

Adjunct Faculty Development:
Building Community and Sustaining Pedagogical Change

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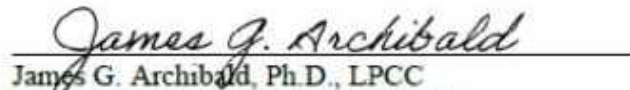
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examined how a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program at a Florida community college fosters community and supports sustained pedagogical change. With adjunct faculty teaching nearly 60% of community college courses while facing systemic barriers, effective support approaches are critical for institutional success.

Guided by constructivist learning theory and Wenger's Community of Practice framework, the study addressed: (1) What strategies build community among adjunct faculty? (2) What strategies contribute to sustained pedagogical change? (3) How do supports and barriers influence involvement? Data collection included semi-structured interviews with five adjunct professors who completed all program components (Academy, Professoriate, renewal portfolio) and portfolio analysis. This triangulated approach captured lived experiences and documented sustained professional growth.

Findings revealed that cohort-based learning, faculty facilitation, and peer interactions fostered community building and identity development. The biennial portfolio requirement institutionalized reflective practice driving pedagogical improvement. Financial incentives and institutional recognition proved essential despite time constraints. Four meta-themes emerged: transformational learning experiences, community-pedagogy integration, sustainability mechanisms, and institutional integration pathways.

The study demonstrates that comprehensive adjunct development programs can overcome systemic barriers through sequential programming, ongoing accountability, and meaningful support. Findings suggest significant potential for improving teaching effectiveness and student outcomes through strategic adjunct faculty development investment, with implications for community colleges nationwide.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Madison and Carson Washington. May the desire to chase your dreams be accompanied by a passion to work hard and never give up. Remember Philippians 4:13; You can do all things through Christ, who strengthens you.

Love Always, Mom

Chapter I

Introduction

Community colleges serve as critical access points for higher education in the United States, enrolling nearly 44% of all undergraduate students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). As open-access institutions offering affordability, flexibility, and career-focused programming, community colleges have experienced growing enrollment even as traditional four-year institutions face declining numbers (Santiago, 2024). This growth brings increasingly diverse student populations to community college classrooms, presenting significant pedagogical challenges for faculty.

In Florida, where this study is situated, legislative changes have further complicated the community college landscape. Florida Senate Bill 1720, enacted in 2013, removed mandatory developmental education requirements, fundamentally altering student preparedness levels in gateway courses (Developmental Education, 2013). This policy shift means that community college faculty now encounter even wider variation in student academic readiness, requiring more sophisticated pedagogical approaches to ensure all students can succeed. The responsibility for meeting these diverse learning needs falls primarily to teaching faculty, yet the composition of this workforce has changed dramatically over recent decades in ways that may compromise institutions' ability to provide high-quality instruction.

The Growing Reliance on Adjunct Faculty

The past four decades have witnessed a fundamental transformation in the academic workforce, with part-time adjunct faculty increasingly replacing full-time tenure-track positions as the primary instructional labor force. Currently, nearly 40% of instructional staff in higher education are adjunct faculty, with this proportion rising to 67% within community colleges (American Association of University Professors, 2018). Part-time faculty now teach approximately 58% of all community college classes, overseeing learning for more than half (53%) of enrolled students (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). Between 2003 and 2009, full-time faculty positions grew by only 2%, while part-time faculty increased by approximately 10%, reflecting a broader institutional shift toward contingent employment models (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014).

This dramatic growth in adjunct employment stems from multiple factors. Declining state support for higher education, rising enrollment demands, and institutional needs for scheduling flexibility have incentivized colleges to reduce instructional costs through increased reliance on part-time faculty (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). As Kezar and Maxey (2015) document, this restructuring has occurred regardless of institutional financial health, suggesting that labor cost reduction rather than fiscal necessity drives the trend. The result is an academic workforce increasingly characterized by temporary, contingent employment with limited institutional support or integration.

The Challenges Facing Adjunct Faculty

Research consistently shows the systemic challenges facing adjunct faculty that compromise their effectiveness and well-being. Financial uncertainty is the most immediate concern, with adjunct faculty earning an average of \$2,700 per course compared to full-time

faculty salaries ranging from \$60,000 to \$100,000 annually (Anthony et al., 2020). This disparity forces many adjuncts to work at multiple institutions simultaneously, creating what Hechinger (1982) termed “gypsy scholars” who move from campus to campus with little opportunity to develop institutional connections or invest deeply in any single teaching context. Yakoboski (2015) found that only 41% of adjunct faculty report high career satisfaction compared to 69% of tenured faculty, with primary dissatisfaction factors including inadequate pay (25%), lack of full-time positions (23%), absence of tenure-track opportunities (22%), and job insecurity (14%).

Beyond financial challenges, adjunct faculty face substantial isolation and exclusion from institutional communities. Eagan et al. (2015) found that lack of access to basic resources like office space, computers, institutional email, or mailboxes directly correlates with adjunct faculty dissatisfaction and sense of not being valued. This marginalization extends beyond physical resources to professional exclusion. Danaei’s (2019) comprehensive literature review revealed that adjuncts are frequently excluded from institutional discussions about learning goals, course assignments, and professional development opportunities, the very activities that institutions prioritize when hiring full-time faculty. Meixner et al. (2010) documented how this absence of physical and social integration contributes to adjuncts questioning their identity as “real teachers” and feeling disconnected from the broader academic community.

The isolation experienced by adjunct faculty has direct pedagogical consequences. Bolitzer (2019a) found that adjunct faculty lack fundamental understanding of institutional teaching goals, possess limited knowledge of pedagogical best practices, and receive minimal support for developing teaching effectiveness. Anthony et al. (2020) noted that adjuncts “are given classes at the last possible minute and they are given the least desirable hours, sometimes teaching both morning and nighttime course sections” (p. 8), treatment that reinforces outsider

status and undermines efforts to build the collegial connections that research demonstrates are crucial for teaching effectiveness. More recent work by Bolitzer (2021) reveals that while adjuncts can learn significantly through interactions with their students, this informal learning remains largely unrecognized and unsupported by institutions, representing a missed opportunity for professional development.

The Professional Development Gap

The challenges facing adjunct faculty are compounded by a fundamental gap in pedagogical preparation across higher education. Unlike K-12 education, which requires formal teacher training and certification, higher education faculty appointments are based primarily on disciplinary expertise rather than teaching ability. Faculty members are expected to hold appropriate academic credentials, typically graduate or terminal degrees in their fields, but no formal pedagogical training is required (Bart, 2010). As a result, many instructional staff across higher education, both full-time and adjunct, never receive formal training in teaching theory, learning principles, or effective instructional practices.

Research demonstrates that this pedagogical knowledge gap directly impacts teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Chickering and Gamson's (1987) foundational work identified seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education, noting that "teachers and students hold the main responsibility for improving undergraduate education" (p. 5). However, they observed that faculty cannot effectively facilitate learning through content knowledge alone. Mayhew et al. (2016) documented in their comprehensive synthesis that teaching quality represents one of the most notable factors influencing student learning, persistence, and success. Tinto's (1997) research on student retention consistently identifies quality of instruction and faculty-student interaction as critical factors in student persistence

decisions. More recent work by Kuh (2008) indicates that high-impact teaching practices, which require sophisticated pedagogical knowledge to implement effectively, substantially enhance student learning and success, particularly for historically underserved populations.

Despite this evidence linking teaching quality to student outcomes, professional development opportunities in higher education remain limited and inconsistent, particularly for adjunct faculty. While national organizations like the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) provide resources and frameworks for effective teaching practices, actual professional development delivery occurs at the institutional level with considerable variation in availability, quality, and accessibility (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). Full-time faculty typically have access to institutional teaching and learning centers, conference attendance funding, and contractual time allocated for professional development. In contrast, adjunct faculty face multiple barriers to professional development participation, including lack of awareness about available opportunities, scheduling conflicts with primary employment, absence of compensation for participation, and explicit or implicit signals that such opportunities are intended only for full-time faculty (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014).

The limited research on adjunct faculty professional development reveals a troubling pattern. Lowenthal et al. (2013) found that adjunct faculty express desire for professional development but face significant access barriers. Bolitzer (2019b) documented that when adjunct faculty do receive professional development, it often takes the form of brief, isolated workshops that fail to produce sustained changes in teaching practice, an approach that Polk (2006) criticizes as inadequate for meaningful pedagogical development. Finnerman (2015) found that adjunct faculty prefer professional development that responds to their specific teaching contexts and provides sustained engagement rather than one-time sessions. Yet few institutions have

developed comprehensive, sustained professional development programs specifically designed for adjunct faculty needs and constraints.

Statement of the Problem

The combination of these factors, increasing reliance on adjunct faculty, systemic challenges they face, pedagogical preparation gaps, and inadequate professional development, creates a critical problem for community colleges committed to student success. As adjunct faculty increasingly deliver the majority of instruction, particularly in the gateway courses that determine student persistence, their teaching effectiveness becomes essential to institutional missions. Yet the current system provides minimal support for developing this effectiveness. As Anthony et al. (2020) observe, despite decades of documentation about adjunct challenges, “many articles have been written about the adjunct experience, but very little has been done to salvage the situation” (p. 5).

This gap between the critical role adjunct faculty play and the limited support they receive has marked implications for educational quality and equity. Community college students, who are disproportionately first-generation, low-income, and from underrepresented groups, depend on effective teaching to overcome academic preparation gaps and achieve their educational goals (Bailey et al., 2015). When the faculty teaching the majority of their courses lack pedagogical training, institutional connections, and ongoing professional support, these students’ chances for success diminish. The problem extends beyond individual student outcomes to institutional effectiveness, as high adjunct turnover, low morale, and inconsistent teaching quality undermine efforts to improve retention, completion, and learning outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to examine how the design of a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program implemented at a Florida community college might build community amongst adjunct faculty and contribute to sustained pedagogical change over time. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore the support necessary to embrace and sustain pedagogical change by adjunct faculty over time following program completion. To examine this, I will conduct in-depth structured interviews with adjunct participants, examine completed portfolios of those seeking renewal, and review program documents (i.e. program syllabi, training materials, and website information).

The goal of my study is to get an understanding of what elements exist within the design and delivery of the comprehensive model that enhances an adjunct's sense of belonging at the college, and which elements contribute to sustained pedagogical change. In addition to looking at the design of the program, I will examine supports and barriers that influence program involvement and commitment to pedagogical change. By understanding these factors, it is my hope to bring light to the value of a structured professional development program for adjunct faculty and for the institution as a whole.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Nearly 60% of community college courses are now taught by adjunct faculty who often lack access to professional development and institutional integration (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). This dramatic shift over the past four decades from supplemental staffing to a dominant instructional model has profound implications for teaching quality, faculty professional development, and ultimately, student outcomes. As institutions grapple with financial constraints while maintaining educational excellence, the need for comprehensive faculty development programs has become increasingly critical, particularly for the growing adjunct workforce who often lack formal pedagogical training despite their subject matter expertise.

This literature review examines the evolution of faculty development in higher education, with particular attention to the unique challenges and opportunities presented by adjunct faculty professional development. The review establishes the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how comprehensive faculty development programs can build community among adjunct faculty and contribute to sustained pedagogical change. Through an examination of historical context, current challenges, and emerging solutions, this review demonstrates the critical need for innovative approaches to adjunct faculty development that address both individual professional growth and institutional educational quality.

The Foundation of Effective Faculty Development

Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning

The primary focus of faculty development is to improve student learning and boost the success of all students throughout their educational experience. Most of a student's time in college is spent within a classroom or through contact with instructional staff, making the quality of instruction vital to educational outcomes. However, not all instructional staff are adequately trained in classroom instruction or theories of learning, although they may be considered experts within their field of study.

