institutions are unlikely to flourish without the cooperation and active engagement of its faculty (Favero & Bray, 2005; Gerber, 2015; Taylor, 2013). In addition, some research has shown active engagement of faculty in the process relates to more positive perceptions of shared governance processes (Miller, Vacik, & Benton, 1998).

Although the specific institutional culture will determine the most effective leadership traits within a local context, research can inform the leadership models and attributes that will likely succeed in engaging all stakeholders in decision-making within a community college shared governance structure. Scholars have attempted to delineate and describe the behaviors that will ensure a successful shared governance model within a variety of institutional contexts. The literature is replete with recommendations for senior leadership regarding how to promote healthy shared governance, including awareness of the specific institutional culture, open communication and consensus-building, transparency, and mutual respect (AGB, 2017; Eddy, 2010; Jones, 2010; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Taylor, 2013). Research on how community college faculty understand shared governance revealed that interpersonal relationships, trust in the decision-making processes, and a feeling of ownership are central to faculty engagement in governance (Favero & Bray, 2005; Kater, 2017; Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). Although previous research on shared governance in community colleges focused more on structural and functional models, current literature indicates faculty’s social, cultural, and interpersonal issues with governance outweigh any structural concerns; the social and cultural aspects of governance, such as relationship-building and trust, are increasingly important to community college faculty as

they conceptualize and engage in shared governance (Favero & Bray, 2005; Kater, 2017; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Parrish, 2015; Pate & Angell, 2013).

Challenges to Shared Governance

The processes of shared governance within a specific institutional context are often misunderstood and difficult to define. Institutional culture and beliefs about shared governance can be a significant challenge to a successful shared governance model and different expectations regarding the role of key stakeholders within decision-making processes can lead to discontent, mistrust, and disengagement in the shared governance structure (Campbell & Bray, 2018; Pierce, 2014; Shinn, 2014). Faculty generally maintain the expectation that they should be consulted on most issues at the institution, while administrators increasingly make decisions that impact faculty without engaging in collaborative decision-making, building consensus, or seeking faculty input (Bahls, 2014; Pierce, 2014). As external issues, such as local, state, and federal funding, articulation agreements between high schools and four-year colleges and universities, business and industry needs, and accreditation issues increasingly place pressure on college governance processes, these tensions continue to escalate (Amey, 2005).

In addition, shared governance structures within community colleges can be clouded by negative stereotypes about both faculty and administrators that prevent mutual understanding and respect between the two groups. The governance literature suggests that a permanent state of tension and conflict mark this relationship; however, the research has focused almost exclusively on the formal decision-making context (e.g., Favero & Bray, 2005). Little attention has been paid to informal relationships and networking that occurs outside of formal decision-making roles and how these interactions can be leveraged (Favero & Bray, 2005). Research exploring governance

issues has found that factors such as culture, trust, and involvement impact the effectiveness of shared governance as much as structures (Amey, 2005; Kaplan, 2004; Pope, 2004).

Finally, when discussing challenges to shared governance within community colleges, it is necessary to disaggregate the experiences of nontenured and part-time faculty from their tenured colleagues. The increasing number of nontenured and adjunct faculty within community colleges has created a significant barrier to robust participation in shared governance. Community colleges rely the most heavily on adjunct faculty, with more than 80% of faculty in nontenured positions and almost 70% of faculty in part-time positions (American Federation of Teachers, 2009). Part-time faculty do not often participate in governance because of their pay, availability, tenuous employment status, or diminished connection to campus (Amey, Jessup-Anger, & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Balkun, 2011; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Additionally, the overwhelming shift to adjunct faculty employment in community colleges has denied tenure protections to the majority of college faculty, limiting their ability to participate authentically in shared governance processes (Gerber, 2015).

Faculty Unions

In U.S. public higher education institutions like community colleges, unions have a deeply rooted history and are a prominent factor in campus culture. Faculty who organize into a union collectively bargain for a contract that defines and protects the terms and conditions of employment. Traditionally, collective bargaining agreements on college campuses addressed economic issues such as job duties, salaries, and health benefits, whereas faculty senates retained control over academic issues such as degree requirements and curriculum (Boris, 2004; Cain, 2017; Maitland & Rhoades, 2001; Messier, 2017). While the ability to collectively bargain empowers faculty unions to advocate for important economic issues on campus, contractual

language around tenure, promotion, and due process can influence faculty participation in shared governance. When the relationship between faculty and administration becomes defined by labor-management conflict, lingering tensions can create a complicated dynamic that makes it difficult to accomplish the hard work of shared governance of the institution.

Prevalence of Unions

Overall, there has been significant growth in unionization efforts and collective bargaining relationships in higher education (Annunziato, 1995; Berry & Savarese, 2012; Herbert, 2017; Rhoades, 1998). Most recently, the biggest area of union growth has been in non-tenure track faculty within private non-profit colleges, including religiously affiliated institutions; there has also been continued growth in the number of bargaining units in the public sector among tenured and tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, and graduate student employees (Berry & Savarese, 2012; Cain, 2017; Herbert, 2017). Faculty unions are present at nearly one third of all college and university campuses (Herbert, 2017; Sproul, Bucklew, & Houghton, 2014; Wickens, 2008). Although somewhat dated, the most recent data suggest that approximately 27% of all U.S. faculty, which includes 430,000 faculty members and graduate students at more than 500 institutions and 1,174 campuses, are represented by collective bargaining agreements (Berry & Savarese, 2012; Cain, 2017; Herbert, 2017).

Faculty unionization is highly dependent on institutional type and region. Academic unionism has thrived at community colleges over several decades (Annunziato, 1995; Berry & Savarese, 2012; Boris, 2004; Herbert, 2017; Wickens, 2008). Public 2-year colleges are the most heavily unionized, with 160,062 faculty, or 42% of their total faculty, covered by collective bargaining agreements (Berry & Savarese, 2012). Illinois has a large concentration of unionized workers generally, and unionized faculty, specifically (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; Cain,

2017). Since 2000, there have been 120 new bargaining units established in colleges and universities, and 22 were in Illinois (Cain, 2017; Herbert, 2017). Following the 2018 Supreme Court decision in *Janus v. AFSCME*, which ruled that public-sector employees do not have to pay fees or dues to their unions, there was only a slight decline in union affiliation of employed workers in Illinois (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019; *Janus v. AFSCME*, 2018). The majority of faculty bargaining units are affiliated with one of three national organizations: the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and the National Education Association (NEA). These three national unions represent nearly 80% of all unionized faculty (Cain, 2017; Herbert, 2017).

Faculty Unions and Shared Governance

The relationship of collective bargaining to shared governance in higher education institutions has consistently been a subject of concern among scholars. Some of the earliest literature examining faculty attitudes towards collective bargaining questioned the relationship between the faculty union and senate, expressing apprehension that the collective bargaining process would replace the work of faculty senates (Baldridge & Kemerer, 1976; Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Cain, 2017; Garbarino, 1980; Glenn, 1987). When examining the benefits and disadvantages of faculty unionization, the impact on the college's shared governance structure is paramount (Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Cain, 2017; Garfield, 2008; Wickens, 2008). Many scholars, and even national unions themselves, argued that unions can reinforce shared governance and provide increased opportunity for faculty input (AAUP, 1973; Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Cain, 2017; Maitland & Rhoades, 2001). Others warned that unions could encroach on the work of academic senates and that faculty contracts which mandate service on shared governance committees could undermine participation in

shared governance (Messier, 2017). To date, there does not appear to be much consensus in literature on the role faculty unionization has in shared governance. The line between collective bargaining and governance issues was a point of conflict when faculty first began to organize, and individual campuses are continuing to test the boundaries (Baldridge & Kemerer, 1976; Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Boris, 2004; Cain, 2017; Maitland & Rhoades, 2001; Wickens, 2008).

When faculty unions embed contractual language that recognizes faculty’s role within the shared governance system in a negotiated agreement, it can give legal standing to and protect the voice of faculty in issues related to governance. Many academic senates and union chapters have negotiated the boundaries of their respective responsibilities, which are often codified in collective bargaining agreements (Boris, 2004; Maitland & Rhoades, 2001; Messier, 2017; Wickens, 2008). With job security, promotion, and due process codified in a negotiated agreement, all faculty, including tenured, non-tenured, and adjunct, are encouraged to actively participate in the shared governance structure, using their voice to advance the mission of the institution. However, if faculty’s role in shared governance is solely derived from a collective bargaining agreement, it could discourage faculty from fully participating in the shared governance system. When faculty involvement in governance becomes solely about specific responsibilities outlined in a negotiated agreement, the genuine purpose of shared governance, giving voice to faculty and maximizing participation in decision-making processes, can be lost (Messier, 2017).

Faculty Unions and Campus Relationships

Scholars have also considered how collective bargaining influences the relationships between individuals and employee groups on campus. According to Cain’s (2017) thorough

review of the literature, scholarship in this field provides mixed interpretations. Some research has suggested that unionized faculty are less satisfied with relationships after bargaining, and scholars have indicated that administrators believe that campus relations have been strained by bargaining (e.g., Odewahn & Spritzer, 1976; Walker & Lawler, 1982; Wilson, Holley, & Martin, 1983). There is evidence that the bargaining process can be adversarial and fracture already divided campus relationships between faculty and administrators (Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Cain, 2017; Garfield, 2008). During contract negotiations, administration is often portrayed as hostile to the faculty, which can lead to a decline in faculty morale, negative working relationships, and disillusionment with the shared governance process (Bucklew, Houghton, & Ellison, 2012; Garfield, 2008). In addition, faculty in a unionized environment expressed less satisfaction with senior leadership than their non-unionized peers (Cameron, 1982; Lillydahl & Singell, 1993; Wickens, 2008). However, there is also evidence to suggest that bargaining relationships between faculty and administration can be successful through proactive leadership, clear communication, transparency, and trusting relationships (Cain, 2017). Relationships between faculty and administration are vital to the functioning of the institution and often determine the general morale on campus as well as the efficiency of day-to-day operations (Garfield, 2008; Wickens, 2008).

Student Learning Assessment

Assessment of student learning is a systematic process of gathering, interpreting, and using information about student learning to improve the educational quality of a higher education institution (AAHE, 1992; HLC, 2014). For the past three decades, colleges and universities across the United States have faced increasing demands for accountability by the federal government, state governments, and both institutional and programmatic accrediting bodies; as a result, higher

education institutions have developed systems for assessing student learning across courses, programs, and the general education curriculum (Ewell, 2009; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011; Suskie, 2014). Assessment literature provides insight into how academic leaders, assessment professionals, and faculty have adapted to student learning accountability while wrestling with institutional cultures and shared governance structures (Ewell, 2009; Suskie, 2014; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014).

Good Assessment Practice

Higher education institutions’ internal processes and methodologies to assess student learning should reflect good practice (AAHE, 1992; HLC, 2014). The American Association for Higher Education’s (AAHE) Principles for Good Practice of Assessment of Student Learning describe assessment initiatives that are focused on improving student learning, embedded and ongoing, widespread, visibly valued and supported by leadership, and meet external accountability mechanisms while improving educational quality (AAHE, 1992). For many community colleges, institutional and programmatic accrediting bodies are the strongest driver of assessment efforts within the institution, more so than their four-year counterparts (Crain, 2014; Ewell, 2009; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Without proactive academic leadership, community colleges may build internal assessment structures for accountability measures rather than improvement of student learning (Ewell, 2009). Institutions with good assessment practice must have a compelling vision for assessment processes, widespread faculty engagement in assessment, clear use for assessment data, robust institutional support for assessment work, and embedded assessment processes (AAHE, 1992; Ewell, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2015). Many of these practices rely on strong academic leadership that can cultivate a campus environment in which assessment and continuous improvement are valued (Ewell, 2009).

While senior leadership can and should provide guidance, leadership, support, and resources for good assessment practices, the work of assessing student learning is rooted in classroom teaching and learning, which overwhelmingly resides within the faculty’s purview (AAUP, 1966; Ewell, 2009; Hutchings, 2010; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Suskie, 2014). Higher education leadership is acutely aware of the importance of faculty ownership and involvement in advancing institutional assessment initiatives (Eaton, 2008; Kuh & Ikenberry, 2009; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014). Many assessment professionals have written on different approaches and actions senior leadership can take to make faculty involvement in assessment work more likely, including accessibility and timeliness of data, staff capacity and support, time, and organizational culture and leadership (Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007; Hutching, 2010; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Sukie, 2014). However, assessment professionals also recognize that there is no single best way of implementing assessment within an institution, and these approaches must be contextualized within a specific institutional type and culture (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

Barriers to Faculty Engagement in Assessment

There are numerous barriers to faculty engagement with assessment initiatives discussed throughout the literature. Some of these barriers are ubiquitous across institutional types, while others are unique to community colleges. The assessment literature recognizes common individual barriers to assessment including lack of training in assessment measures and methods, concerns about assessment’s punitive uses, and doubts about its pedagogical usefulness (Cain, 2014; Cain & Hutchings, 2015; Hutchings; 2010; Suskie, 2014). Research focused specifically on assessment work within community colleges cited institutional barriers, such as the high ratio of adjunct faculty, misalignment between assessment and faculty reward systems, limited

professional support, collective bargaining agreements, and governance issues, as factors that can lead to low faculty interest and engagement in assessment (Cain, 2014; Hutchings, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2013; Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). How assessment of student learning is viewed on a particular campus, the specific barriers that exist, and who engages in assessment work—or not—can be an important lens through which to view the history, status, and health of relationships between faculty and administration.

Faculty Unions and Assessment Work

Collective bargaining agreements for full-time faculty may be a challenge that community colleges must overcome in order for there to be meaningful engagement in assessment work. On campuses with collective bargaining agreements governing faculty work, faculty job descriptions, evaluation criteria, tenure and promotion expectations, and changes in working conditions must be negotiated (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). Unless assessment of student learning is included in the contract negotiation processes and codified in the faculty contract with appropriate reward measures, faculty are not required to engage as a job duty. Individual campus bargaining agreements and local negotiating processes will largely dictate how faculty engage with assessment work on campus. However, the national faculty union organizations have provided some direction here, and these organizations are supportive of campus efforts for assessment of student learning (Gold, Rhoades, Smith, & Kuh, 2011). The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and National Education Association (NEA) have affirmed the importance of assessment, emphasized the central role of faculty in assessment work, and recognized the necessity of faculty involvement in shared governance in order to move assessment work forward (Gold, Rhoades, Smith, & Kuh, 2011).

Principal-Agent Theory

On a unionized community college campus, the relationships between faculty and senior leaders can play an important role in the effectiveness of the shared governance structure. The collective bargaining agreement, negotiated between the faculty union and the institution, explicitly defines specific aspects of the relationship between faculty and administration, while shared governance provides an additional layer of complexity to these relationships. How an institution codifies these relationships can have a significant impact on faculty engagement in the governance of an institution. However, interpersonal relationships can often have more influence over faculty participation in shared governance and institutional initiatives like assessment. Principal-agent theory can be a useful lens through which to view the motivations and actions of both faculty and senior leadership within the complex web of formal contracts and informal relationships that intertwine the campus community.