According to Chickering and Gamson (1987), effective learning requires active student participation rather than passive reception of information. They argue that students cannot achieve deep learning merely through attending lectures, completing routine assignments, and providing rote responses. Instead, meaningful learning occurs when students engage in discussion about course material, reflect through writing, connect new concepts to prior knowledge, and integrate learning into their personal experience (p. 4).

Chickering and Gamson (1987) contend that conventional instructional methods centered on lecture delivery and information recall fail to cultivate effective learning outcomes. They advocate for pedagogical approaches that emphasize active engagement, incorporating diverse classroom experiences and intellectually demanding coursework to enhance student participation and understanding. This ideology aligns directly with the purpose of comprehensive adjunct programming, to enable adjuncts to become more effective in the classroom through effective practice and exploration of active teaching techniques in a community of practice setting.

The responsibility for enhancing undergraduate education rests primarily with instructors and students, as Chickering and Gamson (1987) emphasize. While faculty serve as learning

facilitators, content expertise alone proves inadequate for effective instruction, yet many educators lack formal training in pedagogical methods (Bart, 2010). This gap between content knowledge and pedagogical skill represents a critical challenge that faculty development programs must address.

Characteristics of Effective Faculty Development

Polk (2006) advocates for comprehensive and ongoing professional development opportunities for college faculty, particularly when implementing innovative teaching strategies. He criticizes the prevalent model of isolated, brief training sessions, noting that sporadic professional development efforts, such as periodic two-hour workshops, fail to produce lasting changes in teaching practice. Effective faculty development must be continuous and systematic, incorporating cycles of modeling, application, and constructive feedback as integral components of the teaching role (Polk, 2006).

Research demonstrates that continuous faculty development programs foster instructors' self-awareness regarding their pedagogical approaches (Ginsberg, 2007; Kane et al., 2004; Polk, 2006). Ginsberg (2007) builds upon Dewey's (1938) foundational premise that reflective practice serves as the cornerstone of effective instruction when combined with meaningful experiential learning. Similarly, Kane et al. (2004) position reflection as the central element of their professional development framework, asserting that systematic and intentional reflective practices provide mechanisms for examining and refining instructional methods toward teaching excellence.

Despite the documented benefits of faculty development, several barriers impede faculty adoption of pedagogical innovations, including entrenched educational practices, professional identity concerns, resistance to change, insufficient incentives, time constraints, resource

limitations, and anxiety about potential failure (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Successfully addressing these challenges requires institutional commitment and ongoing support systems that facilitate curricular transformation (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

These principles of effective faculty development become even more critical when considering adjunct faculty, who often have the same professional development needs as full-time faculty but face additional barriers to participation due to scheduling conflicts, lack of institutional support, and limited compensation for professional growth activities.

The Evolution of Faculty Development Structures

Historical Development and Current Models

From its inception in the 1960s, faculty development as a discipline has increased dramatically, not just in North America but across nearly every continent (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). The evolution of faculty development centers reflects changing institutional needs and expanding understanding of effective pedagogical practice. Until recently, the majority of centers followed similar organizational structures, with the main emphasis on education and learning, providing comparable menus of activities and services.

Contemporary faculty development is experiencing considerable transformation as centers form new relationships with instructional technology departments, assessment departments, student affairs departments, graduate schools, and writing programs (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). Some centers have developed innovative organizational structures, combining with instructional technology divisions, integrating various programs within a center, or rearranging existing centers to address additional faculty work requirements. While the learning and teaching mission continues to be central to faculty development centers, the breadth of faculty development is expanding to meet diverse institutional needs.

Austin and Sorcinelli (2013) identified establishing an environment of teaching quality, responding to individual faculty requirements, and promoting innovative initiatives in teaching and learning as primary objectives of faculty development across all institutional categories. However, their research revealed that faculty development frameworks and objectives differed greatly by institution type. Liberal arts colleges placed greater emphasis on fostering collegiality, community colleges focused more on responding to critical institutional requirements, and research universities emphasized aiding faculty experiencing difficulties.

Adapting to Changing Faculty Needs

The diversification of academic appointments and the increasing number of duties faculty manage are changing how faculty development programs are delivered (Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013). Factors like scheduling and inclusivity are altering how faculty and developers design programs. To better accommodate faculty members' busy schedules, several campuses now offer both face-to-face and virtual seminars to provide foundational knowledge on campus resources and pedagogical tools. Some institutions are exploring blended approaches to teacher effectiveness, delivering course material online for several weeks between in-person sessions.

These structural adaptations are particularly relevant for adjunct faculty, who face unique scheduling challenges and often work across multiple institutions. The evolution toward more flexible, technology-enhanced delivery models creates opportunities for meaningful adjunct faculty engagement that traditional models could not accommodate.

Research by Tenzin et al. (2019) illustrated significant positive impacts of faculty development programs on postgraduate education, showing increases in self-efficacy and competency among participants. Faculty development programs promoted educational quality, instructor professional development, and enhanced communication skills, leading to transitions

from traditional instruction methods to workplace-based instruction and evaluation. However, the study also identified many obstacles, including the absence of guidance from essential stakeholders and lack of adequate education facilities.

This evolution in faculty development structures and approaches sets the stage for understanding how comprehensive programs can address the specific needs of adjunct faculty, who represent an increasingly significant portion of the higher education workforce.

The Rise of Adjunct Faculty in Higher Education

National and Historical Context

The employment of adjunct faculty in higher education has transformed dramatically over the past four decades, evolving from a supplemental staffing strategy to a dominant institutional model. This transformation has created both opportunities and challenges for educational quality and faculty professional development. According to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the proportion of part-time faculty in U.S. colleges and universities increased substantially from 33% in 1987 to 48% in 2021 (American Association of University Professors, 2023).

As of fall 2022, the most recent data reveals that of the 1.5 million faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions nationwide, 56% were employed full-time while 44% worked part-time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). These figures represent headcount rather than full-time equivalent positions, meaning that the instructional load carried by part-time faculty may be proportionally higher than these numbers suggest.

The reliance on adjunct faculty varies considerably across different types of higher education institutions, with community colleges showing the highest rates of part-time employment. Historical data indicates that at two-year institutions, the percentage of part-time

faculty increased from 62% in 1991-1992 to 70.3% in 2011-2012 (Ballotpedia, 2024). Four-year institutions also experienced substantial growth, with part-time faculty increasing from 48.5% in 1993-1994 to 55.1% in 2013-2014 (Ballotpedia, 2024).

Economic and Structural Drivers

This dramatic growth reflects broader fiscal and structural transformation in higher education. According to the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE), part-time faculty teach approximately 58% of all community college classes and manage learning experiences for more than half (53%) of enrolled students (2014). Between 2003 and 2009, the number of full-time faculty at public community colleges grew by just 2%, while part-time faculty appointments increased by approximately 10%.

The CCCSE report (2014) identifies important differences between part-time and full-time faculty: only 11% of part-time faculty hold doctoral degrees (compared to 18% of full-time), and 37% of part-time faculty have fewer than five years of teaching experience. Similarly, 76% of faculty teaching developmental education courses are part-time, a notable concern for institutions focused on student readiness and equity.

Declining state and federal support, rising enrollment, and institutional demands for flexibility have incentivized colleges to reduce instructional costs through increased adjunct hiring. As the CCCSE report states, “Expanding the size of the contingent workforce is a rational economic solution because it minimizes costs and maximizes flexibility; colleges can easily expand or reduce instructional capacity based on shifts in enrollment” (2014, p. 2).

However, this economic rationale has created marked pedagogical and equity concerns. Many adjuncts are hired with little notice, receive limited or no orientation, and often lack access to professional development, office space, or inclusion in campus decision-making. This

structural reliance on adjunct labor, while economically advantageous, creates challenges for maintaining educational quality and supporting faculty development.

Florida and Institutional Context

Florida's higher education landscape exceeds national trends in adjunct faculty employment. The Florida College System, comprising 28 public community colleges and state colleges, serves as a critical component of the state's higher education infrastructure. In 2020-2021, the system enrolled 640,183 students across its institutions (Florida College System, 2024). Historical data from the Florida College System indicates significant reliance on part-time faculty, with 15,234 part-time faculty members compared to 6,175 full-time faculty members, representing 71.2% of the total faculty workforce as part-time (Florida Department of Education, 2016).

This proportion of part-time faculty in Florida's community colleges exceeds even the national average for two-year institutions, highlighting the critical importance of adjunct faculty development programs in the state. The Florida College System's mission emphasizes community responsiveness, workforce development, and student success, goals directly impacted by the quality of instruction provided by the substantial adjunct faculty workforce.

The community college examined in this study exemplifies these broader trends. In 2013-2014, the institution employed 554 full-time faculty and 887 adjunct faculty, with adjunct faculty comprising 61.6% of the total instructional workforce. By 2019-2020, the composition had shifted to 483 full-time and 706 adjunct faculty, representing 59.4% adjunct employment. While both categories experienced reductions, the persistence of high adjunct ratios demonstrates the structural dependence on part-time instructional staff that characterizes community colleges.

Table 1

Institutional Context Comparison

Metric	National Average	Florida System	Study Institution (2019-20)
Part-Time Faculty %	44% (2022)	71.2%	59.4%
Full-Time Faculty %	56% (2022)	28.8%	40.6%
Relative Position	Baseline	27.2 points above national	15.4 points above national

This institutional context provides the foundation for understanding why comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs become essential investments in teaching quality and student success. The scale of adjunct employment necessitates systematic approaches to professional development that can effectively serve large numbers of part-time faculty while addressing their unique needs and constraints.

Challenges Facing Adjunct Faculty

Professional Development Barriers and Resource Limitations

Despite their central role in instruction, adjunct faculty often lack the tools and training necessary to promote student success. The challenges facing adjunct faculty extend beyond basic resource access to encompass systematic barriers to professional growth and institutional integration. Understanding these challenges is essential for designing effective development programs that can meaningfully support adjunct faculty professional growth.

Adjunct faculty face immense barriers to professional development participation. Yakoboski (2015) found that while 23% of adjunct faculty report satisfaction with institutional support for professional development and career advancement, one-third are dissatisfied (21% not too satisfied, 12% not at all satisfied). Financial constraints significantly impact participation,

with only 19% of adjunct faculty very confident they will have enough money for comfortable retirement, and 28% citing insufficient savings and 33% citing low earnings as primary concerns.

The lack of basic resources creates fundamental obstacles to effective teaching and professional engagement. Adjunct faculty often lack essential resources such as office space for meeting with students, computers, university email addresses, and mailboxes for receiving important notices (Muncaster, 2011). Meixner et al. (2010) cite the absence of email addresses and office mailboxes as structural impediments to part-time faculty learning about important events, including activities planned specifically for part-time professors.

Impact on Sense of Belonging and Community Connection

The lack of resources extends beyond practical concerns to affect adjuncts' sense of belonging to the campus community. As Meixner et al. (2010) observe, the absence of physical space on campus beyond the classroom contributes to limited collegial engagement, feelings of not being valued, and questioning their identity as "real teachers" (p. 146). This marginalization has considerable implications for both faculty satisfaction and educational quality.

Research by Eagen et al. (2015) discovered a correlation between lack of access to institutional resources and part-time faculty satisfaction. Access to resources was perceived as a sign of respect, and "perceiving respect from full-time colleagues for part-time academics was positively and significantly correlated with workplace satisfaction." This research suggests that adjuncts' lack of access to institutional resources influences not only their work effectiveness but also their relationships with academic colleagues and their perception of their importance to the institution.

The importance of belonging and community for adjunct faculty success has been consistently documented. Danaei's (2019) review found that adjunct faculty who participated in

mentoring programs and professional development reported increased connections to their institutions and improved teaching practices. However, as Anthony et al. (2020) observe, adjuncts “are given classes at the last possible minute and they are given the least desirable hours, sometimes teaching both morning and nighttime course sections” (p. 8). This treatment reinforces their outsider status and undermines efforts to build community connections that research demonstrates are crucial for pedagogical effectiveness.