Framework and Core Assumptions

Developed by economists in the 1970s, principal-agent theory (PAT) is a theoretical framework concerned with the motivations and actions of individuals or organizations (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). PAT describes the relationship between two or more parties in which one party, the principal, enters into a contractual relationship with another party, the agent, to provide goods or services (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008). The relationship between the principal and agent is governed by implicit or explicit contracts—or both—in which the principal delegates authority to the agent to provide a good or service on the principal’s behalf (Lane, 2012). At its core, PAT is interested in how to compel the agent to act in the best interest of the principal through explicit or implicit contractual relationships (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012, Lane & Kivisto, 2008).

Miller (2005) identified six core assumptions of the “canonical” principal-agent model developed by the field of economics. First, the model assumes the agent’s actions impact a payoff to the principal. Second, the theory acknowledges that agents often have specialized knowledge, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the principal to monitor or assess the work of the agent; this knowledge discrepancy is called information asymmetry (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012). Third, the theory assumes agents’ preferences are derived from self-interest and do not align with the interests of the principal. Fourth, the agent reports to a single principal and that principal has specific preferences. Fifth, principal and agent share knowledge about the costs, outcomes, and other structures, and the principal will compensate slightly more than the agent’s opportunity cost. Finally, the principal can engage in ultimatum bargaining, or the principal can cancel the contract should the agent not accept the terms (Miller, 2005).

As a result of these assumptions, the principal must provide incentives to the agent to act in the best interest of the principal and monitor behavior to ensure an agent’s actions are in line with the principal’s goals (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008). Because agents are assumed to act in self-interest and with different goals than the principal, either incentives or monitoring are necessary to ensure agents are complying with the contract. Scholars utilizing PAT in the fields of political science and higher education have also recognized that in large bureaucracies, slippage, or unintentional misalignment of actions, may occur due to poor communication of the principal’s goals (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). Ensuring that the agent’s actions, intentionally or unintentionally, are aligned with the principal’s goals is the heart of principal-agent theory.

Principal-Agent Theory in Higher Education

As public bureaucracies, public higher education institutions are full of principal-agent relationships governed by explicit contractual relationships (Lane & Kivisto, 2008), and principal-agency theory can be a helpful framework to think about how faculty and senior leadership interact on community college campuses. On a community college campus, senior leadership, the principal, enters into a contractual relationship with tenured faculty, the agents. Many of the core assumptions of the original model of PAT adapt to this context seamlessly (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008; Miller, 2005). For example, as agents, faculty take actions, both in the course of their teaching and as stakeholders in the institution’s shared governance structure, that impact senior leadership. Because faculty have specialized knowledge about their field of expertise and pedagogical practices in the classroom, it can be difficult for senior leadership to monitor and assess their work. Also, as the model assumes, faculty and senior leadership often have different priorities, preferences, and motivations about both the work of teaching and the shared governance of the institution.

Although the canonical principal-agent model was developed by economists, scholars agree that the original model can be adapted by modifying one or more of the core assumptions of the theory, most notably by political scientists (Eisenhardt, 1989; Kivisto, 2007; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008; Miller, 2005). As a result, some scholars have applied PAT to the higher education landscape in order to examine the agency relationships that exist surrounding postsecondary organizations, while others have applied PAT to examine relationships internal to higher education institutions, such as the agency relationship between faculty and administration (e.g., Cunningham, 2009; Ortmann, 1996; Gomez-Mejia & Balkan, 1992; Massy & Wilger, 1992). Lane (2012) wrote thoroughly about the special considerations scholars must take in order to apply PAT to the relationship between faculty and administration. For example, the canonical

model of agency theory assumes both parties can freely enter and exit the contract, and the principal can engage in ultimatum bargaining (Miller, 2005). However, in higher education institutions with tenured, unionized faculty, it is more difficult to terminate a contract due to job protections provided in the contract. When the agents in the model are tenured, unionized faculty, it will impact how the principal and agents interact (Lane, 2012). Lane (2012) also recognized that higher education professionals work on campuses filled with multiple and collective principals. Faculty can be monitored by multiple principals; public bureaucracies, such as community colleges, often create long chains of principals and agents within an organizational structure. Faculty unions often enter into a bargaining agreement with collective principals, such as the president’s cabinet or the board of trustees, who must agree on and approve the faculty’s negotiated agreement, introducing more complexity into the relationship. Although some of the theory’s original assumptions must be adapted to fit a public community college setting, PAT offers an important framework when considering how senior leadership can ensure faculty’s actions are aligned with the institution’s goals.

Principal-Agent Theory and Faculty Engagement

Principal-agent theory is the most relevant in relationships in which there is a substantial conflict in goals between the parties involved; and information asymmetry provides an opportunity for an agent’s actions to be misaligned with the principal’s goals (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane & Kivisto, 2008). On unionized community college campuses, these conditions are not only present, but prevalent. Dunn (2003) described the tension that exists on higher education campuses between increasing calls for accountability by external stakeholders and the expectation for autonomy and academic freedom by faculty. In addition, faculty do not always respond directly to evaluation structures and often employ more nuanced approaches to

determining which institutional initiatives are important to their work (Gonzales, 2015). Under these conditions, the relationship between faculty and senior leadership is ripe for analysis utilizing the principal-agent theory. In applying PAT, higher education professionals are forced to be explicit about the motivations of different individuals on campus, and, as Ortmann (1996) observed, often simply acknowledging conflicting interests can make all the difference. When assumptions about an agent’s behavior, which are the basis for PAT, are expected, senior leadership can leverage various incentives or monitoring to ensure faculty’s actions are in line with the institution’s goals. PAT provides a framework for how senior leadership can more successfully engage tenured faculty involvement in assessment initiatives through incentives, such as compensation, institutional support, and communication of value, or monitoring, such as formal contractual duties and tenure criteria. In addition, PAT can be useful for explaining how the institutions of tenure, unions, and shared governance impact the relationships between faculty and senior leadership.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions must document evidence of student learning assessment as a result of increased accountability for student learning in higher education. Both faculty and senior leadership are invested in how assessment work is completed on campus, yet these groups often have different motivations, expectations, and priorities when approaching this work. Senior leadership is responsible for fulfilling the expectations of external quality assurance agencies, but assessment of student learning falls under the faculty’s purview as a practice embedded in the teaching and learning work of the institution. When considering how to engage tenured faculty in assessment work on a unionized community college campus, it is essential to examine how the campus environment, specifically the institution’s culture, shared governance structure, and

faculty-administration relationships, support or discourage their participation. The presence of a faculty union adds an additional layer of complexity to the institutional culture and must be taken into consideration. Existing literature on shared governance in community colleges, faculty unions and collective bargaining, and assessment of student learning together contribute important insights into faculty engagement in this work; in addition, principal-agent theory provides a helpful framework for thinking about how senior leadership can use incentives and monitoring to align faculty behavior regarding assessment work with the priorities of the institution. Using principal-agent theory as a framework and building on the intersections of the existing scholarship, this study examined how senior leadership can leverage personal relationships, contractual language, shared governance processes, and institutional resources to successfully engage faculty participation in assessment work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Current assessment literature has documented the need for faculty involvement in assessment in higher education, discussed the various concerns faculty overall may have to engaging in assessment initiatives, and outlined general strategies that senior leadership can use to make faculty involvement in assessment more likely (AAUP, 1966; Cain 2014; Cain & Hutchings, 2015; Eaton, 2008; Ewell, 2009; Hutchings; 2010; Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007; Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014; Sukie, 2014). However, there remains a need for a deep, qualitative examination of how the dynamics between senior leadership and tenured faculty impact engagement with assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. Case study research in the social sciences is fueled by the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2014), and an explanatory case study designed to examine the dynamic between tenured faculty and senior leadership as these groups navigate institutional complexities around assessment initiatives could be valuable to a wide audience (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2016; Yin, 2014). This chapter will outline the rationale for selecting a case study as the most appropriate methodology and describe the constructivist epistemological perspective from which this research is approached. As a reminder, this case study examined how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. Central questions in this investigation included:

1. What influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College?
2. How can senior leadership successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus?

Case Study Design

Case study research explores a real-life phenomenon over time through detailed, in-depth collection of data involving multiple sources of information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009). A key characteristic of case study research is that the object of investigation is bounded by time and place, defined and described within certain parameters (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). In addition, case study research focuses on an object rather than a process (Stake, 1995) and can be used to examine a decision or set of decisions by individuals, organizations, or institutions (Yin, 2014). As a result, a case study is the ideal methodology for capturing the perspectives of both tenured faculty and senior leaders on a specific institutional initiative within a bounded period of time and determining how different experiences will inform answers to the research questions. Although case study research can be successfully conducted from multiple epistemological orientations, the case study is well suited to a constructivist perspective (Stake, 1995). As a researcher, I am sensitive to the multiple realities present on campus and aware there are different experiences, perspectives, and motivations between tenured faculty and senior leaders, as well as between different tenured faculty members.

Stake (1995) identified two different purposes for engaging in case study research and used the researcher’s purpose to delineate between intrinsic or instrumental case studies. Intrinsic case studies are fueled by the researcher’s curiosity about a specific case, while instrumental case studies seek to explore a specific case in order to gain insight into a larger research question (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2016; Yin, 2014). Using Stake’s (1995) definitions, this case study is inspired by both intrinsic and instrumental motivations. I am exceptionally curious about the bounded system of one unionized community college campus in particular; at the same time, I believe that this institutional context is not unique, and the experience of faculty and senior leadership here can inform the experiences of others at similarly situated institutions.

Yin (2014) argued that case study research has a distinct advantage as a research method when the research question is asked about a contemporary set of events over which the researcher has little or no control. By conducting a case study, I have the opportunity to tell the stories of both faculty and senior leaders’ experiences on a unionized community college campus, develop a deep understanding of faculty motivation, barriers, and incentives when it comes to engaging to assessment initiatives, and paint a detailed picture of what it looks like for senior leadership to leverage institutional structures and relationships to engage faculty in assessment of student learning (Thomas, 2016). As Midwest Community College navigates these institutional challenges in real time, conducting a case study allowed me to listen to the individual voices of both senior leaders and tenured faculty in order to develop a collective set of recommendations that have practical significance for similarly situated institutions.

Data Collection

As a large, public community college with a unionized faculty body, Midwest Community College is a useful institutional context for answering this research question. Midwest Community College is an ideal institution to conduct research regarding faculty engagement in assessment initiatives because, at the time of this research study, the college is looking toward a focused visit from its institutional accreditor on assessment of student learning. In order to demonstrate that the institution meets accreditation standards, specific actions that demand tenured faculty involvement must occur within a two-year timeframe to prepare for the site visit. Due to the heightened scrutiny and potential negative consequences for the institution if the visit is not successful, senior leadership is highly motivated to ensure faculty participation and collaboration. Midwest Community College is also an interesting institution to explore the role the faculty union plays in assessment initiatives due to the fact the faculty union recently

clashed with senior leadership over the inclusion of assessment in the collective bargaining agreement, as described in Chapter 1. The data collection process included interviews of four senior leaders and four tenured faculty members. Additional data was collected from observation of faculty meeting spaces and review of relevant institutional documents. After IRB approval, I tested the interview protocol with a faculty member at Midwest Community College to ensure the interview protocol collected the data necessary to answer my research questions. In doing so, any potential issues were minimized, and adjustments were made prior to conducting interviews with the faculty and administrators affiliated with Midwest Community College.

Participant Selection

In designing my research methods, I engaged in the purposeful sampling of data sources to inform my research question. Maxwell (2013) described one of the goals of purposeful selection as “deliberately selecting” the settings, persons, or activities that will provide information that is particularly relevant to a research question (p. 98). As a current employee of Midwest Community College, I have personal relationships with many faculty and administrators, both current and former, on campus, which allowed me to identify individuals who provided the best data for my study. I deliberately selected eight individuals who represented essential perspectives for this study, including tenured faculty members and senior leaders who are currently employed or have recently left the institution. I selected a diverse panel of tenured faculty in terms of specific demographic characteristics, such as gender, academic disciplines, including both career and technical education and liberal arts, and union involvement, ranging from union leadership to union members, to ensure I fully described a wide range of faculty experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). In addition, I selected senior leaders, both currently employed or who recently left the institution, by considering their

gender and highest title at the institution to ensure multiple perspectives are represented. Final selection of participants in this research study depended on an individual’s availability for interviews and their willingness to engage in a potentially controversial topic.

Procedures

This case study relies on data gathered from three sources: interviews, institutional documentation, and observation of faculty spaces. The use of multiple sources of evidence in case study research allows for converging lines of inquiry and more accurate data analysis (Yin, 2014). Interviews with both senior leaders and faculty were conducted in 60–90-minute sessions. These interviews resembled guided conversations with the intention of following a specific line of inquiry while also simultaneously asking non-threatening, open-ended questions (Yin, 2014). Both groups of participants were asked a series of predetermined but open-ended questions about factors related to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives. The interview process allowed me to cover specific topics around assessment initiatives, faculty engagement, and the impact of the faculty union, while leaving space to ask clarifying questions and explore specific comments further. All participants were able to indicate their preferred meeting location, including off-campus locations.

In addition to interviews with senior leadership and faculty, I examined institutional documentation related to the relationships between administration and faculty. Since a key area of interest in this case study is the ways in which senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives, an exploration of institutional documents related to assessment initiatives, shared governance, and union contracts was necessary. Accreditation documentation, past and present collective bargaining agreements, and internal communication were key documents of interest in this study. As a public institution, Midwest Community

College publicly posts the board meeting minutes and current union contracts on their website, so faculty negotiated agreements and any board actions were readily available online. Relevant accreditation documentation is posted internally on the employee portal for all faculty, staff, and administrators to access; however, my research request to use the institution’s accreditation documents was denied by the president of Midwest Community College. Finally, as a current employee and union member, I have access to internal communication regarding the last contract negotiation, as well as any union communication to its membership since. Collecting and analyzing institutional documentation provided an important source of information that is stable, unobtrusive, and specific, allowing me to corroborate evidence gathered from participant interviews (Yin, 2014).

Finally, I engaged in participant observation of faculty spaces as a third source of data. As a tenured faculty member at Midwest Community College, I am uniquely situated to examine how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment at this institution. Participant observation provides a unique experience for collecting case study data because my role within the institution allowed me to gain access to faculty spaces within the shared governance structure and union environment that would be otherwise inaccessible to a study (Yin, 2014). There would be no way to directly gather information shared regarding assessment initiatives in faculty union meetings, for example, without engaging in participant observation; as a result, this perspective was invaluable to producing an accurate portrayal of Midwest Community College (Yin, 2014).

Data Analysis

According to Creswell & Poth (2018), data analysis occurs in three stages: preparing and organizing the data for analysis, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding, and

finally representing the data in discussion. After the interviews were completed, each audio file was prepared and organized for data analysis by transcribing the interview using a two-part process. First, I used an encrypted online service to turn interview recordings into text through automated voice recognition technology. Then, I reviewed the text version while listening to the audio recording to check for accuracy and make any necessary corrections. During the second phase, I reviewed my notes while listening to the audio recordings in order to add elements such as pauses, gestures, or laughter. This process allowed me to become deeply familiar with the data shared by participants while also permitting me to transcribe the interview efficiently. I completed the transcription of each interview the day it occurred so later interviews could be informed by what I learn from previous participants. In addition, I began to gain a sense of potential codes at this stage to use for the second stage of data analysis.