More recent research continues to document these challenges while identifying institutional approaches that successfully address them. Kezar and Harper (2023) examined institutions that won the Delphi Award for supporting non-tenure track faculty, finding that exemplar campuses implemented comprehensive policies that reduce the precarity facing contingent faculty. These institutions created regular titles and promotion pathways, established longer-term contracts, and meaningfully included non-tenure track faculty in university decision-making. Such systematic approaches demonstrate that the problems of academic labor exploitation are neither natural nor intractable (Kezar & Harper, 2023).

Building on this research, Culver et al. (2025) propose a new conceptual framework for understanding 21st-century faculty work that moves beyond traditional tenure-track versus non-tenure-track dichotomies. Their framework emphasizes the need for institutions to develop integrated support systems that recognize the diverse faculty ecosystem and create pathways for professional growth regardless of appointment type. These findings emphasize that effective adjunct faculty support requires systemic, institution-wide approaches rather than isolated interventions, a principle reflected in the comprehensive program examined in this study.

Specific Professional Development Needs

Research reveals specific areas where adjunct faculty require and benefit from enhanced support. Meixner et al. (2010) identified several significant instructional development areas that adjunct faculty find useful for their teaching effectiveness. Adjunct faculty report requesting and benefiting from increased support in course preparation, including guidance on building syllabi, creating assignments, and writing assessments. They also value assistance with maximizing students' learning experiences and reaching students in large lecture sessions.

Studies demonstrate that adjuncts desire faculty development that responds to the specific contexts in which they teach, such as their specialty areas and required instructional technologies (Bolitzer, 2019b; Finnerman, 2015). Keehn and Martinez (2006) found a correlation between adjunct faculty engagement in sustained faculty development sessions and positive changes in their teaching practices. Participants who attended summer institutes and academic year courses expressed greater understanding of cultural competency instruction and how to employ pedagogies that draw upon students' cultural knowledge.

Despite these challenges, adjunct faculty demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation for teaching excellence. Yakoboski (2015) found that 90% of adjunct faculty say "I enjoy teaching and interacting with students" describes them very well, and 72% value the intellectual stimulation provided by their work. This intrinsic motivation suggests that well-designed professional development programs can effectively tap into existing enthusiasm to create meaningful pedagogical change.

Contemporary Challenges in Higher Education

Impact of Technological and Economic Change

Research demonstrates that contemporary challenges have intensified the pedagogical demands on adjunct faculty. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated existing trends toward digital learning options, fundamentally reshaping higher education delivery models (Hermawan, 2021). However, significant changes to higher education conditions in recent decades have already begun altering environments for adjunct faculty. Economic difficulties over the past decade have substantially changed the higher education landscape, with increasing numbers of students seeking online education as institutions view digital delivery as a way to balance budgets through increased revenue and reduced expenses (Mueller et al., 2013).

This shift toward online education has particular implications for adjunct faculty employment and professional development needs. As Mueller et al. (2013) explain, during economic stress, individuals aim to maximize income potential while minimizing financial burden. Online courses allow students to pursue education and increase marketability without compromising existing work schedules, while allowing colleges to offer courses without incurring traditional overhead expenses associated with physical classrooms.

The increasing dependence on adjunct faculty to teach online courses correlates with the rise of online learning programs. This trend has intensified concerns about the comparative effectiveness of adjunct versus full-time instructors. Mueller et al. (2013) found performance and satisfaction advantages for students in online courses taught by full-time teachers compared to adjunct faculty, highlighting the need for targeted professional development to ensure quality across all instructional modalities.

Online Teaching Challenges for Adjunct Faculty

Online adjunct faculty face unique challenges that compound traditional barriers to professional development. Due to their non-continuous, time-limited academic employment, they may lack connection to the broader academic department, a situation exacerbated by geographical isolation (Mueller et al., 2013). The relative novelty of online education means that many adjunct faculty members lack extensive personal experience with effective teaching and learning practices in digital environments.

Research indicates that adjunct faculty lack skills in online grading practices and digital pedagogical approaches (Mueller et al., 2013). To address these deficiencies, institutions must design targeted faculty development programs specifically for remote faculty members. Such programming should address both effective online educational strategies and be delivered through web-based, asynchronous formats to accommodate participation outside regular work hours.

The contractual, course-by-course structure of adjunct teaching positions creates additional challenges, as adjunct faculty have no expectation, incentive, or obligation to participate in professional development, collaboration, or service opportunities (Peters et al., 2011). Research reveals that institutions remain cautious about enhancing requirements or expectations regarding adjunct teaching quality due to awareness of low compensation structures (Mueller et al., 2013). These contemporary challenges underscore the need for innovative approaches to adjunct faculty development that can address both traditional pedagogical needs and emerging technological competencies while accommodating the unique constraints faced by part-time faculty.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated many of these trends while simultaneously highlighting the critical role of adjunct faculty in maintaining educational continuity. Kezar (2022) observed that the pandemic served as a catalyst for institutional transformation in how colleges and universities support contingent faculty. As faculty members adapted courses to online formats with minimal assistance while providing emotional support to grieving students, administrators at some institutions began implementing more comprehensive policies to honor the contributions of both tenured and non-tenure-track faculty. Kezar documented how exemplary institutions used the pandemic crisis to implement systemic changes that reduce precarity for contingent faculty, including longer-term contracts, promotion pathways, and meaningful inclusion in university decision-making. These institutional responses demonstrate that comprehensive support for adjunct faculty is not only pedagogically necessary but also operationally feasible, even during periods of pronounced institutional stress.

Understanding Adjunct Faculty Roles and Motivations

Professional Identity and Teaching Effectiveness

The exploration of adjunct faculty roles as educators reveals complex relationships between motivation, preparation, and teaching effectiveness. Bolitzer's (2019b) research found that reasons individuals work as adjuncts correlate substantially with their teaching approaches and effectiveness. While questions remain about adjunct faculty effectiveness compared to tenure-track, full-time faculty, clear evidence demonstrates that adjunct faculty lack fundamental resources and instructional development supports, creating limited understanding of how adjunct teachers develop pedagogical expertise.

Research gaps exist regarding how adjuncts determine teaching goals, organize themselves as educators, experience the teaching process, and evaluate their instructional quality

(Bolitzer, 2017). Additionally, insufficient research exists on what specific institutions can provide adjunct faculty and what colleagues can offer independently to support their roles as educators. Understanding these gaps is essential for designing effective professional development programs.

Bolitzer (2019b) identified critical distinctions between the visible labor of instruction within classrooms, such as lecturing, leading discussions, and facilitating group work, and the less apparent work outside of class, including lesson preparation, grading student work, and reflecting on teaching practice. While research has identified possible disparities between full-time and part-time professors, explanations for why these differences exist remain limited, and insight into the less visible components of adjunct faculty instruction is almost nonexistent.

Diversity and Equity Considerations

The ongoing transformations in the professoriate have created additional urgency around understanding adjunct faculty experiences. Over the past two decades, underrepresented minorities and female faculty members have increased, with disproportionate concentration in non-tenure track, adjunct roles (Finkelstein et al., 2016). These trends are particularly pronounced among African American women, who represent the smallest share of tenured and tenure-track professors overall.

This employment gap raises important concerns regarding access and equity among faculty members and substantial questions about the teaching approaches of historically marginalized academics, particularly how they may differ from their white, male colleagues. According to existing literature (Turner et al., 2008), racial and ethnic minorities and female tenure-track faculty members are more likely to implement inclusive teaching strategies that incorporate diverse identities. Research examining whether similar patterns exist among

historically underrepresented faculty members in adjunct roles would provide valuable insights for professional development program design.

These demographic trends have implications for both institutional diversity goals and student success outcomes, particularly given research suggesting that faculty diversity can positively impact student engagement and achievement. Understanding how to effectively support the professional development of increasingly diverse adjunct faculty populations becomes critical for institutional success.

Emerging Models of Effective Adjunct Faculty Development

Evidence-Based Approaches to Professional Development

Recent research has begun to identify effective models for adjunct faculty professional development that address the unique challenges and constraints facing part-time faculty. Packer (2019) examined the implementation and perceived effectiveness of a modified participant-based faculty development model for adjunct faculty, emphasizing instructional innovations and addressing specific teaching challenges. The methodology drew from the Great Teachers Movement concept, employing a participant-based approach that enabled instructors to engage in dynamic dialogues about teaching innovations while seeking solutions to pedagogical obstacles.

Packer's (2019) quantitative and qualitative analysis showed that adjunct faculty preferred participant-based approaches to faculty development over conventional presenter-based models. This preference aligns with adult learning principles and constructivist approaches that position learners as active participants in knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of information. Recent research by Bolitzer (2021) extends this understanding by examining the reciprocal learning relationships between adjunct faculty and their students. Her study revealed that adjuncts engage in a "two-way street" of learning, where interactions with students about

subject matter contribute to faculty members' own pedagogical development. This finding suggests that effective professional development programs should not only provide structured learning opportunities but also help adjuncts recognize and leverage the learning that occurs through their teaching practice.

The significance of adjunct faculty professional development cannot be overstated, as these instructors teach high numbers of general education courses that serve introductory students, and student success and retention often depend on effective teaching practices (Packer, 2019). In environments prioritizing student achievement, adjunct faculty must fully understand the teaching and learning process, effective pedagogical techniques, and strategies for increasing student engagement. Bolitzer's (2021) work demonstrates that when adjuncts are supported in reflecting on their teaching experiences and student interactions, they develop deeper pedagogical understanding that extends beyond what traditional workshop-based professional development can provide.

Addressing Participation Barriers Through Program Design

Research indicates that adjunct faculty participation in professional development can be increased through strategic program design modifications. Participation improves when development opportunities are delivered online with self-paced modules (Dailey-Herbert et al., 2014) or by modifying scheduling to accommodate adjunct availability (Finnerman, 2015). Faculty may also be more inclined to participate when development is provided by their specific program or department or when their colleagues are involved (Bolitzer, 2019a).

Financial incentives play a crucial role in adjunct faculty engagement. Given the financial constraints facing adjunct faculty, compensated professional development programs offering stipends become particularly valuable for encouraging participation. The design of such

programs must balance institutional budget constraints with the recognition that adjunct faculty often cannot afford to participate in uncompensated professional development activities.

Effective programs also differentiate support based on adjunct faculty type and experience level. Research reveals that adjunct faculty are more likely to participate in faculty development when it addresses their individual needs as educators (Bolitzer, 2019a; Meixner et al., 2010). Engagement depends on both the institution's approach to faculty development and adjuncts' perceptions of their own professional development needs.

Building Community and Sustainable Change

Lowenthal et al. (2013) examined faculty motivation to engage in professional development programs, recognizing the need for greater public accountability and enhanced teaching and learning. Their mixed-method research explored motivation among full-time and part-time professors at four institutions, examining barriers to attendance and preferred formats. Results indicated that full-time faculty desired more professional development opportunities than part-time faculty across institutions, but this finding likely reflects access issues rather than intrinsic motivation differences. More recent research by Kezar and Harper (2023) reinforces these findings, demonstrating that sustained, comprehensive approaches to adjunct support, including cohort-based programming and ongoing recognition structures, produce more significant improvements in teaching quality and institutional integration than isolated interventions.

The research indicated that faculty developers should reconsider the variety and frequency of professional development programs and calls for deeper examination of faculty engagement expectations. Despite attempts to provide online faculty development and brief workshops, full-time faculty in the study preferred books, films, and retreats over online

activities and short workshops, suggesting that sustained, immersive experiences may be more effective than brief interventions.

These findings have particular relevance for adjunct faculty development, suggesting that effective programs must move beyond traditional workshop models to create sustained engagement opportunities that build community and support long-term pedagogical change. The challenge lies in designing programs that provide intensive, meaningful experiences while accommodating the scheduling and resource constraints that characterize adjunct faculty employment.

Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Faculty Development

Constructivist learning theory and Communities of Practice theory provide the foundational frameworks for understanding how comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs can transform isolated faculty into communities of practice engaged in sustained pedagogical growth. These complementary theories inform both the design of effective professional development programs and provide the analytical lens through which this study examines how the comprehensive adjunct development program at a Florida community college builds community and sustains pedagogical change among participants.

Constructivist Learning Theory as Foundation

Constructivist learning theory provides the foundational framework most closely aligned with effective adjunct faculty development programs. Drawing from influential educational theorists including Dewey, Piaget, Bruner, and Vygotsky (Kenny & Wirth, 2009), constructivism emphasizes that learners must actively construct their own knowledge and capabilities rather than passively receive information (Huitt, 2011). This principle proves particularly relevant for

adult learners in professional development contexts, who bring extensive prior knowledge and experience that must be integrated with new pedagogical concepts.

Pang and Ross (2010) explain that optimal learning occurs when students function as active participants who process information, take ownership of their educational journey, and direct their learning experiences. This engaged approach results in more profound and meaningful educational outcomes. For adjunct faculty participants, this means moving beyond passive reception of teaching strategies to active construction of their own pedagogical understanding through reflection, practice, and integration with their disciplinary expertise.

Constructivist instructional strategies typically incorporate collaborative discussions, peer-based activities, critical thinking applications, and real-world problem-solving exercises. Such approaches position students as co-creators of their learning while instructors serve as guides and facilitators (Pang & Ross, 2010). This theoretical foundation directly informs effective adjunct development program design, where participants engage collaboratively to construct understanding of effective teaching practices rather than simply receiving prescriptive methods.

The Contrast with Traditional Approaches. Constructivist approaches stand in stark contrast to conventional educational models that emphasize passive information transmission through lecture-based instruction. Despite pedagogical advances, traditional lecture methods continue to predominate in higher education settings (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). This challenge is particularly acute for adjunct faculty, who often lack formal pedagogical training and may default to transmission-based teaching methods they experienced as students, perpetuating cycles of passive learning environments. These conventional approaches position students as passive consumers of knowledge rather than active investigators engaged in inquiry-based learning

(Pang & Ross, 2010). Such environments typically produce surface-level understanding, characterized by limited retention and reduced personal engagement with course material (Pang & Ross, 2010). The construction of the adjunct programming central to this study is designed with these principles in mind, with the adjunct participants positioned as active learners and the adjunct facilitator modeling the active teaching and learning environment that participants can then implement in their own classrooms.

The Bridge to Metacognitive Development. The connection between constructivist learning and metacognitive development represents a crucial theoretical link in this framework. Constructivist teaching methods focus on cultivating students' capacity for self-directed learning, personal facilitation abilities, and reflective awareness of their educational progress (Pang & Ross, 2010). This cultivation directly supports the development of metacognitive skills, which Peters (2000) defines as learners' capacity to recognize and oversee their cognitive processes.

Metacognition encompasses two critical dimensions: evaluating one's thinking patterns and managing cognitive growth (Imel, 2002). Metacognitive awareness enables students to choose optimal learning strategies for specific contexts and challenges (Pintrich, 2002). Educational research confirms the positive correlation between metacognitive development and academic achievement, with Stewart et al. (2007) demonstrating that students possessing stronger metacognitive abilities exhibit superior academic performance (as cited in Pang & Ross, 2010). This research foundation supports the theoretical rationale for embedding metacognitive skill development within the constructivist framework of the adjunct development program.

Active Learning as the Connecting Mechanism. Active learning serves as the practical mechanism that connects constructivist theory to metacognitive development within the adjunct program structure. As adjunct faculty participate in the comprehensive adjunct faculty

programming as students themselves, they experience firsthand the benefits of the active learning process and practice metacognition and other tools of success modeled through the program. By experiencing these techniques as learners and observing the modeling of these techniques, the adjunct faculty develop a deeper understanding of constructivist pedagogical strategies and gain practical experience in implementing them within their own courses.

This experiential approach addresses the adult learner context specifically, recognizing that adjunct faculty bring professional expertise from their disciplines but may lack pedagogical knowledge. The active learning framework allows them to construct pedagogical understanding by building upon their existing professional competencies while developing new teaching skills through guided practice and reflection.

Student Engagement as the Measurable Outcome. Constructivist educational approaches prioritize enhanced learner engagement through environments where students actively build understanding during the learning process. Chapman (2003) characterizes student engagement as learners' readiness to participate meaningfully in educational activities. This engagement manifests through motivated behaviors, evidenced by students' selection of cognitive strategies and their persistence through challenging academic tasks while maintaining control over their learning processes (Chapman, 2003).

The theoretical framework establishes clear progression: constructivist principles inform active learning strategies, which develop metacognitive capabilities, which in turn strengthen student engagement and academic success. For the adjunct development program, this means that as faculty develop constructivist teaching approaches through their own active learning experiences, they become better equipped to create engaging learning environments that promote student success. This theoretical chain provides the conceptual foundation for evaluating the

effectiveness of the comprehensive adjunct development program through measures of both faculty learning and subsequent student engagement in their courses.

Communities of Practice Theory

The Community of Practice (CoP) framework, originating from Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory, fundamentally reconceptualizes learning as social participation rather than individual knowledge acquisition. This framework challenges traditional educational models by positioning learning as a social process embedded within communities of shared practice (Wenger, 1998). The theoretical foundation evolved from Lave and Wenger's (1991) foundational work on legitimate peripheral participation, which emphasized that learning occurs through progressive movement from peripheral to full participation in communities rather than through transmission of knowledge from teacher to student.

In this framework, learning is not viewed as knowledge acquisition by individuals, but as increasing participation in the practices of a community. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, learning is "an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (p. 31) rather than a separate cognitive process. This perspective challenges individual, transmission models of learning that position learning as "a largely unproblematic event in which teachers speak and students learn" (O'Donnell & Tobbell, 2007, p. 315). Instead, learning is positioned as embedded in wider social and historical practices, distributed across person, time, place, and activity.

Central to CoP theory is the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, where newcomers begin at the margins of a community with limited but legitimate access to its practices. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe this as a process where "learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community" (p.

29). Through guided participation and increasing engagement, newcomers gradually develop identities aligned with the community’s practices and move toward fuller participation.

However, peripheral participation can be both empowering and limiting. While it provides access to community practices, institutional barriers, resource limitations, and power structures can prevent movement toward full participation. As O’Donnell and Tobbell (2007) note, “When peripherality is a position from which an individual can move forwards toward fuller participation, it is an empowered position. When peripherality is a position from which an individual is prevented from fuller participation, it is disempowering” (p. 326). This complexity is particularly relevant for adjunct faculty who may face systemic barriers to full participation in academic communities.

Wenger’s (1998) expanded framework identifies a community of practice as present when learners have a common interest, collaborate over time, share ideas and approaches, and design solutions together. The theory positions learning within four interconnected components as indicated in Figure 1 with community, practice, identity, and meaning, with learning as the central organizing principle connecting these elements.

Figure 1

Components of a Social Learning Theory



Components of Communities of Practice.

Community (Belonging). The first component, community, requires that members work together in shared activities, learning from each other through social interaction (Wenger, 1998). This represents learning through developing a sense of belonging within the group. In the CoP model, learning is constructed through the social interactions of participants rather than through individual cognitive processes. For adjunct faculty development, this involves creating spaces where adjunct faculty from different disciplines and experience levels can interact collectively, sharing their diverse expertise and perspectives while addressing common pedagogical challenges.

The development of community involves more than mere proximity or shared interests. It requires what Wenger (1998) describes as “mutual engagement in action,” where participants develop relationships that enable meaningful collaboration and support. For adjunct faculty, this community formation can be challenging given their outsider status within institutions and limited opportunities for sustained interaction with colleagues.

Practice. The second component includes the shared repertoire of activities, tools, concepts, methods, and approaches that the community develops over time. Practice refers to explicitly shared work in which people with common interests can “sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5). This represents learning through doing, where participants with common issues or problems engage in collaborative work that addresses shared challenges.

Practice encompasses not only shared activities but also the development of a shared collection of resources, like language, tools, concepts, methods, and ways of doing things that the community has developed over time (Wenger, 1998). For adjunct faculty professional development, this involves working together to apply pedagogical theory in their teaching

practice throughout various program components, developing shared understandings of effective teaching strategies, and creating resources that support their collective growth as educators.

Identity. The third component addresses how participation in the community shapes who members become. Identity exists when the community develops shared interests that go beyond casual networking to represent a commitment to the group and its purposes (Wenger, 1998). This can be characterized as learning by becoming, involving the transformation of one's sense of self through community participation.

Identity development occurs through negotiating meaning within the community's practices and involves what Wenger (1998) describes as trajectories, such as past experiences, present engagement, and future possibilities. For adjunct faculty, this involves reconciling their content expertise with developing pedagogical identity, potentially shifting from viewing themselves primarily as subject matter experts to seeing themselves as educators committed to effective teaching practice. This identity transformation may be complicated by their marginalized status within academic institutions and the temporary nature of their employment.

Meaning. Through shared experience, the community works to develop meaning, the fourth component of the framework. Meaning-making represents the process of building learning through shared experience and negotiation of understanding (Wenger, 1998). This can be characterized as learning through experience and is closely associated with identity development. As Wenger (1998) explains, meaning is "at once both historical and dynamic, contextual and unique" (p. 54), emerging through the ongoing negotiation between community members' interpretations and the practices in which they engage.

For adjunct faculty participating in comprehensive professional development programs, meaning-making involves developing shared understandings of effective teaching practices,

negotiating the significance of their role as educators, and constructing new professional identities. The conferring of titles such as “Adjunct Professor” upon program completion represents one formal mechanism for recognizing identity transformation and the development of new meanings around professional status and capabilities.

Application to Adjunct Faculty Development

For adjunct faculty professional development, the CoP framework suggests that effective learning occurs not through isolated training sessions, but through sustained participation in communities where pedagogical practices are shared, negotiated, and refined. The framework helps explain how adjunct faculty develop teaching identities and pedagogical knowledge through collaborative engagement with colleagues facing similar challenges.

The framework acknowledges that communities of practice often intersect with other communities, creating boundary zones where participants navigate multiple identities and practices (Wenger, 1998). Adjunct faculty may exist at boundaries between their disciplinary communities and the broader educational community, requiring them to negotiate different sets of practices and expectations. Understanding these boundary dynamics is crucial for designing effective professional development programs that honor adjunct faculty members’ diverse backgrounds while supporting their development as educators.

This theoretical lens provides a foundation for understanding how comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs can create conditions for meaningful professional learning through community participation, shared practice, identity development, and collaborative meaning-making. The framework emphasizes that sustainable pedagogical change occurs through sustained engagement in communities of practice rather than through episodic training interventions.

Gaps in Current Research and Need for Further Study

Limitations in Existing Research

Despite growing attention to adjunct faculty issues, significant gaps remain in understanding how to effectively support their professional development and pedagogical growth. Current research tends to focus on identifying problems and barriers rather than examining successful interventions and their long-term impacts. Limited longitudinal studies exist that track the sustained effects of professional development programs on adjunct faculty teaching practices and student outcomes.

Most existing research employs survey methodologies or brief case studies that provide limited insight into the complex processes through which adjunct faculty develop pedagogical expertise and professional identity. The field lacks comprehensive program evaluations that examine both immediate outcomes and long-term sustainability of pedagogical change. Additionally, insufficient research examines how different program design elements contribute to community building and sustained engagement among adjunct faculty.