After reviewing my three sources of data, the interview transcripts, institutional documentation, and participant observations, I relied on the theoretical propositions of principal-agent theory to guide my exploration into the data (Yin, 2014). This analysis strategy allowed the theoretical foundations that shaped the study design, research questions, and literature review to guide the case study analysis by “pointing to relevant contextual conditions to be described as well as explanations to be examined” (Yin, 2014, p. 136). As discussed in Chapter 2, PAT is interested in how a principal can provide incentives for the agents to act in the best interest of the principal or monitor behavior to ensure an agent’s actions are in line with the principal’s goals (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008). With this framework guiding my exploration into the data, I reduced the data into themes through a process of coding. First, I read through the interview transcripts, institutional documentation, and observations, taking notes and identifying initial codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Then, I classified the data into

codes, organized the codes into themes, and determined noteworthy themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). As I engaged in this process, the theoretical foundations of principle-agent theory highlighted relevant content and focused my analysis.

Confidentiality

Participants’ confidentiality is a necessary consideration for any research study, but it was particularly important given the sensitive and potentially political nature of this case study. As a result, I used several strategies to ensure participant confidentiality. I conducted all interview requests via phone or personal email to avoid leaving a record of my request on the institution’s email system. I provided all participants with an informed consent form prior to any interviews, which outlined the purpose of the study and reaffirmed the voluntary nature of participation. Audio files of interviews were recorded and stored on an encrypted hard drive, not institutional computers, in order to ensure the confidentiality of participant data. Only I had access to the recordings. Finally, all participants were de-identified during the transcription process, and no identifying information, including job title or pronouns, was used.

Delimiters

A key characteristic of case study research is that the object of investigation is bounded by time and place, defined and described within certain parameters (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Although not limitations of this study, there are several delimiters present due to the bounded nature of this methodological approach. The unit of analysis under investigation was assessment initiatives that have taken place on Midwest Community College’s campus from the institution’s mid-cycle review site visit in spring of 2018 through the institution’s focused visit on assessment of student learning in spring of 2020, specifically focusing on the efforts by senior leadership to engage unionized, tenured faculty in program and

general education outcomes assessment to satisfy the requirements of the institution’s accrediting body.

This case study was bounded by place and time, but it is also necessary to distinguish what was under exploration from data that was external to this case study (Yin, 2014). This study was focused exclusively on the perspectives of tenured faculty. While the partnership of adjunct faculty in assessment work is critical, the barriers to participation and motivation for adjunct faculty were outside the scope of this investigation. In addition, this research study was interested in senior leadership positions, or the vice presidents and president, at Midwest Community College. Finally, this case study was interested in the context in which assessment initiatives take place, such as the relationships between tenured faculty and senior leaders, as well as the structures that guide those relationships, such as the college’s shared governance structure and the faculty union. This case study was not intended to be representative of all faculty at Midwest Community College or generalizable to all community colleges. However, this case study was designed to give voice to individual experiences within a specific institutional setting in the hopes that similarly situated readers may be able to apply the conclusions to their own institutional contexts.

Trustworthiness

Several strategies were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and establish the reliability of the evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2014). First, I clearly documented operational procedures, and I used this case study protocol to remain consistent throughout the data collection process. I used an audit trail to ensure consistency within both conducting the study and analyzing the resulting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the audit trail process, I mapped my research questions to the interview protocol prior to data collection and

connected initial codes back to my research questions during the data analysis process. In addition, I used software to create a case study database to preserve the data in an organized, retrievable form (Yin, 2014). Second, this case study used multiple sources of evidence in an effort to triangulate the data through interview transcripts, document analysis, and participant observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Multiple sources of evidence were used in order to develop converging lines of inquiry, so findings were supported by more than one source of evidence (Yin, 2014). Thick, rich description in the chapters presenting the data, as well as the length of time spent in the field, also add to the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Finally, one of the most important ways to ensure I have not misrepresented participants’ perspectives and opinions is to ask them. I engaged in respondent validation, or member checking, to confirm I have accurately represented participants’ perspectives by taking a rough draft of my preliminary analysis to participants and asking them to reflect on its credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

Positionality and Reflexivity

As a faculty member at Midwest Community College, this case study is deeply entwined with my professional work. When I was in the process of considering research questions for my dissertation, I stepped into the role of chair of the academic assessment committee in the same month in which Midwest Community College received notification of a focused visit on assessment of student learning from its institutional accreditor. In addition, I was asked by the faculty union leaders to participate in contract negotiations between administration and the faculty union when assessment work was being discussed. My topic, and the driving interest for my doctoral research, emerged directly from these personal experiences at Midwest Community College, and this case study is action research rooted within a local context (McNiff, 2013).

By choosing to examine how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College, my positionality as a faculty member, union member, and chair of the assessment committee at Midwest Community College certainly influenced how I collected, analyzed, and interpreted data (Bourke, 2014). It is important to recognize that, as assessment committee chair, my public advocacy for assessment initiatives undoubtedly impacted the interviewee’s responses, which also potentially influenced my line of inquiry (Yin, 2014). Particularly for the faculty participants in this study, I leveraged my relationship-building and reputation on campus to create a conversation in which individuals knew their perspective was valued despite any differences in opinion and communicated that my intention in this study was to identify productive, helpful recommendations for the future. As a faculty member, I believe in the essential role of faculty in shared governance structures in higher education institutions. In addition, I am a proud union member; I believe in the importance of unions and the right to collective bargaining in order to protect and advocate for workers. Although it is impossible to completely remove my motivations, assumptions, and biases in this research, I share my positionality as a way to contextualize my research as I discuss how to best engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus.

Conclusion

This case study was approached from a constructivist epistemological perspective and explored the experiences of tenured faculty and senior leadership on one community college campus. This study’s design, including the methodology, data collection strategies, and participant selection process, was shaped by the desire to investigate the dynamics between tenured faculty and senior leadership within a bounded place and time as these groups navigate

institutional complexities around faculty engagement in initiatives to assess student learning. While this case study is not intended to be representative of all faculty at Midwest Community College or generalizable to all community colleges, it was designed to tell the stories of both faculty and administrators’ experiences in a unionized community college, develop a deep understanding of faculty motivation when it comes to engaging to assessment initiatives, and provide recommendations for how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in institutional assessment initiatives in the future.

Chapter 4: Findings

Between the time of faculty contract negotiations during summer of 2018 and the external accrediting body’s focused visit regarding assessment of student learning in spring of 2020, Midwest Community College’s senior leaders and faculty body navigated complex and nuanced institutional dynamics in order to meet accreditation expectations in the wake of a bitter contract negotiation. This chapter provides an overview of the data from the eight participants in this study, which include four current and former members of senior leadership and four faculty members who are union leaders and union members. The data gathered from participant-observation and institutional documents were used to triangulate the findings from the interviews, as demonstrated in Appendix E. As a reminder, the specific findings identified in this chapter are ultimately answering the research questions guiding this study:

1. What influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College?
2. How can senior leadership successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus?

The first section in this chapter identifies the common ground shared between faculty and senior leadership related to their work at Midwest Community College. The second section discusses the personal and institutional factors that influence a faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus, including faculty’s perceived barriers to engagement in assessment activities. The third section in this chapter discusses how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this unionized community college campus.

Common Ground

Motivation

All participants in this study identified the students at Midwest Community College as their source of motivation in their daily work on the college. Both faculty and senior leaders expressed a similar belief in the mission of community colleges and the benefit of higher education to the community, as well as a desire to improve the lives of students who attend Midwest Community College through access to high-quality and affordable higher education. As one faculty member stated:

> Definitely the students motivate me. The best part of my day is when I'm teaching my students. That definitely motivates me. And I'm not being cliché. It actually really does. I think it's important to make the school better for everybody, but students most importantly.

This personal connection to students was present in each of the faculty member’s answers. Additionally, most faculty evoked the larger impact of higher education on students’ life. Speaking about their perception of the impact of their work on students’ lives, one faculty member put it this way:

> [Midwest Community College] offers, for many students, kind of a last chance, best hope to either get a terminal degree for a career or maybe a certificate for a career or get the first two years of college out of the way inexpensively compared to going somewhere else. We have a lower-middle class or upper-low-income population. I know a lot of them are first-time college attendees, first-time from the family. Unfortunately, from what I hear, the vast majority are not college ready. So I think it means a lot in the sense that, holy cow, you know, what we do might be their last best chance at not being a cashier at

> Target for the rest of their life or being on some sort of public aid the rest of their life or whatever. It's kind of a touchy-feely answer.

Similarly, another faculty member spoke about how the community college student population, specifically, motivated their work:

> At a community college, it means that I contribute to the greater democratization of, you know, the United States. . . . I wanted to work in an institution that would serve working class students, more so than an R1 institution. I like doing research. I keep on doing my own on the side. But, it's a chance of bettering someone else's life.

Senior leaders at the institution also expressed that Midwest Community College’s students are a source of motivation in their own work at the institution. One senior leader stated:

> The greatest day, you know, is what day at the campus? Graduation. Just to be able to see all their happy faces walking across that stage, knowing they did well. And they're leaving our college with the credentials they need to be successful.

In addition to the student body, all senior leaders who participated in this study were motivated by the desire to improve the campus for employees at the institution, including faculty and staff. Several administrators who had been faculty previously drew on their experiences as faculty as motivation for their work as senior leaders:

> I see my role as an advocate and a representative. I've been an instructor . . . so I know what it's like to be a faculty member. I did as an adjunct, and I did as a full-time. I think I have a good understanding of that. Certainly [an] advocate for the students.

Whether driven by a personal desire to help students, a higher ideal regarding the open access mission of community college, or a sense of commitment to serve the campus community, both

faculty and senior leaders who participated in this study shared a common motivation to support the students at Midwest Community College.

Purpose of Assessment

All faculty and senior leaders agreed the purpose of assessment of student learning in a higher education institution is the improvement of teaching and learning. Faculty who participated in this study described the purpose of assessment of student learning as the improvement of one’s own instruction and, ultimately, student learning; in addition, faculty acknowledged the need for accountability in the classroom. One faculty member stated succinctly, “I see the purpose of assessment is to make sure that your courses are functioning the way they're supposed to.” Another faculty member, upon describing multiple factors that impact teaching and learning in a higher education institution, said:

> The only way to have any sort of check or balance on this entire situation, to ensure that students are actually learning what was approved as the curriculum, is to have some intervening measure that sort of double-checks that outcomes are being achieved. . . . It would be complete chaos and an utter failure if there weren't some regulating mechanism. And one of the few ways you have of sort of gauging how well the moving pieces are working together is through assessment of student learning.

Faculty were also aware of the external pressures to assess student learning, including from the campus community, the state, and outside accrediting agencies. According to one faculty member, assessment of student learning allows instructors:

> To make sure we're actually teaching them something, that we're not just yammering on in the classroom. To assess—I'll use the word test—to test that they're actually understanding what I'm yammering about and the examples we do in class. Otherwise

> we're wasting their time as well as ours if they're not learning what, theoretically, we are teaching them.

Another faculty member explained the dual purposes of student learning assessment in this way:

> I think that the most important feature of assessment is assessment of one's own work. So that, you know, the next semester class can run more smoothly and the assignment that wasn't clear can be clarified. There can be more alignment between assignments and learning objectives and so forth. So I think that that's the sort of the core effectiveness of assessment. Then, of course, as you know, there is another institutional, accreditational look at assessment. Institutions like the HLC require assessment data, aggregate, perhaps, from the institution to support their accreditation claims.

Faculty who participated in this study generally viewed the purpose of student learning assessment as ensuring that students met learning outcomes and learned what the faculty intended them to learn. These responses included faculty members who have been vocal advocates of faculty withholding participation from institutional assessment initiatives without additional compensation, as well as faculty members who are actively involved in the institution’s assessment initiatives. At various points in their interviews, all faculty articulated the importance of student learning assessment in the classroom as well as at the institutional level.

Senior leaders at Midwest Community College highlighted the importance of student learning assessment both in the classroom and to the larger campus community as a tool to improve instructional quality. One senior leader stated:

> From my perspective, it's really about strengthening the teaching and learning within the classroom. If you're not assessing it, then how do you know that you're successful at what

> you're teaching? You're issuing grades, you're seeing students leave your classroom. But are you really assessing the work they're doing? Are they leaving there with the tools, the content knowledge, the skill set?

Another senior leader emphasized the role of student learning assessment in improving teaching practices, stating that the purpose of assessment is:

> For improvement of instruction. And that's all it really is. It's improvement of instruction. . . . I think that it isn't enough for individual faculty [to] say, “Well, I know what I'm doing.” That's just not acceptable, because don't you want somebody checking out that your police officer knows how to use his weapon? . . . We've all heard the stories of the full professor with literally cobwebs around his notes. And, you know what, we have people like that at [Midwest Community College]. I think that the purpose of this is for self-reflection.

Senior leaders also recognized the importance of accountability for teaching and learning, with one senior leader declaring the purpose of student learning assessment is:

> To demonstrate to the board, the public, and the accrediting body that we're doing what we're supposed to. It's not enough to just say it . . . there has to be a check and a balance for everybody, for everything.

Both faculty and senior leaders agreed that the purpose of student learning assessment is to improve teaching and learning in the classroom. Faculty emphasized the role of assessment in reflecting on their own teaching practice and introducing a level of accountability for students’ learning; however, senior leaders were more likely than their faculty counterparts to tie assessment of student learning to the larger institutional mission. “I honestly believe that,” another senior leader concluded, “assessment and student success are the way community

colleges truly serve their mission in the communities and for the students.”

Factors that Influence Faculty Engagement in Assessment

While the first section discussed the common ground between faculty and senior leaders regarding their motivation for their work and their understanding of the purpose of student learning assessment, this section discusses the individual and institutional factors that influence a faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus. The perceived barriers to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives are also included.

Individual Factors

Several individual factors that impact a tenured faculty member’s decision to participate in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College were identified, including lack of knowledge or understanding of assessment processes, time, and value. In addition, an individual’s personal understanding of what it means to be a faculty member on Midwest Community College’s campus, as well as the contractual definition of a faculty member’s role, deeply influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage in institutional assessment processes.

Assessment Knowledge and Understanding

When asked about the factors that impact faculty participation in assessment, the barrier identified by all faculty and senior leaders was a clear understanding of assessment practices. Both faculty and senior leaders stated that a lack of knowledge surrounding assessment practices had either personally impacted them or they had seen it impact other faculty’s decision to engage in assessment initiatives at the institution. “The biggest barrier,” one faculty member argued, “is not understanding it. I think that, because this is completely anonymous, that's why we got put on

monitoring, because faculty didn't understand it, the same way I didn't understand it.” A senior leader supported that assertion, stating:

> So, I think one barrier is, and I think a strong barrier that we knocked down, is people didn't know how to do [assessment practices], and they didn't really know what it meant. And people were kind of embarrassed, other than the very youngest faculty, to say, “Well, could you let me know what that means here at [Midwest Community College]?” But if you're a senior faculty, how do you do that? How do you ever come out and say, “Yeah, we've been doing this for 15 years, but I don't have any clue as to what I'm doing or how to make it better or how to use what I've found out.” So I think that is a barrier.