The intersection of adjunct faculty development with institutional change processes remains underexplored. While individual-level outcomes receive some attention, limited research examines how successful adjunct development programs influence broader institutional culture, full-time faculty attitudes toward adjuncts, or systemic approaches to supporting contingent faculty. Understanding these institutional-level impacts is crucial for developing scalable and sustainable approaches to adjunct faculty support.

The Need for Comprehensive Program Analysis

Current research demonstrates clear need for detailed examination of comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs that address multiple dimensions of professional growth

simultaneously. Most existing studies focus on isolated interventions or single-component programs, providing limited understanding of how multi-faceted approaches can address the complex challenges facing adjunct faculty.

The field requires research that examines how program design elements interact to create conditions for both individual professional development and community formation among adjunct faculty. Understanding the mechanisms through which comprehensive programs build lasting connections among participants and support sustained pedagogical change represents a critical knowledge gap that this study addresses.

Furthermore, limited research examines the supports and barriers that affect adjunct faculty commitment to pedagogical change over time. While initial participation in professional development programs has received some attention, understanding factors that contribute to long-term engagement and application of new teaching practices remain underdeveloped. This gap is particularly significant given the resource constraints and institutional marginalization that characterize adjunct faculty experiences.

Summary

The literature review highlights a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities in adjunct faculty professional development. The dramatic growth in adjunct faculty employment across higher education, particularly in community colleges, has created unprecedented demands for effective professional development programs that can serve large numbers of part-time faculty while addressing their unique needs and constraints.

Key findings from the literature establish that effective faculty development must be continuous, systematic, and grounded in constructivist learning principles that engage participants as active learners rather than passive recipients of information. Successful programs

incorporate sustained engagement, reflective practice, and collaborative learning approaches that build both pedagogical knowledge and professional community. However, adjunct faculty face considerable barriers to participation, including limited resources, scheduling constraints, financial pressures, and institutional marginalization that compound the challenges of developing effective teaching practices.

The literature demonstrates that adjunct faculty possess strong intrinsic motivation for teaching excellence but lack access to the systematic support structures available to full-time faculty. While emerging models show promise for addressing some barriers through flexible delivery, financial incentives, and participant-centered approaches, comprehensive evaluation of multi-faceted programs remains limited. The field lacks detailed understanding of how program design elements interact to create conditions for sustained pedagogical change and community formation among adjunct faculty.

Identification of Research Gaps

This literature review identifies three critical gaps that this study addresses:

1. Limited understanding of comprehensive program design: While research identifies individual components of effective faculty development, insufficient analysis exists of how multi-faceted programs integrate various elements to build community and support sustained change.
2. Lack of longitudinal analysis of pedagogical change: Most existing research provides snapshot assessments of program satisfaction or immediate outcomes, with limited examination of factors that contribute to sustained pedagogical change over time.
3. Insufficient attention to support systems and barriers: While barriers to initial participation receive attention, understanding of ongoing supports and obstacles that

affect long-term engagement and commitment to pedagogical change remains underdeveloped.

Statement of the Problem

Teaching faculty within higher education are experts within their fields; however, most lack formal training related to pedagogy. Accountability for student academic success remains high, with success data serving as benchmarks for accreditation, grants, funding, and institutional reputation. Investment in quality teaching is crucial to the learning process and academic success measures. With increased reliance on adjunct faculty within higher education, their role in student learning is as vital as that of full-time faculty. Addressing the knowledge gap between content expertise and educational theory must be a focal point for institutions serving all teaching faculty, especially adjuncts.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the design of an existing comprehensive adjunct faculty development program builds community amongst adjunct professors and contributes to sustained pedagogical change over time. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore the supports necessary to embrace and sustain pedagogical change over time. To provide focus, the following research questions guide this investigation:

1. What program design and delivery strategies enhance the building of community amongst adjunct professors?
2. What program design and delivery strategies contribute to sustained pedagogical change for adjunct professors?
3. How do program supports and barriers affect adjunct professors' involvement and commitment to pedagogical change?

Conclusion

Given the heightened use of adjunct faculty within higher education, particularly within community college systems, mechanisms must be in place to provide necessary training, resources, and ongoing support to achieve success both in the classroom and within the collegial community. Adjunct faculty require both tangible resources that provide a sense of belonging and intangible supports such as networks of colleagues for collaboration, idea sharing, and educational partnership. Furthermore, adjunct faculty need access to ongoing training that is comprehensive and meaningful to bridge the gap between their content knowledge and needed educational theory and practice.

This study examines a single institution that developed and provides a comprehensive adjunct professional development program with multi-faceted components designed to align adjunct faculty pedagogical practices with research-based best practices while fostering community through cohort-based and community of practice programming. Through detailed analysis of this program, the study contributes to understanding how institutions can effectively support adjunct faculty professional development and enhance student learning outcomes.

Chapter III

Methodology

This study will utilize a case study analysis of a comprehensive adjunct faculty professional development program at a single site community college in Florida. With the lack of comprehensive professional development programs available within institutions of higher education created solely for adjunct faculty, an in-depth examination of one such existing program is a valuable contribution to future practice and the limited literature. A review of the program components, design, and delivery will be analyzed alongside the perspectives of program participants to better understand strategies that contribute to an enhanced sense of belonging and positive pedagogical changes that can be sustained.

Through structured interviews, the supports needed for successful implementation will be explored along with barriers that impact adjunct involvement. The results of this exploration will reveal insights that can inform future practice for other institutions to support adjunct faculty professional development needs leading to more effective teaching and enhanced student learning. An explanation of the case-study method used along with the conceptual framework that informs this research will follow, along with a detailed overview of the program, participants, and data sources used in analysis. I will describe the process of data analysis used along with the strategy for data validation. To maintain confidentiality, I have changed the name of the site, the participants, and the programs.

Research Questions

This study examines how the design of a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program builds community amongst adjunct professors and contributes to sustained pedagogical change over time. Additionally, this study investigates what institutional supports, beyond the program itself, are necessary to help adjunct professors maintain their commitment to pedagogical change. To provide focus, the following research questions were adopted to guide the process:

1. What program design and delivery strategies enhance the building of community amongst adjunct professors?
2. What program design and delivery strategies contribute to sustained pedagogical change for adjunct professors?
3. How do program supports and barriers affect adjunct professors' involvement and commitment to pedagogical change?

These questions were operationalized through a comprehensive interview protocol that explored participants' experiences before, during, and after program participation, allowing for comparative analysis of pre- and post-program perceptions and behaviors. In addition to participant interviews, program documentation was reviewed.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study methodology to examine a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program at a community college in Florida. A case study approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth examination of a specific phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). As Mills and Birks (2014) explain, this methodology enables researchers to think critically and position themselves to achieve quality outcomes through

thoughtful research design. The case study approach was particularly appropriate for exploring the experiences of adjunct faculty within a specific professional development program, as it facilitated deep understanding of participants' perspectives and the meaning they attributed to their experiences. It is not the intention of the current work to identify whether an intervention successfully improved the satisfaction and performance of adjunct professors. Rather, the study is intended to elicit information about the experiences and perceptions of participants in the intervention with a specific focus on their attitudes and opinions on the intervention's structures and sense of community.

The research was guided by constructivist learning theory, which posits that individuals actively build knowledge through experience and reflection (Huitt, 2011), and Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework, which emphasizes learning through belonging, doing, becoming, and meaning-making within a community context. Constructivist pedagogical strategies seek to cultivate students' self-regulation, self-facilitation, and metacognition regarding their own learning practices and successes (Pang & Ross, 2010).

As such, the purpose behind the study is the identification of the ways in which the adjunct faculty development program establishes a sense of community among adjunct professors. It is anticipated that this sense of community will contribute to sustained pedagogical change over time, possibly improving the satisfaction and efficacy of adjunct faculty. Through the constructivist paradigm, it is assumed that the participants' existing knowledge and schemas will be reshaped by the development program. More specifically, social learning theory serves as the theoretical framework for understanding how participation in the program may shape the knowledge of the participating adjunct faculty. These frameworks aligned well with the program's design and provided a theoretical lens for analyzing participants' experiences.

Research Site

The research site for this case study was a community college with seven locations across a three-county service district in the southeastern United States. Located in a mid-sized urban area, the college enrolls more than 24,000 credit and noncredit students annually, with 79% of graduates transferring to four-year institutions. In Fall 2024, the college served approximately 13,900 students, with a diverse student body comprising 38.6% White, 28.6% Hispanic, and 25.8% Black students. The majority of students (55.9%) attended full-time, and approximately 55% identified as female. The student population was predominantly traditional college-age, with over half under age 24, though the college also served a significant adult learner population.

The college employed approximately 750 instructional faculty members by headcount, with part-time adjunct instructors comprising roughly 71% of the instructional workforce (533 part-time compared to 218 full-time instructors). However, these headcount figures do not reflect full-time equivalency (FTE); full-time faculty typically teach six courses per academic semester, while part-time adjuncts generally teach one to two courses, with a maximum load of four courses per semester. Despite the lower course loads per adjunct, the heavy reliance on part-time instructors to meet instructional needs made professional development programming particularly critical to maintaining instructional quality and pedagogical consistency across the institution. Faculty credentials were strong, with 47% holding master's degrees and 24% holding doctoral degrees. The site was selected because it had implemented a comprehensive, multi-phase adjunct faculty development program with specific components aimed at building community, enhancing teaching practice, and providing ongoing support.

The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) is a department within the College tasked with providing professional development and training services for all college employees

specifically with the vision to inspire, empower, and unite a community of learners. Full-time faculty at this focal site are provided an in-depth three-day orientation before their first teaching semester to introduce them to the college structure and pertinent policy and procedures that govern their work. The orientation introduces basic teaching and learning concepts and builds a sense of community amongst the faculty through daily group activities. Following orientation, new full-time faculty participate in cohort-based faculty development programming through the first five years of employment until they are eligible for tenure. Programming for new faculty includes introductions to and practice in teaching and learning theories, assessment and evaluation, active learning techniques, diversity, equity and inclusion, and high-impact practices at a minimum. In addition, new faculty programming aims to move faculty from content experts to master teachers through experience and practice over time and through mentorship, modeling, observation, and reflection.

Professional development for all faculty, including adjunct faculty, is offered on an ongoing basis and includes the same concepts provided to new faculty and online teaching and learning concepts. Each semester all teaching faculty may elect to participate in a community of practice, faculty learning community, book study, or any combination of faculty workshops. Attendance at national conferences on teaching and learning practices is also offered to faculty annually as funding allows, although travel is seldom provided for adjunct faculty. Full-time faculty have a contractual requirement to attain professional development annually to align with teaching goals with their dean. Adjunct faculty do not have a required orientation or a requirement for professional development, although they are permitted to participate along with full-time faculty in general workshop offerings. Participation in professional development by adjunct faculty is very low as they often have scheduling conflicts or other duties with their full-

time employment that prevents them from participating. In addition, there is no incentive for participation other than intrinsic motivation.

Along with the array of programming offered through the CTL is the adjunct enrichment programs, The Academy and The Professoriate. These programs are semester-length, pedagogy-based enrichment programs for adjunct faculty led by a full-time faculty member with the designation of Adjunct Facilitator. Adjunct faculty completing both programs earn the title of Adjunct Professor and a salary increase, renewable every two years. Participation in these enrichment programs requires an application, approval, and satisfaction of prerequisites, however these in-depth programs best meet the identified needs for bridging the gap in content knowledge and educational theory and practice that exists, along with the identified need of belonging that adjunct faculty have.