Another senior leader shared their perception on the link between professional development and involvement stating, “I just think they weren't privy to what assessment means and how to do it. So if we don't give them the resources and the means and show them how to do it, then they're not going to buy into it.” All participants in this study recognized a significant barrier to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College was a lack of understanding or knowledge on the part of faculty of what it means to engage in institutional assessment processes.

Time

All faculty and senior leaders who participated in the study acknowledged the investment of time to engage in institutional assessment processes. One faculty member who engaged in assessment at Midwest Community College argued:

> The second barrier would be time. Because to do a good assessment takes time. It takes time to figure it out to implement it, to come up with the implementation tool, to implement it, and then to go over the results. So, and I'm sitting here—this is no joke—

> part of my assessment, one of the faculty finally turned in their assessments from their course. And you know, looking at this I'm like, “Was this the right tool for me to get a good assessment? Was this the best vehicle to get this information?” I have to figure out how to use that information. So that's the thing, time. Time for all of that.

One of the senior leaders supported this claim, stating:

> Yeah, it's time consuming. And it causes me to do something uncomfortable that I might not want to have to do. It makes me start to look at my process. It starts to analyze me and my work, and I'm sharing that with other people.

Both faculty and senior leaders recognized the time it takes for faculty to fully engage in institutional assessment practices in a meaningful way and recognized this time as a barrier to participation.

Lack of Value

All faculty members, as well as senior leaders who had previously been faculty, acknowledged the institution’s struggle to communicate the value of individual faculty members’ engagement in assessment initiatives in the past. According to a faculty member, until recently at the institution, “There's been no formalized system, no guidance, no support.” This faculty member described their first encounter with the institution’s assessment processes in this way:

> I quite roughly had to, as an individual faculty member, assume the role of reporting for an entire department based upon no coordination or plan or intentionality. I mean, I think for three years in a row we reported on [a general education outcome] because it's pretty simple. . . . So we picked, well, I shouldn't say we, I picked the easy one because a) I had no training. I had no reasonable expectation of what this work should look like. And b) I was just asked to do it. It was just handed to me by someone who obviously had no idea

> what they were supposed to do with it, had no training, and saw no value in it enough for them to figure out how to do it. They were in a position . . . to be able to hand it off. As being the person who [it] was handed to, I didn't feel I had the power to say, “Oh gee, no, not my job.” So yeah, my perception is that there was just no institutional desire, plan, or process.

This faculty member’s description of their initial encounter with assessment processes at the institution was not unique. Reflecting on their time as a faculty member, a senior leader shared an anecdote about their first experience with the institution’s assessment processes:

> I was called up to the assessment person's office, and she said, “Okay, you're going to have to assess five things.” I said, “Well, I don't know anything about this.” [She said], “Oh, I know. Just put something down.” And that's where I got the idea that we're just doing this to check some boxes. And then the next year we went to a different format. I don't even know what the acronym was for. . . .This is something new. It just seemed very gimmicky to me. And I could see where some people didn't feel that the process was effective. I was assessing in my program on my own, but just to go through the motions of this—it felt like a gimmick. Okay, check, I did this. You're off my back for a while. I'm good for a while. I think that some people approach it that way.

These examples speak to the lack of value placed on involvement in assessment communicated by the institution, generally, and senior leaders, specifically. A faculty member clearly summed up this sentiment by stating:

> The general sense is that the administration cares about assessment only because the HLC is coming back and, you know, testing the institution assessment. . . . It feels like a coat

> of fresh painting on an old car, otherwise. It doesn't seem like there is an institutional push to really make assessment meaningful.

Lack of assessment knowledge, time, and perceived value are barriers to faculty engagement in assessment practices that are difficult to overcome without addressing in a systematic, sustainable way.

Understanding of Faculty’s Role

An individual’s understanding of the role of faculty regarding assessment of student learning is at the crux of how assessment work is viewed on this particular campus. Throughout the interview process, faculty and senior leaders communicated a conflicting understanding of a faculty member’s role at Midwest Community College. All faculty and senior leaders agreed assessment of student learning is inherent to one’s role as a faculty member. Stated concisely by one faculty member in the study, “Assessment [is] a natural process or part of conducting teaching.” This idea that assessment work is an inherent, or “natural,” part of the teaching process was reinforced by participants throughout the study. Another faculty member stated:

> I do think that faculty assess their work at the micro-level. I think that that happens. By micro-level, I mean in the relationship with their students. And then, eventually, you know, re-evaluating their teaching methods or their goals or their tests and papers and so forth. I think that kind of happens naturally to anybody who's interested in teaching.

All senior leaders interviewed supported this idea, with one senior leader stating, “I think that teachers naturally assess and modify in order to achieve their goal, which is that light bulb that goes on over the student's head.” In addition to the concept that assessment work is a natural part of the teaching process, both faculty and senior leaders shared that perception that “good” faculty members were engaged in assessment work. One faculty member expressed:

> To be a good faculty member, you have to be doing assessment, you have to be doing classroom assessment in your classes, for sure. You have to constantly be assessing your own class and whether your students are learning what you're teaching. Absolutely. I think most faculty do that. I don't think most faculty realize that they're doing it, but they're doing assessments. They're looking at their test questions: Oh, all these students got this question wrong. Is this question clear, or are they getting it wrong because it's not worded correctly? Or is it, are they getting it wrong because they didn't learn it? So, everybody has to be doing that. And I think that everybody does that. They do, or the majority of people do that to be good teachers. So, the point I'm trying to make is, definitely, you have to be doing assessment, and you have to be doing assessments of the courses that are being taught in your department.

One of the senior leaders supported this idea, stating:

> I think a good instructor is assessing anyways. It's part of what we naturally do. You do something, did it work or not? Let me try something different. We naturally do this. Yes, it's now a more formalized process, but how do we get everybody to be doing that? . . . I think if you talk to most people, they do assessment. That's what a good faculty member does.

Although both faculty and senior leaders agreed that assessment work is inherent to one’s teaching practice, there was disagreement between participants regarding the role of a faculty member and the documentation of student learning data for institutional assessment processes. While all participants agreed that assessment of student learning is an inherent part of teaching, not all participants agreed that the documentation of evidence of student learning beyond one’s own classroom practices is assumed or required as a faculty member. One faculty member made

a clear distinction between classroom assessment practices and engaging in “formalized assessment,” which this individual described as:

> Participating in the collection of data beyond what we do for . . . assigning a grade in the course to assist the college in assessing student learning, especially with regards to an assessment tool that is not something we, as an instructor develop, but is something that, maybe, comes out of an assessment committee and requires some sort of work or even just us providing data on a particular learning outcome and just providing information on that.

Another faculty member described the tension between this personal and collective understanding of the role of faculty in assessment work in this way:

> The campus, in my opinion, has taken the position that not only does your being hired by the institution—and this is in our contract, right? The fact that they go [you] to sign on the dotted line and they officially hire you—presumes your qualification to teach. They bundle into that notion the presumption that . . . you will be ensuring student learning through assessment. That has been the position of the institution, that this is just somehow bundled into the concept of presumption of ability to teach. And while, yes, it is a natural function of teaching, it is not necessarily something that can be presumed that how it's done, when it's done, how it's best done, and then, is it being done?

The job duties of Midwest Community College faculty, outlined and codified in the faculty negotiated agreement, support this assertion. While the job description clearly delineates a faculty member’s responsibility to instruct, submit grades, take attendance, and attend department meetings, there is no specific language included in the contract which compels a faculty member to participate in the documentation of evidence of student learning. In other

words, while assessment of student learning is considered an inherent and natural part of the teaching process to the participants in this study, there is no explicit documentation or contractual language that reinforces this perception, especially when referring to documenting evidence of student learning as a part of institutional assessment initiatives. As a result, there is a clear divide between participants in this study regarding what kind of assessment work is and is not considered inherent to a faculty member’s role at the institution. One senior leader posed the question this way:

> And then the theoretical discussion, you know, which all philosophers enjoy is this: Is this essentially the base part of a true educator, and, therefore, does it mean that there should be no extra pay to it?

The kind of assessment work that faculty are responsible for as part of their role at the institution is a key point of contention for individuals at Midwest Community College. For several participants in this study, documenting evidence of student learning for institutional purposes steps out of their understanding of their role as faculty and crosses into the larger work of the campus community, which is fraught with historic and deep institutional challenges.

Institutional Factors

In addition to personal factors that impact a faculty member’s engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College, participants identified several institutional factors that act as barriers to faculty participation in assessment initiatives, including the college’s shared governance structure and the faculty union. Divergent views on faculty’s role within the institution’s shared governance structure, the perceived lack of value placed on faculty input, and the relationship between senior leadership and the faculty union were identified as factors impacting faculty’s desire to engage with larger campus initiatives.

Definition of Shared Governance

Participants in this study shared conflicting views on the definition of shared governance of a higher education institution. From some, their understanding of shared governance included shared decision-making among senior leadership and others at the institution. Two of the faculty members described shared governance in this way. For example, one faculty member defined shared governance as:

> The conjunction of all the parts of the college, which include, of course, faculty and staff and administration, but also students and non-teaching or non-educational staff and faculty who are not full-time, to make decisions that will impact the institution.

Other faculty placed a different emphasis in their definition, focusing on the opportunity to provide meaningful input before decisions are made. For example, one faculty member, acknowledging the managerial role of senior leaders, described it this way:

> I would define it as the administration taking—now, it's not just faculty. I know there's other groups, but focusing on faculty—taking faculty input seriously. Which doesn't mean, of course, administration has to always do what faculty suggests . . . but seriously considering what employees or an employee group or department, whatever, provides in terms of input. And, if they did seriously consider it, you think you would see those suggestions incorporated. Not all the time, but at least every now and then.

Even though the faculty participants did not communicate the same definition of shared governance, they all emphasized that faculty contributions, in the form of shared decision-making or input in the decision-making process, should be highly valued.

In contrast, the senior leaders who participated in this study described shared governance solely as gathering input from faculty or other employee groups, not shared decision-making. One senior leader described it this way:

> It's like getting people to the table. Doesn't mean though that you're going to come to a conclusive decision. Someone still has to make the final decision. But at least you're getting their opinion. And then, as a leader, you should be able to weigh, honestly, weigh their decisions. . . . You can have shared governance, but you still ultimately have to make a decision, and everybody at that table might not agree with that decision, but at least they gave their opinion. And at least you are able to hopefully reflect on their feedback.

Another senior leader, aware of the conflicting definitions of shared governance, stated:

> I think people think it means that everybody has a say in something. And I don't think that's what shared governance is. I think the key people, you know, certainly there are certain issues [that] some people have much more of an understanding and something to say about than somebody else. So, you know, if you're talking about a faculty issue, certainly faculty have something [to] say about that. Maybe their supervisors have something to say about it or even the people that they're serving, the students, have something to say about that. So, in that issue, those are the people that have to have some kind of input. Ultimately the decisions are made, let's face it, by the administrators because that's their role. That's what they're charge is from the community here, to run the college. But it's taking that input and making sure that you're getting enough information to make a good, solid, information-based decision.

It is worth noting that the “Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities,” issued jointly by the AAUP, the ACE, and the AGB, defines shared governance as an “inescapable interdependence” between administration and faculty that requires “full opportunity for appropriate joint planning and effort” (AAUP, 1966).

Despite conflicting definitions of shared governance, all participants agreed that faculty have a role in the shared governance of a higher education institution. All faculty who participated in the study believed faculty should be consulted and have the opportunity to provide input on college decisions that impact teaching and learning because of the significant relationship between faculty and students. For faculty in this study, the relationship between faculty and students is the justification for their critical role in the decision-making processes of the institution. For example, one faculty member stated:

> I think faculty definitely has a role in shared governance. The faculty makes up a big portion of the employees at the institution. And the faculty is what's driving it because you need faculty to have students.

Another faculty member explicitly pointed to the relationship between faculty and students as the reason for faculty’s role in shared governance of the institution, stating:

> I mean, I think that the two essential figures in a college are the students and the faculty, and then the other sides of the institution play somewhat of a supportive role to this relationship. So, when I say that the faculty should have a leading role, it's because I think that the relationship they entertain with the students informs the rest of the college life.

Like the faculty, all of the senior leaders acknowledged the important role of faculty in the governance of the institution, emphasizing the relationship between faculty and the students as

the main motivation. “They do because people come here for the faculty. They're not coming in here for me,” said one senior leader. “They're not coming here for the aesthetics of the buildings. It's nice, but they're coming for the faculty.” Another senior leader stated:

> Faculty are intelligent people that know a lot, just about everything collectively. They provide different perspectives we're not seeing. They're in touch with our students, they're the front lines. They hear the stories from the students that we're not hearing up here. So do they have a role? Yes.

The important relationship between faculty and students was highlighted by other senior leaders at this institution when describing the role faculty play in shared governance. Another senior leader described faculty’s role in shared governance this way:

> I think the faculty we often sometimes undercut or undersell maybe, or underappreciate would be a better term, underappreciate the faculty engagement in some of the decision-making process because we think they're just in the classroom, and we're running the operational aspect. And we need to remember that this is the operational aspect of the classroom. If it wasn't for the faculty, we wouldn't have a job.

Another senior leader highlighted the professional role of the faculty and their teaching expertise in addition to their relationship with students:

> Well, they do [have a role]. Partially because our accrediting body says that it should be, it's the best practice in our profession. It's like saying a hospital is run, yes, by administrators, but the governance has to be shared by the physicians. The physicians would be the equivalent of the faculty. And to say, you know, “We're not going to buy this anymore.” Well, you can't really go into an OR without having a mask on, so that's

> going to be really bad. You need to be able to say, “Oh no, no, this budget's wrong because we need that,” so I think they do have a role.

Although senior leaders agreed that faculty have a unique and important role in the shared governance of the institution, they did not agree that faculty should participate in shared decision-making at the college. One senior leader, acknowledging the tension between the two definitions, stated:

> I have to say, there's times when I felt faculty didn't have a role with this issue, and then there's times I thought we need to get faculty input. And a lot of times faculty wanted to have their input on things that necessarily wouldn't impact them. But then when I sat back like, okay, I could see why maybe they want it, they want to have a voice or maybe they just wanted to have some input. So I get it from both aspects.

From this senior leader’s perspective, faculty participation in shared governance was described as “input,” a sentiment that was echoed by other senior leaders. In addition, the link between decision-making and impact or responsibility was emphasized by several senior leaders. For example, another senior leader addressed the conflicting expectations of shared governance in this way:

> But I don't think that's what people think of as shared governance. I think that they think that they get to come in and make the decisions along with. And that's fine, but they're not responsible then for what happens with those decisions. So I think that there's a skew of what people think about shared governance.