Comprehensive Adjunct Development Program

To increase adjunct participation and address the knowledge gap from content expert to master teacher, two consecutive incentive-based programs are offered each semester for adjunct faculty along with a bi-annual renewal process to maintain status. The first program is a semester-long, cohort-based program referred to as the Academy, which is an opportunity for adjuncts to connect with other colleagues, learn more about the College's resources to support faculty and students, and ultimately support and expand knowledge, skills, and abilities related to teaching and learning within the College. It is designed to be interactive, and discussion-based, allowing opportunities to share experiences and ideas.

The Academy is considered an entry-level program with a central focus on the basics of teaching and learning concepts. Topics covered include: Community of CARE (building and maintaining student connections, establishing rapport with students, winning over resistant

students), Blooms Taxonomy, Active Learning and Student Engagement, Resources for Students and Faculty, Growth Mindset, Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom, The Student-Centered Syllabus, All Things Technology, and Reflections. Cohorts range in size from 5 – 15 depending on applicants. A full-time faculty member leads the program with the designation of Adjunct Facilitator, who serves as the mentor and guide of all program components. The Academy is open to any adjunct that has taught a minimum of one semester and a minimum of one course at the College. Completion of The Academy program awards each graduate a stipend of \$500 and makes them eligible for the next level program, The Professoriate.

The Professoriate is a semester-long, cohort-based program open to those that have completed The Academy program but also have taught at the College for a minimum of two semesters and have also taught at least 12 credit hours at the College. The Professoriate aims to delve deeper into theoretical concepts of teaching and learning, as well as explore various teaching strategies that increase student success based on research evidence. In addition, The Professoriate intends to engage adjunct faculty in service to the College and in professional growth and to provide reward and recognition for their commitment to student learning and success.

Those participating in The Professoriate reflect on high-impact practices in the classroom and develop a high-impact practice proposal for future implementation. All participants make final presentations of their high impact proposals to college administrators at the end of the program. Each graduate of The Professoriate is paid an additional \$100 per credit hour taught for a period of two years, which is renewable, and they earn the title of Adjunct Professor.

Once the two-part program is completed and the title of Adjunct Professor is earned, the individual maintains this status for two years. To continue the status past this period a portfolio

must be submitted that is a simplified version of portfolios required of full-time faculty. The portfolio includes a teaching philosophy created during The Academy program. It also includes reflections on activities that were required during the two years since they became an Adjunct Professor or since their last renewal.

Required activities that must be documented and reflected on in the portfolio are teaching observations of a peer, teaching observation by a peer, professional development involvement, student course evaluation analysis, and student success data analysis. Portfolios are submitted to the Director of Faculty Development and forwarded to the respective supervising Associate Dean for review and approval. If renewal is granted the reflective practice continues and the process repeats in another two years.

Intended Impact on Adjunct Faculty

The programmatic components of the comprehensive adjunct faculty development program, The Academy and The Professoriate, purport to equip adjuncts with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to fill the gap between content expert and educator. These programs are guided by a faculty facilitator who models active learning techniques and provides opportunities for practice in a safe environment through a community of practice. The program components broaden the scope of resources adjunct participants have, not only for themselves, but also for their students. Once the final program is completed, The Professoriate, the Adjunct Professor must engage in several activities over the next two years to sustain the pedagogical changes that occurred during the program. The two-year interim period is concluded with the submission of a portfolio of artifacts and reflections that serve as an accountability component, continued use of reflective practice, and also an incentive for maintaining positive change as the

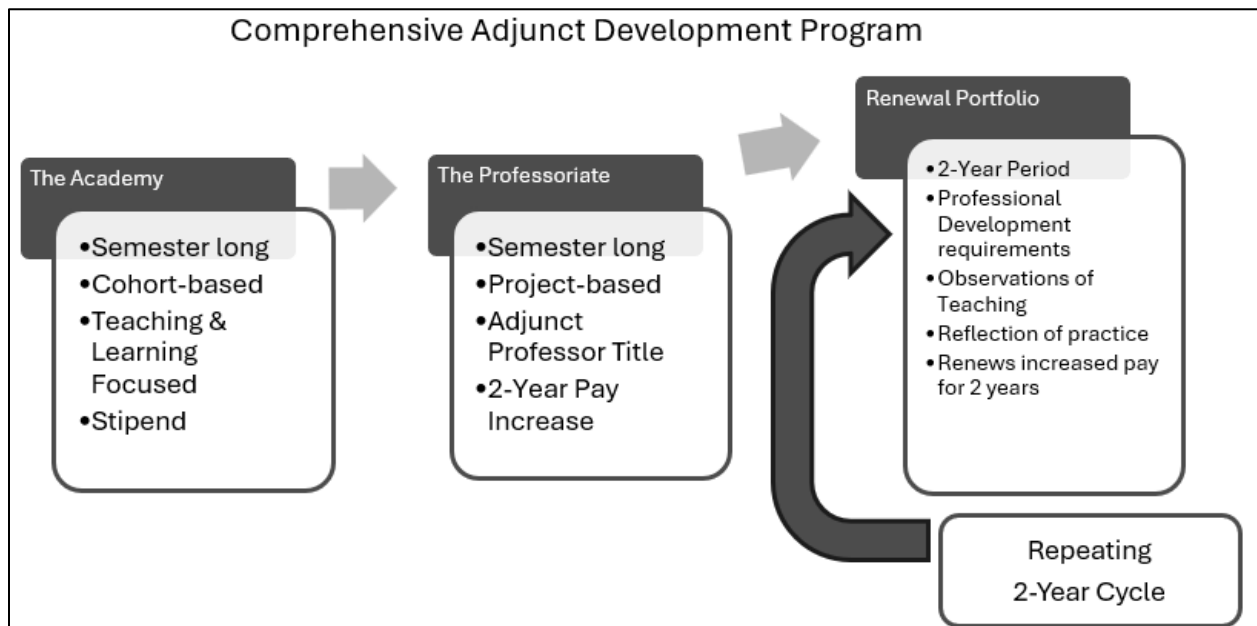
approval of the portfolio grants continued status of Adjunct Professor and a continuance of a higher rate of pay.

Applying a community of practice model of professional development to engage adjunct faculty around a central purpose over time has shown to have more impact than standalone workshops and the two-year renewal process aims to focus on sustaining pedagogical change through reflective practice and continued engagement in development activities throughout interim years.

To recap, the adjunct faculty development program consisted of three distinct components as shown in Figure 2:

Figure 2

Comprehensive Adjunct Development Program Model



1. The Academy (part 1): A semester-long, cohort-based program introducing adjuncts to teaching and learning concepts, institutional resources, and student engagement strategies. Participants who completed this component received a \$500 stipend.

2. The Professoriate (part 2): A semester-long, project-based program where adjuncts developed and implemented a high-impact practice in their courses. Participants who completed this component earned the title of “Adjunct Professor” and received a two-year pay increase.
3. Renewal Portfolio (part 3): A biennial process requiring adjuncts to submit a portfolio documenting their teaching philosophy, professional development activities, teaching observations, and analysis of student success data to maintain their “Adjunct Professor” status and pay increase.

The program is facilitated by full-time faculty designated as Adjunct Facilitators, who provide mentorship and guidance throughout the process.

Participant Selection

Although prerequisites exist for admission, adjunct faculty participation in The Academy and The Professoriate programming is voluntary. In addition, not all who complete The Academy move on to The Professoriate and some choose to wait several years before joining The Professoriate. Completers of both programs and those that maintain status through the renewal process are considered Adjunct Professors by the College. The current adjunct professor population includes 62 individuals. However, in Fall 2018 The Professoriate was updated and fully revised to be project-based and focused on high-impact practices. In addition, the implementation of the reflective portfolio process was added as a bi-annual renewal process this same year.

Since some opt to wait longer periods between The Academy and The Professoriate, this study only included participants that completed both programs within two years and completed The Professoriate during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, or Fall 2019 as these Adjunct Professors all

participated in the revised version of the program with the expectation of a two-year reflective portfolio renewal. The program is not offered during the Summer, and the Spring 2020 cohort was omitted due to interruptions caused by a global pandemic. Professoriate cohorts beginning after Spring 2020 were excluded from this study as they had not completed the 2-year renewal process at the time of this research. Based on these criteria 8 participants were eligible to be included in this case study; 4 Professoriate graduates from Fall 2018 that completed a portfolio renewal in July 2021 and 4 that completed renewal in July 2022; 2 from the Spring 2019 cohort and 2 from the Fall 2019 cohort.

Purposeful sampling was employed to select participants who could provide rich, relevant information about the research questions (Patton, 2015). The following criteria guided participant selection:

1. Completion of all three program components (Academy, Professoriate, and at least one Renewal Portfolio cycle)
2. Completion of The Professoriate during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, or Fall 2019 (after the program revision)
3. Current teaching status at the college

These criteria ensured that participants had experienced the complete revised program, including the project-based Professoriate component and portfolio renewal process, and could reflect on the program's impact over time.

Of the eight adjunct professors who met these criteria, two were excluded because they had not taught in the previous two semesters, limiting the richness of their recent experiences. Of the six eligible adjunct professors, five agreed to participate in the study. While this represents a small sample, it encompasses a substantial proportion of the eligible population and includes

representation across various academic disciplines, providing diverse perspectives on the program experience. Attempts to include adjuncts who had participated in earlier versions of the program were unsuccessful, as their experiences did not align with the revised program structure. These potential participants lacked familiarity with key terminology and concepts central to the revised program and had not completed the project-based component that was fundamental to the current program design.

Participants

This study included five adjunct professors at a single-site Florida community college, all of which successfully completed all parts of the comprehensive adjunct programming. Each adjunct professor represents diverse academic backgrounds, professional experiences, and perspectives on teaching and professional development.

Respondent 1 holds a bachelor's degree in communications, a law degree, and a master's in strategic government and public relations. After military service and a legal career, he transitioned into teaching political science and legal studies on a part-time basis. Prior to completion of the adjunct programming, his professional development was minimal due to time constraints, though he engaged with students and colleagues through Model UN activities within the college. He credits the programs with providing his first formal exposure to teaching pedagogy and strategies.

Respondent 2 holds a bachelor's in psychology with a minor in special education and a master's in early childhood education. With extensive experience in child and family services, she had long been active in professional development but not specifically in higher education. Before adjunct programming, she participated in only a few workshops, limited by time and uncertainty about adjunct access. She sought to merge her early childhood expertise with college

teaching, and through participation in the comprehensive program she became more intentional about professional growth and integration into the college's academic community.

Respondent 3 has a Bachelor of Art in music education and has pursued doctoral studies. Her background is rooted in K–12 teaching, with training in music pedagogy. Within the college, her professional development opportunities were limited before participating in the adjunct programming, which she valued for offering collaboration with colleagues from outside her discipline. Despite continued challenges in connecting with other adjuncts, she emphasizes creativity, improvisation, and student engagement as central to her teaching approach.

Respondent 4 earned a bachelor's degree in English literature and a master's in English education. She began teaching as an adjunct, bringing a strong foundation in pedagogy from her graduate studies. Most of her early development came through departmental trainings and frequent course redesign work in her division. She pursued adjunct programming to broaden her network and refresh her teaching practices. While time constraints as a part-time instructor remain a challenge, she values the programs for introducing high impact practices and for reaffirming her student-centered, adaptable teaching philosophy.

Respondent 5 holds a Doctorate in Public Health. As a newer adjunct, her early professional development was limited to webinars and graduate-level training. She first learned about adjunct programming from a colleague and joined to strengthen her teaching and student engagement strategies. Since completing the programs, she reports greater awareness of professional development opportunities, increased collaboration with colleagues, and a refined teaching philosophy that emphasizes active learning and adapting pedagogy to the community college context.

Data Collection

A thorough collection of data is necessary in a case study, and multiple sources were examined to create a detailed picture of the comprehensive adjunct faculty program. Evaluating the program from multiple sources enables the researcher to draw more precise conclusions. To respond to the research questions and purpose of this study, a full review of adjunct professor renewal portfolios was conducted. In addition, interviews with the adjunct professors were necessary to gather information on their experiences and perceptions. Ultimately, two primary methods of data collection were employed:

Semi-Structured Interviews

Adjunct Professors in this study participated in synchronous interviews via Zoom related to their individual experiences and perceptions during The Academy, The Professoriate, activities two years following the programs, and the completion of the renewal portfolio. Questions were centered around specific program components or design elements that were impactful and led to building of community and pedagogical change (Appendix A). Participants were questioned on their perception of value of the program and/or components of the program as well as supports and barriers that affected their involvement and commitment to embracing and sustaining pedagogical change.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant via Zoom. The interview protocol consisted of 31 questions aligned with the three research questions, as documented in the Interview Question to Research Question Matrix (Appendix B). The questions were designed to explore:

- Pre-program experiences, knowledge, and community involvement
- Experiences during program participation

- Post-program teaching practices, knowledge, and community engagement
- Perceptions of program supports and barriers
- Impact of specific program elements (cohort design, facilitator role, portfolio process)

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using Zoom's transcription feature, with manual verification and correction of transcripts to ensure accuracy; no video was recorded.

Document Analysis

The Academy and The Professoriate syllabus and program material used in the design and delivery of the program were reviewed for descriptive purposes of the program and its components and requirements. In addition, the requirements and directions for the bi-annual portfolio renewal process were reviewed for similar purposes. Aside from program documentation, participants' renewal portfolio documents were collected and analyzed to triangulate with interview data. The portfolios contained:

- Teaching philosophy statements
- Professional development reflections
- Teaching observation reports and reflections
- Student success data analysis
- Course evaluation analysis

This documentary evidence provided additional insights into participants' teaching approaches, professional growth, and reflective practices, complementing the self-reported data from interviews.

Analytical Tools

Thematic analysis is an approach used to identify, examine, and document patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lindberg et al., 2024). Many pathways for such analysis can be

utilized in research, from manual analysis to computer assisted analysis. A manual approach requires immense attention to detail and large quantities of time to sift through qualitative data and identify patterns. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) are technology assisted techniques to help researchers with qualitative data analysis (Freitas et al., 2017). Examples of CAQDAS may include the use of programs like MaxQDA, NVivo, ATLAS.ti, AILYZE, and many more.

Most recently, artificial intelligence has been integrated with CAQDAS to enhance coding and the analysis process more efficiently, especially with large data sets (Bryda & Costa, 2024). ATLAS.ti and MAXQDA, two highly used products for qualitative analysis, have partnerships with OpenAI, developer of ChatGPT. Using this integrated technology, ATLAS.ti relies on automatic coding with AI as the driver, while MAXQDA incorporated AI to provide summaries of data following coding (Morgan, 2023). Computer assisted technologies increase the speed at which data can be examined to identify patterns based on prescribed input or open analysis.

Research on AI-assisted qualitative analysis has evolved considerably in recent years. Morgan's (2023) exploratory study illustrated that ChatGPT could reasonably replicate manually coded themes, particularly for descriptive content, though it was less successful with subtle, interpretive themes. Building on this foundation, Morgan (2025) developed a more sophisticated query-based framework for using ChatGPT in qualitative data analysis. This approach positions AI as a tool for systematic interrogation of data rather than autonomous analysis, emphasizing the researcher's active role in constructing and refining queries that elicit meaningful insights. Morgan's query-based methodology demonstrates that the strength of using AI in qualitative analysis lies in its ability to locate concepts in data while the researcher maintains interpretive

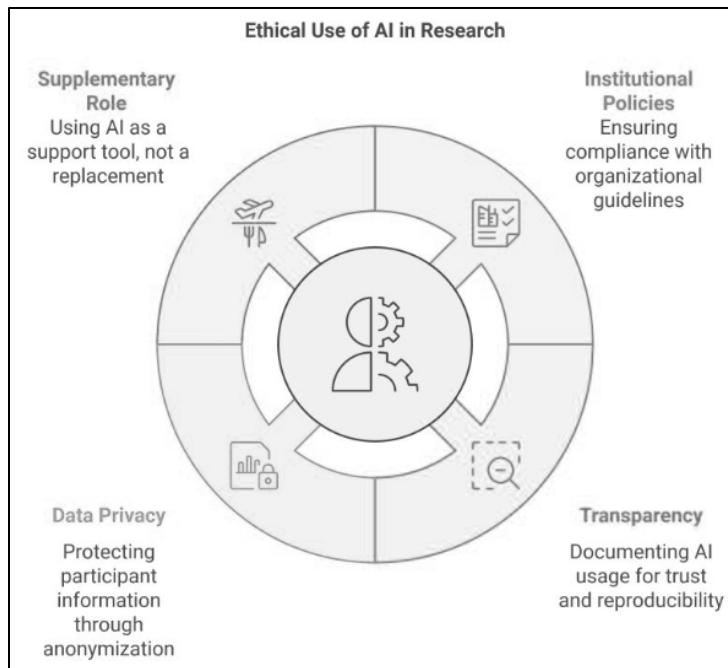
authority over meaning-making. This evolved understanding emphasizes that AI should serve a supportive role to aid in thematic analysis and enhance the depth and breadth of analysis while relying on the interpretive and critical evaluation skills of the researcher (Morgan, 2025; Christou, 2024).

This study utilized manual coding using Word of primary themes directly related to each research question. From these themes, AILYZE was used to code the data using the same themes for added reliability. AILYZE is an online CAQDAS like NVivo and ATLAS.ti, both of which incorporate AI to enhance analysis. Recent qualitative research studies (such as Floris et al., 2024; Raymer & Nelson, 2023; Riedl Cross et al., 2024; de Caux & Pretorius, 2024) have used AILYZE, and achieved high accuracy and low bias, especially when used with human oversight in the same manner used by this researcher. This dual-coding approach aligns with Morgan's (2025) recommendation that AI tools function as analytical partners rather than replacements for human interpretation, with the researcher maintaining primary responsibility for theme development and validation.

Dr. Philip Adu, a methodology expert, provides a guide for ethical use of AI tools in qualitative data analysis as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Ethical Use of AI in Research



He advises researchers to check the policies of the research institution and ensure compliance, be transparent about the use of AI in analysis, maintain privacy of data, and to ensure the tool is merely a supplement to the expertise of the researcher (Adu, 2025).

To address ethical use of AI in this research based on Dr. Adu’s model, the institutional policies were reviewed and approaches used comply with guidelines available at the research institution. AI Use Guidelines for responsible use of AI by the research institution include protecting data security and privacy, ethical and fair use of data analysis and decision-making, transparency in AI use, and maintaining human involvement at the core of AI use (VSU, n.d.). These guidelines align with the current ethical guidelines model followed in this research.

The privacy of data was maintained through removal of any identifying information within the interview transcripts and documents reviewed. AILYZE, as a tool, provided data security by fully encrypting data and guaranteeing that data is not used to train AI models, leaving the ownership of the data with the researcher. Data submitted is stored within the United

States and can be deleted at any time and is not retained by the tool. In addition, AILYZE adheres to global and security regulations for data safety (AILYZE, 2025). Transparency in use is detailed in this study along with its role as supportive tool and not a replacement for the researcher's expertise.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as the systematic approach to analyze and make meaning of the qualitative data. This process aimed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data independent of theory and assumptions. Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022) provides a flexible and useful research tool that emphasizes researcher subjectivity as a resource and acknowledges the interpretative nature of theme development. Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis offers the potential to provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke have significantly refined their approach since their foundational 2006 publication, now distinguishing their method as "reflexive thematic analysis" to differentiate it from other approaches such as coding reliability or codebook methods (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexive TA embraces researcher subjectivity as valuable rather than problematic, views coding as inherently interpretive rather than pursuing accuracy, and emphasizes ongoing reflexivity throughout the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). This contemporary understanding recognizes that themes are actively generated through the researcher's engagement with data rather than passively emerging from it (Braun & Clarke, 2021). While grounded theory was considered for a model of analysis, the goal of that process is to develop a theory that is abstracted from data collected by a researcher (Chun Tie et al., 2019). For purposes of this study, it is not a goal to develop a theory, but to explore the perceptions and needs of adjunct faculty.

Analysis with this method can be inductive or theoretical (deductive) in nature, where the inductive approach finds themes within the interview and portfolio data and the theoretical approach is driven by the researcher with initial coding being developed by the research questions (Bryda & Costa, 2024). Following Braun and Clarke's (2021) guidance, this study utilized a theoretical (deductive) thematic analysis approach, beginning with predetermined codes directly related to the research questions while remaining open to unexpected patterns and meanings that emerged during analysis. This approach acknowledges that all analysis involves interpretation and that the researcher's theoretical commitments and research questions appropriately shape the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Initial coding of interview transcripts and portfolio documents applied a framework of primary codes aligned with the three research questions as follows:

- Community Building (CB): References to experiences, structures, or processes related to professional connections and belonging. This is in direct relation to research question #1.
- Pedagogical Change (PC): References to knowledge acquisition, skill development, or changes in teaching practice. This is in direct relation to research question #2.
- Supports and Barriers (SB): References to factors facilitating or hindering participation and change. This is in direct relation to research question #3.

First-Cycle Coding

Interview transcripts and portfolios from all five participants were read and manually coded using the initial three codes related to research questions. Excerpts relating to each code were identified throughout each transcript and document to begin the coding process. This process was repeated utilizing the CAQDAS AILYZE to capture any portions that may have been overlooked during the initial read and supplement the extracted data set. In the reviewing

and coding of data in this first-cycle, attention was given to alternate patterns that existed within the data that did not fit the primary themes but were consistent ideas. From this, two additional cross-cutting themes were created and coded within the first-cycle coding in the same manner.

Cross-cutting codes for this study included:

- Transformational Elements (TE): References to identity, confidence, agency, or perspective transformation
- Program Design (PD): References to specific structural components of the program

With the interview questions focusing on pre and post program participation information, sub-codes were applied where appropriate to provide more granular analysis within each category. For example, CB-PRE and CB-POST distinguished pre-program and post-program community experiences as both are vital to understanding the participant experience; the same was applied to the other first cycle codes to include PC-PRE, PC-POST, SB-PRE and SB-POST.

Second-Cycle Coding

Following the first cycle of coding, a deeper analysis was needed to determine what themes were evident within common data. Second-cycle coding was conducted to organize first-cycle codes into meaningful groupings of patterns correlated to each of the three research questions and cross-cutting codes. Excerpts common to each initial code were collated in AILYZE and analyzed further to break down patterns within each code group. Multiple sub-codes were created surrounding commonalities in the data within each first-cycle code and cross cutting theme.

Community building (CB) not only included CB-PRE and CB-POST, but many other sub-codes where grouping of data was found. Community building refers to experiences, structures, processes that lead to connections, belonging, or professional relationships amongst

the adjunct faculty with the institutional community as a whole. Sub-codes used to further break down community building were cohort-related community building, faculty facilitator influence, collaboration opportunities, impact of new title on belonging, barriers and supports for engagement, and formal and informal structures and opportunities for community building.

Pedagogical change (PC) data were sub-divided into pre/post, knowledge of concepts/theories, application of concepts, reflective practice, supports for sustained change, impact of The Professoriate project on teaching, portfolio influence, changes in student outcomes, and self-reported improvements in teaching. All of these were rooted in references in the data to the acquisition, development, or changes in knowledge, skills, or teaching practice along with theoretical understanding of teaching and learning.

The third research question focused on supports and barriers (SB), which were identified as references to factors that either facilitated or hindered participation, learning, application, or a change in teaching practice. Sub-codes used were financial incentives, and both supports and barriers that were institutional, time-related, personal, departmental, technology-related, leadership oriented, resource related, motivation related, or aspects of the design of the program.