Another senior leader provided justification for the executive power of senior leadership in terms of responsibility. When describing the different roles senior leadership and faculty have in shared governance, this senior leader argued:

> People want to have both sides of it. They want to be able to make the decision and control their destiny. But it's not my job. It's not my responsibility, [they say]. Well, it's a two-way street. If you want to be able to step up and participate in that decision-making process, then what is your liability? What is your responsibility? I can tell you administrators only have one-year contracts. We turn around and make a decision that embarrasses the school or causes financial damage to it, odds are we're not back here the following year. Are our faculty saying that that's what they want? Well of course not, you know, they've got tenure. . . . I really think that that's what it comes down to, is sharing the expertise.

All of the senior leaders acknowledged the important role of faculty in the governance of the institution due to their connection with students and academic expertise; however, senior leaders described faculty’s role in shared governance as providing “input” rather than contributing to decision-making.

Shared Governance at Midwest Community College

The conflicting expectations regarding faculty’s role in the shared governance of the institution were starkly highlighted when faculty and senior leaders were asked to move from a theoretical definition of shared governance in higher education institutions in general to the tangible shared governance practices at their own institution, Midwest Community College. A clear tension existed in responses from faculty and senior leaders in interviews for this study regarding faculty participation in the shared governance structure of the institution. Three out of the four senior leaders interviewed for this study expressed the desire to have faculty more engaged in the shared governance of the institution and placed the burden of responsibility on faculty to be more invested. For example, one senior leader argued:

> With shared governance comes shared responsibility. If you're going to turn around and have the power to make decisions, then you have to have the responsibility for having made those decisions. You have to share that responsibility. . . . I think that there are experts in different areas here. There are people that are hired to do certain things. If we want to have participation, then with that participation comes a responsibility of making those decisions.

Another senior leader shared their perspective, saying:

> As was discussed when we first began the fight about shared governance, was, “Be careful faculty,” not from the administration, [but] amongst our colleagues, to say, “With a demand for a shared governance model, you own a lot of responsibility.” If you want to abdicate that responsibility, that's fine, but then don't complain about it and don't say, “Well, we didn't have an opportunity for shared governance.” No, you just didn't show up. You didn't show up. And I think that that is the crux of it right now, is, I want to say for the first time, a misunderstanding on the part of faculty rather than a misunderstanding of it on the part of administration.

In the course of the interviews, only one senior leader specifically addressed the accreditation issues the institution had encountered associated with shared governance. Additionally, the president of Midwest Community College denied the research request to use the institution’s accreditation documents, which provide more details on this issue, in this case study. The only senior leader to address these issues placed the responsibility for fostering shared governance on senior leadership, stating:

> Shared governance has been in the forefront of [Midwest Community College] for many years. . . . We had some successes, and we also had some failures. You know, not all the

> time does the administration want to hear about the failures. They only want to hear the successes. So, we've had a combination of both. . . . I think it's up to administration to make sure that they foster that. And not just at [Midwest Community College], but at any college, you can't just say you're going to have shared governance and expect everyone to run to you. You've got to foster it, you've got to cultivate it. . . . If you just got their opinion and didn't listen to it, then you're wasting your time with shared governance. Then it's just smoke and mirrors. You really have to engage with them, listen to them, you know, feel out and then go back and reflect.

Although the senior leaders who participated in this study expressed a desire for meaningful faculty input in the shared governance of the institution, the faculty expressed frustration at what they believed to be the lack of meaning placed on faculty contributions to shared governance at this institution. At best, faculty were highly skeptical of the value senior leaders placed on faculty participation in the shared governance structure due to a long history of institutional challenges with shared governance, most notably the appointment of two vice-presidents of academic affairs within the last five years without faculty feedback. When asked to describe what shared governance looks like at Midwest Community College, three faculty immediately shared negative reactions. One faculty member stated dryly, “Impotent.” Another emphatically stated, “Not what [Midwest Community College] does!” Another laughed and said, “I’m not sure.”

Regardless of which definition of shared governance is applied, the faculty who participated in this study do not believe that senior leadership values their role in shared decision-making or their input in making decisions that impact the institution. When asked, one

faculty member, who understands shared governance as listening to and valuing faculty input, described what shared governance at Midwest Community College looks like in this way:

> There is none. Um, what I just said. They say they want the shared governance. You have some dopey meeting or committee. It is, it's a dopey committee meeting, a complete waste of time, where you give your input on something. And administration does what they were planning to do before the committee even was formed. And again, I'm not suggesting they always got to do what we want. Of course not. But it would be nice if sometimes. At least they could have something to point to at one point and say, “Well, we did this.” Okay. Yeah, you're right. I can't think of one. At least nothing of substance, I'll say. So it just doesn't really exist, except in talk. . . . I wholly support management’s right to make the final decision, but then if you’re never—that’s not hyperbole—*never* going to seriously consider a suggestion, then why are you wasting your time, and why are you wasting ours? Oh, I know, cause you want to be able to say we have shared governance. But, I mean, it's just a complete waste of time.

Another faculty member, who understands faculty’s role in shared governance to be shared decision-making, stated:

> There are several bodies, it seems to me, at the college where shared governance could make a significant impact. The decisions that are made at these bodies are often overturn or die off and so forth. So, in that sense, it is a banner, right? It becomes an opportunity to share one's opinion, but . . . I guess the point is that there's very little executive power attached to the shared governance process.

The tenured faculty interviewed for this study believe that both faculty input and their role in shared decision-making at Midwest Community College is limited, if not completely absent in

the shared governance of the institution. The limited perceived impact of faculty engagement in the college’s shared governance structure has a negative impact on faculty engagement in the institution as a whole, which is felt most significantly in engagement in the academic senate, the faculty arm of the college’s shared governance structure. According to one senior leader, “The senate became insignificant all on its own. And I think that's a big problem. Stuff maybe I wouldn't say, but I can say now. That thing has become irrelevant.” Tenured faculty’s disengagement in the shared governance of the college is a significant institutional factor that influences how and when tenured faculty choose to engage in campus initiatives at Midwest Community College.

Faculty Union

At Midwest Community College, simmering resentment and mistrust between senior leaders and faculty have developed into a deeply adversarial relationship between senior leadership and the faculty union. When asked about the relationship between the faculty union and senior leadership, all participants affirmed the explicitly negative relationship between the two groups. “The relationship?” laughed one faculty member. “It's very contentious. I would describe the relationship as being contentious. . . . I feel like faculty are very bitter. Very, very, very bitter.” This sentiment was expressed by another faculty member, who stated:

> God-awful. God. Awful. [Head shake. Eye roll.] God-awful. . . . I don't think I've ever been more disrespected professionally or personally than the way they, the administration, treat us, collectively faculty. . . . I mean, it's beyond astonishing to me. I never thought I'd encounter something this bad. In many ways it's a fantastic place to work. I have no complaints in that regard. But in terms of how we're treated, that's a whole different story. It's horrible. The relationship is all but non-existent. . . . So, you're

> in a god-awful, loveless marriage and your child is eight years old, and you realize you've got to stick around with a smile on your face for another 10 years until he or she turns 18—or until you're able to retire, is the metaphor. You've got to—I mean, you don't have to, I know, it's not prison, you can leave, you can quit or whatever, retire early, theoretically—but, I mean, effectively you pretty much have to stick around until it’s time, and you're able to bow out gracefully for everybody involved in it.

Several participants shared a more nuanced perspective on the current tensions between senior leaders and the faculty union leadership. Two faculty members acknowledged that interactions between senior leaders and the faculty union are not inherently negative, citing the fact that recent senior leaders were formerly faculty union leaders. Unknowingly referencing a similar metaphor, another faculty member described the current relationship in this way:

> Bruised. Bruised. [Audible sigh.] Because, if you look at administration over the past multiple years, leadership in administration has come directly from the faculty union, right? So, there is not an overarching sense of animosity from the administration standpoint towards union participation or, for that matter, union leadership. The fact that it's not functioning well now is not that it's broken, but that we're currently just have a, I don't know, just kind of like a lover's spat, I guess in a way. You know, it's like any relationship is going to have its rough spots. I just feel that after this last fight that everyone's kind of retreated to their corners and are holding a grudge and just nursing their wounds. And it doesn't have to be that way, cause it wasn't.

A senior leader supported this assertion, stating:

> Oh, I think it's pretty adversarial at this point in time. Very sadly, I say that, because I come from faculty, and I come from the union, and it's hard to see that.

According to participants, the recent contract negotiations and leadership personalities on both sides have made the current climate particularly uncomfortable. Another senior leader stated, “I think that the last contract negotiations were a disaster.”

Assessment of student learning at Midwest Community College is currently functioning as a proxy in the conflict between the faculty union and senior leadership. The struggle over assessment work in the last contract negotiation, and the tensions over engaging in this work since, is a symptom of a much deeper fracture in the relationship between faculty and senior leaders, one that is marked by mistrust and resentment. One faculty member shared their opinion on the recent clash between senior leaders and the faculty union, stating the current relationship is “more of the same, but the topic has switched to formalized assessment, as I call it. Only the channel on the TV has changed. The TV itself has not.” Or, in other words, the faculty union’s pushback against assessment work is less about assessment and more about the existing relationship between the faculty and senior leadership. The faculty member continued on, sharing:

> So the barrier, in that sense, is administration's unwillingness to acknowledge the value of assessment, the value of formalized assessment with cash, as opposed to once again, just the talking points. “Of course we value it. We're not gonna pay you any more, but we value it.” . . . But because they insisted this thing that is now, by the way, so important to them, had no value to them, we're going to stick to our guns. . . . I'm more adamant than ever that we should continue with the “we don't work for free” mantra.

Referencing the union leadership’s current position on engaging in assessment work at the institution, one faculty member stated:

> It is as if they have scapegoated the assessment topic for all of the other concerns. . . . They have distilled assessment down to a workplace issue. They have distilled it down to some sort of extra duty for which they are demanding—and I think that's really key, right? They entered into negotiations with a list of demands that they're demanding compensation for. And assessment has become a dirty word because it's just the personification of their own petty greed. Right? So something that should be, as an educator, an exciting opportunity to become an even better educator. You do this because you care about the students. You care about learning, and this is an opportunity to become even better and provide better care and learning to the students. They have completely twisted what should have been a beneficial exercise into a black and white, I either get paid or I don't do this at all. And I don't think it actually has anything all to do with assessment. It's just their lever or their bludgeon to express their anger over their inept negotiating and their inability to actually achieve outcomes in terms of getting paid, getting a raise in their contract. And they've grabbed ahold of the horns of this one and they are just going to ride it until it's dead.

Acknowledging how assessment work became caught in the tensions between faculty and senior leadership, a senior leader described the contract negotiations over assessment this way:

> It's probably a missed opportunity. There was a missed opportunity, I think, for people to see you understand the importance of it, given its value, and then trying to figure out how we can get that accomplished. It became a bargaining chip instead of understanding the importance of what it does for our students. So, in essence, it became devalued. It was just a little pawn along the way.

Another senior leader recognized this institutional barrier to engaging in assessment work in this way:

> But the other challenge is that it's been monetized. That's the problem. That was the big error.

At Midwest Community College, a significant barrier to tenured faculty involvement in assessment initiative overall, and the predominant challenge to meeting accreditation expectations for the institution’s focused visit on student learning outcomes assessment, has been the adoption of the stance by the faculty union that participation in institutional assessment activities lies outside of a faculty member’s contractual job duties.

What Senior Leaders Can Do

The previous section in this chapter explored that various individual and institutional factors that influence a faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus. This section discusses how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this unionized community college campus, such as offering additional compensation, demonstrating that assessment of student learning is highly valued, and engaging with faculty in their assessment work. In addition, the necessity of student learning outcomes assessment as a codified contractual duty for faculty is discussed.

Compensation

Both faculty and senior leaders recognized the important role of compensation for faculty in assessment initiatives on this campus, specifically related to the prior contract negotiation. In the wake of the controversial contract negotiations, senior leadership offered faculty stipends for leading assessment work within academic departments. All of the faculty who participated in this

study referred to those stipend roles when discussing incentives for assessment initiatives, and all of the faculty recognized that compensation was essential to faculty participation at this time at Midwest Community College. One of the faculty members shared, in order to engage tenured faculty in assessment, senior leadership should leverage this type of additional compensation.

> Definitely incentives. We have these assessment fellows, and I think a lot of it is driven by the incentives that they were given. So the people that are engaged in assessment are getting paid for it, and that worked. I mean, the administration would have to admit that worked. So definitely incentives.

Again, as a direct result of the faculty union contract negotiations, another faculty member stated:

> Pay them. . . . Offer something, a dollar amount, no matter how small it is or how big it is. And the market will take care of itself. If it's for whatever it is, if they're not offering enough money, they're going to have to increase the amount until it reaches a point where people will do it, and then they’ll get the participation they want. Pay us for it, and eventually you'll get enough people to get enough data where it's robust enough to have some meaningful outputs from whatever it is you're going to do with the data from assessment. Pay us.

Another faculty member supported the current stipend structure, suggesting that senior leaders:

> Just extend the program they have already. I think the union said this many times, offer a small stipend for data gathering activities in one's classroom, aside from the assessment fellows and so forth.

One senior leader agreed with this approach, stating:

> I do believe that they have to have some compensation that should be tied to that. Because if you're now dealing with a tenured faculty member who is not doing assessment, never done assessment, now you tell them to do assessment, but you don't compensate them in any other way, you're adding to the job responsibilities, and they're not going to do it. They're only going to be bitter about it. So you can't create that bitter environment.

Another senior leader acknowledged the essential role of compensation as a way to engage tenured faculty at this institution, stating:

> And because of the fact that they hold that, I'm not saying it's right or wrong in any way, shape, or form, they hold a position that we won't do any extra work without any extra pay. And then the debate comes down to how much are people going to get paid for it and what’s it worth.

Regardless of whether or not the individual was supportive of the current faculty union leaders’ stance on assessment work, all faculty who participated in this study viewed compensation as a way of communicating value to faculty. The amount of compensation was not as significant to faculty as the respect this gesture communicated. The faculty members who participated in this study generally spoke about this compensation in the form of annual raises over the three years of the negotiated faculty contract. For example, one faculty member argued:

> What this all came down to to begin with was lack of compensation equaling lack of respect. We would have taken three [percent], three [percent], three [percent]. All they had to do was three [percent], three [percent], three [percent]. They wouldn't [expletive] do it.

Some senior leaders, however, were skeptical of the true value of additional compensation in the long term. One leader argued,

> I don't think money is always the answer, because, you know, five becomes 10, 10 becomes 20. But at what point in time do you inherently just do things because you know, it's good, it's important, it's what needs to be done, there is a benefit to it.

Due to assessment work becoming a labor relations issue recently on this campus, compensation was a preeminent solution to engaging tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus. However, because the debate over assessment work served as a proxy to much deeper, more systemic issues between faculty and senior leaders, additional methods (e.g., demonstrating the value of student learning outcomes assessment) to engaging tenured faculty in assessment initiatives quickly became equally, if not more, prominent.

Value

All faculty and senior leaders addressed the need for senior leadership to place a high value on assessment work. Faculty recognized that, in order for assessment work to be meaningful, there must be a clear message from senior leadership regarding the value of assessment. As one faculty member stated:

> I think that the administrators just need to show it’s important by having someone . . . be in charge of assessment to help everybody. Like, they need like a position that's going to go out there and help people get it done.

In addition, senior leaders addressed the importance of sharing the value of assessment with faculty:

> You really have to have it pushed from an institutional level as well. You know, as I said a few minutes ago, you've got faculty-to-faculty colleagues, I think that is core. But then as administration we have to push assessment too and show why it's important.
>
> I know people always think it's, you know, “Show me the money,” but I don't think it's just about the money. I think it's about giving inherent value to what people do too. Some things rise above money.

Another senior leader acknowledged the need for senior leaders to set expectations about assessment, specifically to faculty newer to the institution. As they stated:

> It's a good time for us to do that during a tenure cycle process because faculty are more eager and willing to adjust their teaching styles because they want to succeed and pass that tenure cycle. So why not teach them that in their front end so that they can continue to do that even after tenure hopefully. But it's really important because we want to have those teachers who are effective in the classroom. And I think assessment is key to that.

This sentiment was echoed by another senior leader:

> When you're hiring the new kids, so to speak, you're going to be turning around and making sure in the interviews you're asking the question about assessment. That should be the standard question that's on all full-time interviews: What is your experience with assessment, and how do you feel about it?, et cetera. Get them to engage in the conversation so they know right from the beginning that assessment is an expectation.

As one senior leader commented, “I guess it's the importance that you put on it.” While all faculty and senior leaders addressed the need for senior leadership to place a high value on assessment work, the recommendations participants discussed, such as hiring an assessment officer, incorporating assessment work into the tenure evaluation, or asking about assessment in

faculty interviews, were framed in terms of what senior leadership should do, not what they are currently doing. As a result, both faculty and senior leaders acknowledged that senior leadership is not currently engaging in behaviors that could more effectively communicate the importance of assessment work to tenured faculty.

Engagement

In addition to compensation for assessment work and communicating the value of assessment to the institution, both faculty and senior leaders highlighted engagement of senior leaders with faculty as one of the essential components of leading a successful assessment initiative on campus. As one faculty member explained:

> And I think you're not going to get faculty engaged, aside from the stipend, aside from the labor relations, unless you meet them in their personal relationship with the students. So explaining or asking faculty, where [they] would want to move the needle on student achievement and how to do it.

A senior leader described how this might look in this way:

> What is our goal with assessment? What do we want to look like with assessment? And don't determine that as administration. Determine that with the faculty. Bring them to the table, show the faculty why assessment is important, why they need to do assessment. Give them some best practice models. Show what's happening nationwide or whatever it may be, and then engage them in building a model for the institution that we also could assess. . . . If we don't show them the importance of it, they're not going to buy into it. So, you have to engage with the faculty member individually and have them buy in. You can’t just throw it out and say, “Do assessment.”

When asked what senior leaders could do to engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College, one faculty member argued:

> They'll never do it, as it requires you being a human being . . . they spent all their time micromanaging the [expletive] out of all this stuff, but can't find the time to have interpersonal relationships with any of the faculty. Again, can I reiterate? There are only a hundred of them. Not administrators, full-time faculty. Start there.

Overall, faculty communicated that the most compelling argument to invest their time, energy, and expertise into institutional assessment initiatives was the importance placed on these initiatives by senior leaders. This sentiment was captured in this faculty member’s description of what senior leaders could do to engage faculty in assessment at the institution:

> You have to respect the faculty as the assets that they are. You hire faculty, you give them this golden thing called tenure, and then you just can't let them free. They're not pigeons, right? You need to harness, cultivate, stimulate, motivate, and collaborate in order to be able to get the most out of your investment. Otherwise they're just going to come teach their class and go home. That's what the contract says. . . . We've seen over and over again that having some sort of a personal relationship and actually treating them like they're human beings, actually treating them like they have something that cannot be replaced, right? . . .
>
> You are a full-time faculty member with a body of experience and a living experience in the classroom that I can't tell you what assessment looks like in your area, but you can tell us. And you can tell us where you would like access to more resources, whatever those may be. I do think that it has to be one-on-one. And instead, administration has taken the stance of this is a faculty-driven process, and, therefore,

> faculty have at it. And unless you're going to express interest in the process, express interest in the results, express interest in the people engaging in that, make them feel like they're super valuable and the only ones capable of getting this done, it's going to fizzle. It's all just going to kind of diminish. I'm sorry to say that.

However, not all senior leaders agreed. Because assessment of student learning is understood to be within the purview of the faculty, the role of senior leadership was debated. For example, one senior leader argued:

> I don't think they [senior leaders] can do anything. I don't think it's a one-sided teeter-totter. I think that it's going to take a joint partnership in order to turn around and actively engage people. People resist change. It's just natural human nature that change is resisted . . . You know, you're talking about something so deep with human nature and everything else. And that's why I think change needs to equally come from within. So that's why I say nothing. I don't think there's any unilateral thing that executive administration or any administration can do to implement this. I think it's gotta be group think. We all have to kind of be on the same page, looking for the same goal, framed in a way to make it there.

This sentiment was shared by another senior leader, who stated:

> Somebody needs to say, “What are we going to do about assessment?” . . . I don't think the [senior leader] needs to do it, cause then that's interfering in the most significant model of shared governance on campus.

While faculty expressed a desire for senior leadership to be more engaged in and committed to assessment initiatives on campus, senior leaders interviewed for this study seemed to justify their hands-off approach by placing the responsibility for assessment on faculty.

One senior leader viewed it differently. Addressing the role of senior leaders in engaging tenured faculty in assessment initiatives, this participant stated:

> I think the key thing to a lot of your questions really goes to, I'm going to say this, to the caliber and the talent that you have in place in leadership roles, executive roles. Not everybody could step into a vice presidency or a presidency. It just doesn't work that way . . . I think the people who step into an executive role have to have some key traits, and, of course, relationship-building, personality, charisma, visionary, those are all things that I think people need. . . . So it takes a certain type of people to be successful and be a good executive-level member. And I don't believe institutions—not just [Midwest Community College] but institutions as a whole—always hire the right person for the right job. And maybe that kind of then causes some conflict within the institution, causes some dissension, causes some morale issues. . . . So I think that's a key challenge. Again, not just for [Midwest Community College], but any institution. You have to make sure you find your best.

According to this senior leader and the faculty members who participated in this study, senior leaders at Midwest Community College are responsible for demonstrating commitment to the faculty, building relationships with faculty, and successfully championing the importance of student learning outcomes assessment on this campus. This requires balancing both the relational and transactional components that are integral to the interactions between faculty and senior leaders on Midwest Community College’s campus.

Faculty Contract

An essential question for faculty and senior leaders at this institution centered around engagement in assessment work as a contractual job duty. When asked if assessment work should be added as a contractual job duty in the faculty negotiated agreement at Midwest Community College, participants in this study offered conflicting opinions. One senior leader stated:

> It's what we do. Yeah. I mean, if that's how we're going to—I don't want to say the word enforce—value what people do, do we have to name it? Then, sure. If that's what people feel that it needs to be outlined, you know, stipulated, to give it the value that it needs. Then, yeah.

However, another faculty member expressed concern over codifying assessment work in the contract, stating:

> Then it just becomes one of those duties you have to do—kind of like showing up to graduation. Really, I'd rather just take a personal day. It would become valueless. The data would quickly become normed. People would submit the same report that they submitted three years ago. People would just be filing paperwork instead of engaging in the actual activity. So that's the risk you run by codifying it.

When asked if assessment needed to be included in the faculty contract, another faculty member answered:

> No, not necessarily. The contract is just the safeguard for the quality of labor of the college. That’s what I think of when you think about the contract. I think that good leadership doesn't need a contract to get consensus and get stuff done, quite frankly.

For one senior leader, the current stipend structure is the best fit for this local context:

> But I honestly believe—and this is why when I sit back and look at the assessment model that we've got going on right now—I honestly believe, while not the ideal for the way I would hope it would have done, that for [Midwest Community College’s] personality, that it's the best one.

At Midwest Community College, the point of contention during the contract negotiations in the summer of 2018 that dissolved into a bitter dispute between faculty and senior leadership was over codifying student learning outcomes assessment in the faculty contract. Eighteen months later, both faculty and senior leaders were inconclusive on whether or not assessment work should be a job duty outlined in the faculty contract. This finding further illustrates how the struggle over assessment work in the last contract negotiation, and the tensions over engaging in this work since, is enveloped by the fracture in the relationship between faculty and senior leadership at Midwest Community College.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the data from interviews with eight participants in this study, which included four current and former members of senior leadership and four faculty members who are union leaders and union members. The data from participants was triangulated with institutional documents and participant-observations, as shown in Appendix E. The first section in this chapter identified the common ground shared between faculty and senior leadership related to their work at Midwest Community College. Both faculty and senior leaders who participated in this study shared a common motivation to support the students at Midwest Community College, and all faculty and senior leaders agreed that the purpose of assessment of student learning in a higher education institution is the improvement of teaching and learning.

The second section discussed the personal and institutional factors that influence a faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus. Several individual factors that impact a tenured faculty member’s decision to participate in assessment initiatives were identified, including lack of knowledge or understanding of assessment processes, time, and value; in addition, an individual’s personal understanding of what it means to be a faculty member on Midwest Community College’s campus deeply influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage in institutional assessment processes. Conflicting views on faculty’s role within the institution’s shared governance structure, the perceived lack of value placed on faculty input, and the relationship between senior leadership and the faculty union were identified as institutional factors impacting faculty’s desire to engage with larger campus initiatives.

The third section in this chapter discussed how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this unionized community college campus, including offering additional compensation, demonstrating the value of student learning outcomes assessment, and engaging with faculty in their assessment work. These findings will be contextualized within the literature in the next chapter for further discussion and implications.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

This study’s design was shaped by the desire to explore the dynamics between tenured faculty and senior leadership within a bounded place and time as these groups navigate institutional complexities around faculty engagement in initiatives to assess student learning. When considering how to engage tenured faculty in assessment work on a unionized community college campus, the findings of this study demonstrate the institution’s culture, shared governance practices, and faculty-administration relationships are significant factors that must be addressed. Existing literature on shared governance in community colleges, faculty unions and collective bargaining, and assessment of student learning contribute important insights into faculty engagement in this work, while principal-agent theory provides a helpful framework for thinking about how senior leadership can use incentives or monitoring to encourage faculty engagement in institutional assessment processes. Using principal-agent theory as a framework and building on the existing scholarship, the discussion in this chapter is framed around this case study’s research questions:

1. What influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College?
2. How can senior leadership successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus?

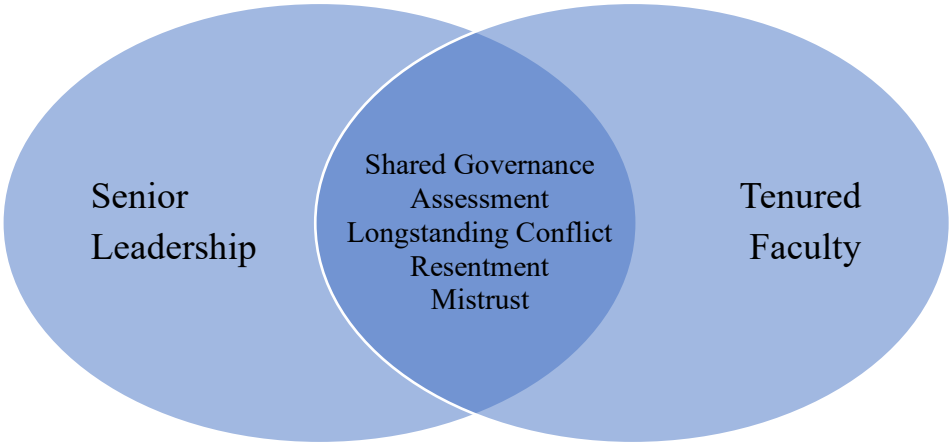
This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of this study in the context of the existing scholarship, as well as recommendations for action and suggestions for future inquiry.

The findings of this study apply to Midwest Community College at a specific moment in time in which senior leaders and tenured faculty are navigating complex institutional dynamics around student learning outcomes assessment. As depicted in Figure 2, robust faculty

engagement in Midwest Community College’s assessment processes requires faculty to step out of their direct sphere of influence, the classroom, and cross into the space owned by both faculty and senior leaders—the shared governance of the campus. Principal-agent theory provides a framework for discussing how senior leadership can use incentives or monitoring to encourage faculty to step into this space and engage in institutional assessment processes. However, it is equally important to acknowledge that this space is fraught with a longstanding, ongoing conflict between both parties, which adds more nuance to the theory’s application in this context.

Figure 2

Conceptual model of faculty engagement



For Midwest Community College, the institution’s efforts to meet the expectations of an external accrediting agency regarding student learning outcomes assessment within a bounded time exposed profound systemic issues with the college’s tenured faculty body, senior leaders, and shared governance practices. This chapter describes what happens when institutional priorities and senior leadership’s goals are challenged by longstanding conflict, simmering resentment, and deep mistrust between senior leadership and the tenured faculty body. The following discussion foregrounds faculty engagement in student learning outcomes assessment

as a lens through which to discuss deep, historic issues with shared governance and the relationship between tenured faculty and senior leaders on this unionized community college campus.

Barriers to Assessment

Individuals interviewed for this study identified several specific factors that impact a tenured faculty member’s decision to participate in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College, including lack of knowledge or understanding of assessment processes, time, and value. All participants in this study recognized that a significant barrier to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College was a lack of understanding or knowledge on the part of faculty of what it means to engage in institutional assessment processes. Both faculty and senior leaders recognized the time it takes for faculty to fully engage in institutional assessment practices in a meaningful way and recognized this time as a barrier to participation. In addition, all faculty members, as well as senior leaders who had previously been faculty, acknowledged the institution’s struggle to communicate the value of individual faculty members’ engagement in assessment initiatives in the past.

The findings regarding the perceived barriers to faculty participation in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College are not unique and, in fact, support the larger body of assessment literature specifically addressing barriers to student learning outcomes assessment on community college campuses. Lack of time, lack of faculty knowledge and understanding of assessment processes, and lack of value placed on assessment work are the most frequently identified barriers to community college faculty engagement in student learning outcomes assessment (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011). These barriers to faculty engagement in

assessment practices require intentional action and must be addressed in a systematic, sustainable way.

In this case study, an important factor that impacted engagement in student learning outcomes assessment was an individual’s understanding of the role of faculty at Midwest Community College. The perception of a faculty member’s role at the institution, and what kind of assessment work is inherent to that role, is critical to how student learning outcomes assessment is viewed on this particular campus and plays a significant part in a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage in institutional assessment processes. Despite assessment literature, faculty professional organizations, national unions, and institutional accreditors agreeing that faculty have a responsibility to be involved in assessment work, faculty at this institution do not necessarily agree when this involvement extends beyond their classroom (Cain, 2014; Ewell, 2009; Gold, Rhoades, Smith, & Kuh, 2011; HLC, 2014; Kuh, et al., 2015; Suskie, 2014). There can be strong resistance from faculty, specifically older or tenured faculty, who do not see engagement in student learning outcomes assessment as their job (Nunley, Bers, & Manning, 2011).

In addition to personal factors that impact a faculty member’s engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College, participants identified several institutional factors that act as barriers to faculty participation in not only assessment initiatives, but any larger campus initiatives, such as faculty’s role within the institution’s shared governance structure, the perceived lack of value placed on faculty input, and the relationship between senior leadership and the faculty union. Participants in this study shared conflicting views on the definition of shared governance of a higher education institution. Some faculty defined shared governance as shared decision-making, while others described it as contributing meaningful input before

decisions are made. In contrast, the senior leaders who participated in this study defined shared governance solely as gathering input from faculty or other employee groups. The conflicting expectations between faculty and senior leaders at Midwest Community College are reflected in the literature regarding shared governance at a variety of higher education institutions (Bahls, 2014; Pierce, 2014). At Midwest Community College, different expectations regarding the role of faculty within decision-making processes have led to discontent, mistrust, and disengagement in the shared governance practices of the college (Campbell & Bray, 2018; Pierce, 2014; Shinn, 2014).

As recent scholarship on shared governance suggests, there is significant need at Midwest Community College to focus on the human dimensions of governance and more closely examine the cultural issues at this institution that impact participation in shared governance work. Interpersonal relationships, trust in the decision-making processes, and a feeling of ownership are central to faculty engagement in governance (Favero & Bray, 2005; Kater, 2017; Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). It is worth noting that faculty in this study did not address any concerns with the shared governance structure at Midwest Community College. However, faculty expressed feelings of frustration at what they believe to be the lack of value placed on faculty input at this institution. Specific actions by senior leadership in the past have eroded relationships, communication, and respect between tenured faculty and senior leaders at this institution.

The social and cultural aspects of governance, such as relationship-building and trust, are critical to Midwest Community College faculty as they consider engaging in the institution’s shared governance structure (Favero & Bray, 2005; Kater, 2017; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Parrish, 2015; Pate & Angell, 2013). Senior leadership at Midwest Community College can refer to the many documented recommendations regarding how to promote healthy shared governance,

including awareness of the specific institutional culture, open communication and consensus-building, transparency, and mutual respect (AGB, 2017; Eddy, 2010; Jones, 2010; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Taylor, 2013). In addition, the informal relationships and networking between senior leaders and faculty that occur outside of formal decision-making roles can and should be leveraged (Favero & Bray, 2005). Findings in this study support the research that factors such as culture, trust, and involvement impact the effectiveness of shared governance as much as, if not more than, structures (Amey, 2005; Kaplan, 2004; Pope, 2004).

As discussed in Chapter 4, assessment of student learning at Midwest Community College is currently functioning as a proxy in the conflict between the faculty union and senior leadership. The struggle over assessment work in the last contract negotiation, and the tensions over engaging in this work since, are symptoms of a much deeper fracture in the relationship between faculty and administration, one that is marked by mistrust and resentment. The splintering in the relationship between faculty and senior leaders has erupted over tenured faculty engagement in student learning outcomes assessment. In this instance, the faculty union is acting as a barrier to faculty engagement in assessment; however, this stance is less principled than practical. The faculty union has not taken this stance as a result of something inherent in assessment work; rather, recent assessment initiatives at this institution are the means by which collective discontent, mistrust, and perceived disrespect are being launched into the forefront of the campus’ consciousness.

Principal-Agent Theory and Faculty Engagement

With these complex dynamics in mind, principal-agent theory (PAT) offers an important and helpful framework for considering how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty involvement in student learning outcomes assessment. As a reminder, principal-agent

theory is a theoretical framework concerned with the motivations and actions of individuals or organizations (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). At its core, PAT is interested in how to compel the agent to act in the best interest of the principal through explicit or implicit contractual relationships (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008). Because agents are assumed to act in self-interest and with different goals than the principal, either incentives or monitoring are necessary to ensure agents are complying with the contract.

In this case study, principal-agent theory can help explain faculty behavior at Midwest Community College regarding student learning outcomes assessment and provide senior leaders with a conceptual framework to improve relationships with faculty and the faculty union. This model recognizes that senior leaders have tools at their disposal to more effectively engage faculty at the institution and are empowered to use them. The concept of shirking or slippage in PAT provides senior leaders with a more nuanced explanation of faculty behavior. PAT can account for motivational variables, such as passive and aggressive shirking, that can lead to better decision making and policy changes. This model acknowledges that faculty often have different goals when engaging in student learning outcomes assessment than senior leaders; as a result, either incentives or monitoring are necessary to ensure the faculty are complying with the institution’s assessment priorities. In order to successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus, senior leaders of Midwest Community College must provide incentives and monitor behavior to ensure faculty’s actions are in line with the institution’s assessment goals (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lane, 2012; Lane & Kivisto, 2008).

Principal-agent theory makes two important assumptions concerning the agency relationship: there must be informational asymmetries and goal conflicts present simultaneously

in the agency relationship (Kivisto, 2008). In this case study, these assumptions are present at Midwest Community College in the relationship between tenured faculty and senior leaders, creating an agency problem. Faculty are the only individuals on campus who can perform student learning outcomes assessment in the classroom; however, due to individual and institutional barriers, faculty choose to engage in classroom assessment practices but are often reluctant to participate in institutional assessment practices and reporting processes. In light of these assumptions, agency theory can offer a theoretically sound framework for examining how to best engage tenured faculty in the institution’s assessment work (Kivisto, 2008). The assumptions of self-interest, information asymmetry, and incentives provide senior leaders with an opportunity to assess and improve the collective bargaining agreement, tenure process, and hiring practices, as well as senior leaders’ own behavior towards and relationships with tenured faculty.

The findings of this study suggest that senior leaders must leverage both incentives and monitoring to successfully engage tenured faculty in institutional efforts to assess student learning outcomes. Time, professional development, and value are barriers to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College. Both faculty and senior leaders agree that additional pay, in the form of stipends or contractual pay raises, can adequately compensate faculty for their time and investment in additional professional development on assessment processes. Faculty interviewed for this study also acknowledged that additional compensation partially addressed the need for senior leaders to communicate the value of assessment work. Due to student learning outcomes assessment becoming a labor relations issue recently on this campus, compensation was a preeminent solution to engaging tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on Midwest Community College’s campus. Regardless of whether or not

the individual was supportive of the current faculty union leaders’ stance on assessment work, all faculty who participated in this study viewed compensation for assessment work as an essential component of engaging faculty in institutional assessment processes. This finding suggests senior leaders should examine how to leverage the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement or outcomes-based stipends to appropriately compensate faculty for their participation.

All participants in this study recognized that another barrier to faculty engagement in assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College is a lack of understanding or knowledge on the part of faculty of what it means to engage in institutional assessment processes. In addition to demonstrating the lack of value placed on assessment work in the past, the gap in faculty knowledge about institutional assessment processes and assessment practices in general is a barrier. Robust professional development is needed to ensure faculty know current best practices and are informed about the institution’s assessment processes. Therefore, senior leaders should leverage the tenure process and the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement to support embedded and ongoing professional development for faculty on student learning outcomes assessment practices and institutional assessment processes.

The findings in this study suggest that a form of monitoring is also essential to faculty participation in institutional assessment processes. In large bureaucracies like higher education institutions, shirking, or pursuing one’s own goals instead of the principal’s, or slippage, an unintentional misalignment of actions, may occur due to poor communication of the principal’s goals (Lane & Kivisto, 2008). At this institution, specifically, both passive and aggressive shirking occurs in student learning outcomes assessment due to faculty mistrust of senior leaders, the lack of perceived value on faculty input in general, and lack of perceived value placed on

assessment work. Slippage can also easily occur in the absence of explicit expectations of faculty’s role and responsibilities in assessment. Without some form of monitoring present, faculty may forgo participation in institutional assessment processes in lieu of classroom assessment practices that are directly relevant and more immediately valuable to them.

An individual’s understanding of the role of faculty regarding assessment of student learning is at the heart of how assessment work is viewed on this particular campus. All faculty and senior leaders agreed assessment of student learning is inherent to one’s role as a faculty member; however, not all participants agreed that the documentation of evidence of student learning beyond one’s own classroom practices is assumed or required as a faculty member. In addition, there is no specific language included in the faculty contract which compels a faculty member to participate in the documentation of evidence of student learning. In order to build a collective understanding of the role of faculty in institutional assessment processes, the expectation for faculty to engage in institutional assessment processes must be codified in the contract.

Without explicitly defining assessment of student learning as a contractual job duty, it is left up to each individual’s interpretation of what is required as a faculty member at Midwest Community College. As a result, senior leaders must intentionally document, shape, and cultivate a vision of what it means to engage in assessment work as a faculty member at Midwest Community College in order to meet accreditation standards and achieve the institution’s assessment goals. Faculty at Midwest Community College use the contract as the primary means of defining the faculty’s roles and responsibilities; therefore, the most effective way of communicating the value of student learning outcomes assessment and expectations regarding

faculty’s role in institutional assessment processes is explicitly including assessment work in the faculty contract.

Gaps in Principal-Agent Theory

The application of principal-agent theory to higher education institutions, specifically the relationship between senior leadership and tenured, unionized faculty, has its challenges. Like many scholars who have attempted to apply PAT to relationships in the context of higher education, this case study reveals some of the weaknesses in this theory. According to Kivisto (2008), the “greatest weaknesses of agency theory are related to the narrowness of its behavioural assumptions and of the focus of the theory. The fact that agency theory focuses only on self-interested and opportunistic human behaviour means that the theory ignores a wider range of human motives” (p. 346). Organizations like higher education institutions are not simply transactional affairs, and critics of PAT argue that the theory presents too narrow a model of human motivation (Kivisto, 2008). The appeal of this theory when applying it to complex, dynamic relationships between senior leadership and tenured faculty on a community college campus is its value-neutral assumptions. PAT does not presume ill-will between principal and agent; however, it also does not accommodate for more messy, unpredictable, and affective components of human relationships, such as longstanding conflict between the two parties. Higher education organizations are made up of people; therefore, there is always an affective human component. As one senior leader in this study said, “Personalities are the game.” In addition to incentives and monitoring, the faculty and senior leaders in this case study spoke to the need for acknowledging the value of assessment work, demonstrating respect for faculty’s engagement in institutional assessment processes, and giving inherent meaning to what faculty do. In order to repair the deeper, systemic issues at play, senior leaders must move beyond

incentives and monitoring and take action to directly address the faculty’s collective mistrust, resentment, and perceived disrespect.

“Carrots and Sticks Aren’t Enough”: Recommendations for Action

First, senior leaders at Midwest Community College need to address the historic division between faculty and senior leadership on this campus and define what it means to have shared governance moving forward. Participants in this study shared conflicting views on the definition of shared governance at Midwest Community College, and different expectations regarding the role of faculty within decision-making processes have led to discontent, mistrust, and disengagement in the shared governance structure (Campbell & Bray, 2018; Pierce, 2014; Shinn, 2014). Participants identified several institutional factors that act as barriers to tenured faculty participation in not only assessment initiatives, but any larger campus initiative, and this longstanding, ongoing dispute over shared governance is at the center. The fight over shared governance has a long history at Midwest Community College, and, although structural improvements have been made in the past, the current leadership must address the misalignment in expectations between tenured faculty and senior leaders head on. In order to rebuild the relationship with tenured faculty in the long term, senior leaders must openly address past actions that have broken trust and fostered disengagement while setting expectations for what it means for faculty to have a role in the shared governance structure at Midwest Community College. Subsequently, senior leaders must demonstrate a real, practical shift in the way that they include faculty in the decision-making of the institution as a method of promoting meaningful participation in shared governance processes in the future.

Second, senior leaders at this institution must commit to fully embedding good assessment practice into the college’s structures, planning documents, and reporting systems.

Effective assessment practices include a compelling vision for assessment, clear use of assessment data, robust institutional support for assessment work, and processes that are aligned with institution’s planning and reporting documents; however, effective assessment practices rely on strong academic leadership who can cultivate a campus environment in which assessment and continuous improvement are valued (AAHE, 1992; Ewell, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2015). Faculty members at Midwest Community College who participated in this study communicated that the most compelling argument to invest their time, energy, and expertise into institutional assessment initiatives was the importance placed on these initiatives by senior leaders. Senior leaders, specifically the chief academic officer, must have clear ownership for communicating the institution’s vision for using assessment to improve the educational quality of the college. Consistent messaging from senior leadership at faculty meetings and professional development days, public recognition of and appreciation for faculty who are engaged in assessment work, and ongoing communication about the use of student learning assessment data in decision-making at the institution are clear next steps for senior leadership at Midwest Community College (Kuh, Jankowski, Ikenberry, & Kinzie, 2014).

In addition to clearly articulating a vision for assessment work, senior leaders must hire, develop, and support colleagues who align with the culture of assessment on campus. Senior leaders must express an expectation of faculty participation in student learning outcomes assessment from the beginning of a faculty member’s time on campus; for example, faculty should be asked to discuss their experience with student learning outcomes assessment during the interview process, and faculty involvement in the institution’s assessment processes should be an expectation during the tenure process. As positions within the institution turn over, senior leaders must hire faculty, staff, and administrators who embrace the college’s vision for student

learning outcomes assessment. Senior leaders must also invest resources into supporting faculty in this work while building capacity and sustainability for assessment structures on campus. Midwest Community College does not currently have an assessment office or any full-time staff to support institutional assessment processes. A dedicated assessment professional would serve as a resource to faculty by translating the natural assessment processes that occur in the classroom to the kind of data collection and analysis necessary for institutional reporting. Furthermore, the creation of an assessment office with dedicated staff would be a clear signal to tenured faculty regarding the value and longevity of student learning outcomes assessment initiatives on campus.

Third, senior leaders at Midwest Community College must engage with faculty in a much more robust way by demonstrating consistent interest in and involvement with faculty work regarding student learning outcomes assessment. The senior leaders interviewed for this study seemed to justify their hands-off approach by placing the responsibility for assessment on faculty, indicating that student learning outcomes assessment is “faculty-driven.” To the faculty in this study, this stance seems to communicate a lack of interest in and respect for faculty’s work. Senior leaders must be intentional in shaping and cultivating faculty engagement in institutional assessment processes on a personal level. At Midwest Community College, there were recent improvements in assessment processes and more faculty involvement due to a substantial investment in faculty stipends following the last contract negotiation. However, in order to ensure lasting cultural change, senior leaders at Midwest Community College must demonstrate interest in assessment processes, assessment results, and, ultimately, in the faculty members who are engaging in this work at the institution.

Several faculty members expressed the sentiment that good leadership does not need a contract to reach consensus and influence behavior. In order to become more engaged in faculty’s assessment work, senior leaders at Midwest Community College must take tangible action to make and sustain personal relationship with tenured faculty, such as scheduling one-on-one meetings, attending department meetings, participating in professional development opportunities alongside faculty, learning more about good assessment practices, discussing assessment results, and making decisions based on faculty’s recommendations. It is worth noting that, in sharing what they thought senior leaders could do, faculty who participated in this study described personal, face-to-face interactions that fostered two-way communication; no one mentioned email communication as an effective way of building relationships. As one faculty member stated:

> It’s a combination of personalities, design, and then the sort of, I don't want to say pandering, but sort of, you know, working on that psychology of people need to be respected, and they need to be valued, and they need to be celebrated. Cause carrots and sticks aren't enough.

By connecting with and investing in the individual professionals who are participating in the institution’s student learning outcomes assessment processes, senior leaders can begin to mend relationships with the tenured faculty body at Midwest Community College and more successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus.

Implications for Future Work

While not intended to be representative of all faculty at Midwest Community College or generalizable to all community colleges, this case study provides several important implications

for community college administrators, tenured faculty, assessment leaders, and future researchers. First, community college administrators can learn from the faculty voices and experiences represented by this study. The findings of this study illustrate what happens when institutional priorities and senior leadership’s goals are challenged by unaddressed interpersonal dynamics between senior leadership and the tenured faculty body. Faculty interviewed for this study expressed that the contentious campus environment related to assessment work is due, in large part, to a much deeper fracture in the relationship between tenured faculty and senior leadership. In order to move the needle on institutional assessment initiatives, or any larger campus initiative in the future, the root causes of this fracture must be addressed directly, specifically the need for faculty to feel heard, respected, and valued on campus. While the details of this breakdown may be unique to Midwest Community College, community college administrators may face similar cultural barriers at other institutions related to longstanding, ongoing conflict between faculty and administration. The voices in this study offer compelling evidence for why the more human and interpersonal dimensions of shared governance cannot be ignored, suppressed, or minimized. Community college administrators need to establish two-way communication with faculty, cultivate trust in the decision-making processes, and foster a feeling of ownership in the shared governance of the institution in order to more successfully engage tenured faculty in institutional initiatives like assessment (Favero & Bray, 2005; Kater, 2017; Stensaker & Vabø, 2013). When it comes to institutional assessment initiatives, specifically, community college administrators should consider the best ways to engage in the assessment work of faculty and champion the importance of student learning outcomes assessment on their campus.

Second, the faculty’s experience at Midwest Community College has direct implications for faculty union leaders and members working on any unionized community college campus. Individual campuses like Midwest Community College are continuing to negotiate the boundaries between collective bargaining and shared governance issues. Due to tensions between the faculty union and senior leadership on this campus, the role of faculty at Midwest Community College has been reduced by union leadership to what is delineated within the four corners of the faculty contract; as a result, the faculty union leadership actively discouraged other faculty from fully participating in the shared governance system and investing in larger institutional initiatives without additional compensation. The faculty’s experience at Midwest Community College illustrates how, when faculty involvement in institutional initiatives like assessment becomes solely about specific responsibilities outlined in a negotiated agreement, the genuine purpose of shared governance, giving voice to faculty and maximizing participation in decision-making processes, can be lost (Messier, 2017). When possible, faculty union leaders should leverage contract negotiations as an opportunity to align the full-time faculty contract with institutional assessment priorities. Individual campus bargaining agreements and negotiating processes will largely dictate how this is accomplished at the local level; however, faculty union leaders should seek to align the faculty contract with institutional assessment processes in order to affirm the importance of student learning assessment and codify the central role of faculty in assessment work.

Third, assessment officers who lead institutional assessment processes on community college campuses can learn from the challenges described at Midwest Community College. Common barriers to faculty engagement in assessment, such as lack of assessment knowledge and understanding of best practices, time, and value, should be addressed. For example,

assessment officers can create robust professional development opportunities for faculty to learn best practices for assessment of student learning, provide workshop environments in which faculty can receive help in creating assessment methods and measures, and assist in documenting and recording assessment data for the institution’s reporting process. In order to address the more relational components discussed in this study, assessment officers should also be advocates for the value of assessment practices and consistently communicate to faculty why assessment is important, how assessment data is used for learning improvement, and which assessment data is used in institutional decision-making regarding resource allocation. Faculty in this study pointed out specific actions that can be taken by leaders to engage faculty in institutional assessment initiatives; in addition to assessment expertise, assessment officers should consistently communicate the importance of using assessment data to improve learning, build relationships with faculty across the campus, and advocate for faculty’s work on the campus.

Several research opportunities exist to expand on the findings of this study. While principal-agent theory has been widely adopted by economists, political scientists, and sociologists, the application of the theory to this case study contributes to a small body of literature that applies PAT to intra-college relationships (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; Massy, 1996; Ortmann & Squire, 2000; Lane, 2012). Future research can expand on this study by examining how PAT can provide a framework for the relationships between senior leaders and tenured faculty in a variety of higher education institutions. In addition, because PAT does not account for more affective components of relationships within higher education institutions, the findings of this study suggest additional research on how adversarial relationships between tenured faculty and senior leadership develop over time, specifically how mistrust and resentment are internalized within a specific institution’s culture, would add to the body of

shared governance literature. This study addressed participants’ perception of the efficacy of shared governance at this institution; however, it did not go into depth regarding how participants came to their understanding of shared governance. Further research investigating how both faculty and senior leaders develop an understanding of their role within the shared governance of higher education institutions is needed (Kater, 2017). Finally, an opportunity exists to better understand how faculty unions impact shared governance relationships on community college campuses following the Supreme Court’s decision in *Janus* (*Janus v. AFSCME*, 2018). This study discussed the impact of the faculty union at this community college at a specific moment in time; however, more research should be done to explore how faculty unions impact relationships between faculty and administration at a time when unions are potentially becoming more active in order to prove their worth to their members.

Conclusion

Higher education institutions across the United States face challenges to engaging faculty in assessment initiatives for a variety of reasons, including institutional type and culture. This case study was designed to unpack the dynamic between tenured faculty and senior leadership as these groups navigate institutional complexities around assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. This case study of Midwest Community College, bounded by time and place, examined a specific institution as senior leaders and faculty wrestled with complex institutional dynamics around assessment of student learning. Interviews were conducted with faculty and senior leaders in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What influences a tenured faculty member’s decision to engage with assessment initiatives at Midwest Community College?

2. How can senior leadership successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on this specific unionized community college campus?

With these complex dynamics in mind, principal-agent theory (PAT) offers an important and helpful framework for considering how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in student learning outcomes assessment. The findings of this study suggest that senior leaders must leverage both incentives and monitoring to successfully engage tenured faculty in institutional efforts to assess student learning outcomes. In addition to incentives and monitoring, the faculty and senior leaders in this case study spoke to the need for acknowledging the value of assessment work, demonstrating respect for faculty’s engagement in institutional assessment processes, and giving inherent meaning to what faculty do. The findings of this study have direct implications for collective bargaining agreements, tenure processes, hiring practices, as well as senior leaders’ own behavior towards and relationships with tenured faculty.

The goal of this research study was to tell the stories of both faculty and administrators’ experiences in a unionized community college, develop a deep understanding of faculty motivation, barriers, and incentives when it comes to engaging to assessment initiatives, and describe how senior leadership at this institution can leverage institutional structures and relationships to engage faculty in assessment of student learning. While the details of this case study are unique to Midwest Community College, the experiences of faculty and senior leadership here can inform decision-making at similarly situated institutions. Ultimately, the findings from this study will be shared with senior leaders at Midwest Community College in the hopes of more successfully engaging tenured faculty in the institution’s efforts to assess student learning outcomes in the future.

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Appendix A

Faculty Interview Protocol

Prompt 1: Current Role

- Tell me about the path that brought you to your current position at [Midwest Community College].
- What does it mean to be a faculty member, and how did you come to that understanding?
- What motivates you in your work as a faculty member?
- What does your time typically look like during an average week?
- Is there anything else about your path to your current role that you’d like to add?

Prompt 2: Shared Governance

- How do you define shared governance?
- What does shared governance look like at this institution?
- What do you envision to be the role of faculty in shared governance?
- Is there anything else about your experience with shared governance at Midwest Community College that you’d like to share?

Prompt 3: Assessment Initiatives

- You mentioned that you have worked at [Midwest Community College] for _____ years now. It’s my understanding that assessment has been a topic of debate across the institution with various initiatives over the years. What is the purpose of assessment of student learning in higher education?
- What are some of the barriers to faculty engagement in assessment work?
- Have you or your colleagues encountered resistance from faculty to engaging in assessment in your department? On campus?

- Is there anything else about assessment initiatives at [Midwest Community College] that you’d like to add?

Prompt 4: Assessment & the Faculty Union

- How would you describe the relationship between the faculty union and the administration?
- How does the union impact your work as a faculty member?
- What has the campus been like, both during and since, the last contract negotiations concluded in the summer of 2018?
- Did anything seem to be different from prior years that you would attribute to the debate over assessment and the contract negotiations?
- Is there anything else about your experiences with the faculty union that you’d like to share?

Prompt 5: Faculty Engagement

- What could the administration do to more successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment work at the institution?
- Is the current approach to engaging tenured faculty in assessment working? Why or why not?
- Have any of the experiences during the last year caused you to reconsider how you do assessment? How you engage with the college? How you participate in the faculty union?

Appendix B

Administrator Interview Protocol

Prompt 1: Current Role

- Tell me about the path that brought you to your current/last position at [Midwest Community College].
- How do you describe your work as a [job title]?
- What motivates you in your work as a [job title]?
- Is there anything else about your path to your current/most recent role that you’d like to add?

Prompt 2: Shared Governance

- How do you define shared governance?
- What does shared governance look like at this institution?
- Do faculty have a role in the governance of the college? Why or why not?
- What are some of the challenges to shared governance at this institution?
- Is there anything else about shared governance at [Midwest Community College] that you’d like to share?

Prompt 3: Assessment Initiatives

- You mentioned that you have worked at [Midwest Community College] for _____ years now. It’s my understanding that assessment has been a topic of debate across the institution with various initiatives over the years. What is the purpose of assessment of student learning in higher education?
- What do you think are some of the barriers to faculty engagement in assessment work?
- Have you or your colleagues encountered resistance from faculty to engaging in assessment on campus? Why or why not?

- Is there anything else about assessment initiatives at [Midwest Community College] that you’d like to add?

Prompt 4: Assessment & the Faculty Union

- Please tell me about your experience with the faculty union on campus, specifically related to the last contract negotiation.
- How would you describe the current relationship between the faculty union and the administration?
- Does anything seem to be different from prior years that you would attribute to the debate over assessment and the contract negotiations?
- Do you believe assessment work should be included as a job duty in the faculty contract?
- Is there anything else about your experiences with the faculty union that you’d like to share?

Prompt 5: Faculty Engagement

- What could the administration do to more successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment work at the institution?
- Is the current approach to engaging faculty in assessment working? Why or why not?

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Lauren Kosrow, and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about tenured faculty engagement in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus.

If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will take the form of one interview scheduled at your convenience during the months of December 2019 or January 2020. The interview will last approximately ninety minutes and include five categories of questions with the opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Interviews will be audio recorded.

Participation is this study is completely voluntary. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email me at XXX.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Lauren Kosrow

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Explanation of the Research Study
You are being asked to participate in a research study to understand how senior leadership can successfully engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives on a unionized community college campus. This case study will help the researcher develop a deeper understanding of factors that impact faculty engagement in assessment initiatives and develop recommendations for how senior leadership can best address these factors. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

By signing below, you are providing consent to participate in a research project conducted by Lauren Kosrow, doctoral student at National Louis University, Chicago, IL.

Participation in this study will include one interview scheduled during the months of December 2019 or January 2020. The interview will last approximately ninety minutes and include five categories of questions with the opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Interviews will be audio-recorded. The participant may view and have final approval on the content of the interview transcript.

Your Rights and Participant Confidentiality
Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published, but participants' identities will in no way be revealed. Data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will use an encrypted recording device and secure recordings, transcripts, and field notes in a locked cabinet in her home office. Only the researcher and her dissertation committee chair will have access to data.

There are no anticipated risks or benefits, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be useful to other institutions who are seeking to engage tenured faculty in assessment initiatives.

Upon request you may receive summary results from this study and copies of any publications that may occur. Please email the researcher, Lauren Kosrow, at laurenkosrow@gmail.com to request results from this study.

Contact Information for Questions or Concerns
In the event that you have questions or require additional information, please contact the researcher, Lauren Kosrow, at XXX, or by phone, XXX.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that has not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact:

- Dr. Nathaniel Cradit, dissertation committee chair
    - Email: ncradit@nl.edu

- Dr. Shaunti Knauth, co-chair of NLU's Institutional Research Board
  - Email: Shaunti.Knauth@nl.edu
  - Phone: (312) 261-3526
- Dr. Kathleen Cornett, co-chair of NLU's Institutional Research Board
  - Email: kcornett@nl.edu
  - Phone: (844) 380-5001

Documentation of Informed Consent

I understand that by signing below, I am voluntarily agreeing to participate in this research study and to have the interview audio recorded.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____

Lauren Kosrow Date
Reference Librarian
Faculty Coordinator, Center for Teaching Excellence
Chair, Academic Assessment Committee
Triton College Faculty Association Member

Appendix E

Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

Major finding	Source of Data I	O	D
Category 1: Common Ground			
1. All parties are motivated by students and student success.	X	X	X
2. All faculty and senior leaders agreed the purpose of assessment of student learning in a higher education institution is the improvement of teaching and learning.	X	X	X
Category 2: Individual Factors			
1. Faculty and senior leaders identified lack of knowledge or understanding of assessment practices as a barrier.	X	X	
2. All faculty and senior leaders who participated in the study acknowledged the investment of time to engage in institutional assessment processes.	X	X	
3. All faculty members, as well as senior leaders who had previously been faculty, acknowledged the institution's struggle to communicate the value of individual faculty members' engagement in assessment initiatives in the past.	X	X	X
4. All faculty and senior leaders agreed assessment of student learning is inherent to one's role as a faculty member	X	X	X
Not all participants agreed that the documentation of evidence of student learning beyond one's own classroom practices is assumed or required as a faculty member.	X	X	X
Category 3: Institutional Factors			
1. Participants shared conflicting views on the definition of shared governance of a higher education institution.	X	X	X
Faculty believe shared governance is extremely limited, if not completely absent.	X	X	
Senior leadership expressed a desire to have faculty more engaged, but struggle to foster an environment in which faculty feel valued.	X	X	
2. A deeply adversarial relationship between senior leadership and the faculty union has developed.	X	X	X
Category 4: What Seniors Leaders Can Do			

1. Both faculty and senior leaders recognized the important role of compensation for faculty in assessment initiatives on this campus.	X	X	X
2. All faculty and senior leaders addressed the need for senior leadership to place a high value on assessment work.	X	X	X
3. Both faculty and senior leaders highlighted engagement of senior leaders with faculty as one of the essential components of leading a successful assessment initiative on campus.	X	X	X
Senior leaders interviewed for this study seemed to justify their hands-off approach by placing the responsibility for assessment on faculty.	X	X	X
Senior leaders are responsible for successfully championing the importance of student learning outcomes assessment on this campus.	X	X	X
4. Faculty and senior leaders were inconclusive on whether or not assessment work should be a job duty outlined in the faculty contract.	X	X	X

Note. I = Interview, O = Observation, D = Document