Cross-cutting themes were also important to capture as it represents additional commonalities in the data that did not fit perfectly within the primary codes, however, was frequent enough within each participants data to be meaningful. The transformational elements (TE) were selected due to the high number of references to changes in identity, perspective, or approach that reflected a deeper transformation. Professional identity transformation, confidence as an educator, sense of empowerment, philosophy development, change in perspectives, deep learning, self-advocacy, and commitment to teaching excellence were all used as sub-codes.

The program design elements (PD) included repeated references to specific components of the program and how it was structured and how it influenced outcomes for each. Subcodes were created for each part of the program (academy, professoriate, and portfolio), as well as design elements such as the cohort model, role of faculty facilitator, incentives, project-based activities, duration/timing of program, content focus of program, and the impact of the delivery method.

Following the identification of all sub-codes, all previously coded segments were coded a second time using the sub-codes. Excerpts from data were collated within the sub-codes to show the hierarchical relationship between concepts. A careful review of the data identified for each sub-theme was conducted to further refine the results for accuracy. In the review I was able to identify patterns and group data together that were closely related to each research question.

Theme Development

This iterative process identified major themes within each research question that tell a better story of each research question. Ultimately, four themes were organized as a comprehensive framework that included:

Community Building (CB): Research question #1

Theme 1.1: Structured Cohort Experience

Theme 1.2: Faculty Facilitation Impact

Theme 1.3: Professional Identity Formation

Theme 1.4: Community Sustainability Challenges

Pedagogical Change (PC): Research question #2

Theme 2.1: Structured Reflection Cycle

Theme 2.2: Practical Application Pathways

Theme 2.3: Student-Centered Approach Development

Theme 2.4: Pedagogical Knowledge Expansion

Supports and Barriers (SB): Research question #3

Theme 3.1: Time Management Challenges

Theme 3.2: Institutional Support Structures

Theme 3.3: Motivation and Incentive Factors

Theme 3.4: Program Design Elements

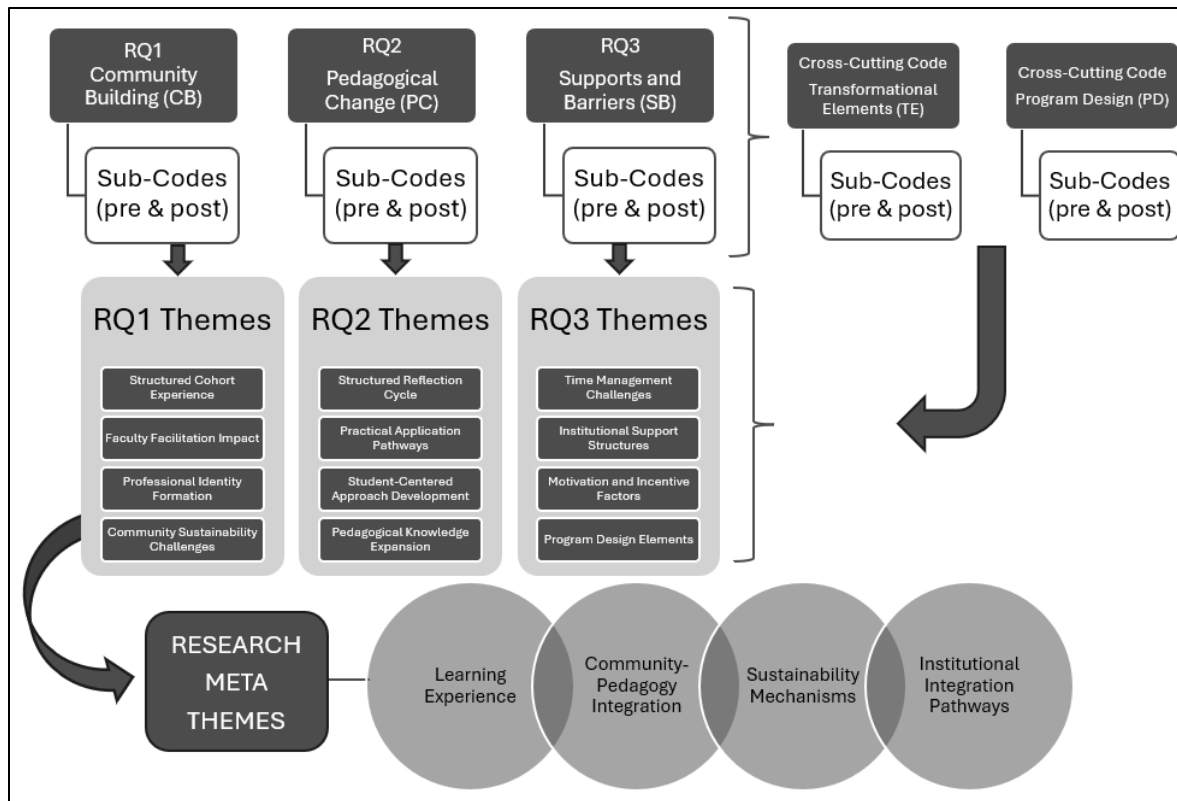
Interview and portfolio data were coded using these themes using AILYZE to isolate excerpts within each that exemplified thematic patterns based on given descriptors. Data were reviewed by the researcher to ensure all appropriate excerpts were captured for each theme. Consistency was found within all data elements that correlated with the expanded themes. Demarcation of themes as pre or post was also included in this step to differentiate perceptions and experiences before and after participation.

Review of the second-cycle thematic coding results enabled the researcher to identify four overarching themes that spanned multiple areas of the research and were not just confined to one given research question. These meta-themes provide overarching themes for this research. Meta-themes included: Transformational Learning Experience, Community/Pedagogy Integration, Sustainability Mechanisms, and Institutional Integration Pathways.

A visual representation of the thematic analysis process is shown in Figure 4. This demonstrates the deductive approach starting with first-cycle coding based on each research question and cross-cutting themes into the second cycle coding through to theme development.

Figure 4

Thematic Analysis Process



Note. This figure demonstrates the deductive thematic analysis process from research question (RQ) first-cycle coding and cross-cutting codes. Cross-cutting codes are additional patterns in the data that exist outside the research questions. Second-cycle coding with sub-codes led to themes for each research question and four overarching meta themes.

Comparative Analysis

The thematic analysis provided a detailed look at the perceptions and experiences of participants, giving insight into each research question. With an additional focus on perceptions and experiences prior to program participation and after completing the program, it is important to explore the changes that occurred from pre to post for the participants as this gives insight to sustainability and future needs. A structured comparative analysis of pre and post program perceptions was conducted to identify significant changes in participants’ knowledge, behaviors,

and attitudes across the domains of the research questions. This analysis focused on participant sense of belonging and community, pedagogical knowledge, and engagement in professional development. Excerpts of each participant interview were examined and collated based on pre and post data related to each research question to show growth that had transpired.

Researcher Position

Having worked in the field of Higher Education for over 20 years, 17 years being full-time, I have seen and experienced the struggles of adjunct faculty from many lenses. As an adjunct myself I have fallen victim to the lack of communication regarding scheduling, deadlines, requirements, training, and general information necessary to be successful in my duties. This awareness due to personal experience has enabled me to be more cognizant of adjunct faculty needs through my full-time roles in higher education. As a former full-time faculty member and program chair, I communicated often with adjunct faculty and offered guidance and support on a continual basis to help them stay connected.

As a former faculty development director, I worked to create and grow professional development programs to meet the needs of adjunct faculty. For five years I directed professional development at the college of focus for this study and coordinated the effort to evolve the comprehensive adjunct development program into the current model. Collaborating with adjunct faculty, deans, and faculty facilitators guided the process of crafting the components of the program to address areas of weakness that had been identified in prior models.

Shortly after the initiation of the new model I moved to the role of Associate Dean with direct oversight of adjunct faculty within my area. This new role enriched my relationships with adjunct faculty and further highlighted the needs they had for professional development and communication. Having an administrative role has not created a bias related to the needs of

adjunct faculty as I am not far removed from their position. Serving as adjunct faculty at other institutions, I understand adjunct needs and an empathy for the issues they face. It is through this lens that I developed a desire to support and advocate for adjunct faculty needs and need for professional growth and belongingness.

Research Credibility

Several strategies were employed to strengthen the trustworthiness of the research. Data triangulation was achieved by analyzing both interview data and portfolio documents, providing multiple perspectives on participants' experiences and allowing for verification of self-reported information against documented evidence. Extensive use of participant quotes and detailed descriptions of experiences provided rich contextual information to support findings and allow readers to assess transferability to other settings. Interview transcripts were shared with participants to verify accuracy and allow for clarification or elaboration of responses.

The use of multiple analytical approaches (first-cycle coding, second-cycle coding, and comparative analysis) provided different perspectives on the data, enhancing the depth and credibility of interpretations. The use of manual coding supplemented with CAQDAS, AILYZE, to analyze the same data provided a form of analytical triangulation, with consistency in identified themes supporting the reliability of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research practices, including Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix C) from both the researcher's institution and the study site. Prior to participation in research, informed consent was obtained from all participants, including clear explanation of the research purpose and procedures. Confidentiality protection was established through the omission of identifying information for participants and limited demographic details

were used. Interview and portfolio data were securely stored in password-protected files and permanently deleted after analysis, except for interview transcripts that will be maintained for the required duration. Member checking was utilized to ensure accurate representation of participants' experiences post interview.

As the former faculty developer at the institution under study, the researcher acknowledged potential biases and took steps to minimize their influence on data collection and analysis. While the researcher's position provided valuable contextual knowledge, it also necessitated careful attention to objectivity during interviews and data interpretation. The use of secure AI analytical support, member checking, and triangulation helped mitigate potential bias in data analysis.

Data Analysis Summary

This qualitative case study aimed to examine the design of a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program and its impact on building community, contributing to sustained pedagogical change, and identifying supports and barriers affecting adjunct faculty involvement in professional development. The study employed a constructivist framework alongside Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice model to understand how adjunct faculty learn and develop through their participation in a structured development program.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with five adjunct professors who completed all three components of the program (Academy, Professoriate, and Renewal Portfolio) and analysis of their renewal portfolio documents. The interviews focused on participants' experiences before, during, and after the program, with questions aligned to the three research questions (Appendix B). This structure allowed for comparative analysis of pre- and post-program perceptions, which was valuable for understanding transformational changes.

The data analysis followed a systematic qualitative approach of thematic analysis using first-cycle and second-cycle coding. The first-cycle coding applied primary codes aligned with the three research questions: Community Building (CB), Pedagogical Change (PC), and Supports and Barriers (SB). Cross-cutting themes were identified and additional codes added for Transformational Elements (TE) and Program Design (PD). The second-cycle coding organized these initial codes into multiple sub-codes, which were then analyzed for meaningful themes and patterns. This analysis revealed deeper insights about the relationships between community development, pedagogical improvement, and institutional supports through meta themes.

To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation was employed by analyzing both interview data and portfolio documents. The analysis also incorporated direct quotes from participants to accurately represent their experiences and perceptions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how the adjunct program influenced participants' teaching practice, professional identity, and sense of belonging within the institution.

Chapter IV

Results

This qualitative case study employed a systematic approach to examining a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program through multiple data sources: in-depth interviews with five adjunct professors who completed all program components and analysis of their renewal portfolios. The triangulation of interview data with portfolio documents provides a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences while maintaining trustworthiness through multiple analytical perspectives. The methodology was designed to provide rich, contextual understanding of participants' experiences across their complete journey from program entry through sustained implementation.

Results and Findings

The analysis revealed significant findings related to each research question, along with important interconnections between these areas. Portfolio analysis provided additional evidence that both corroborated and expanded upon interview findings, offering insights into participants' reflective practices, teaching philosophies, and sustained engagement with pedagogical change. To further illuminate the program's transformational impact, a comparative analysis of participants' pre and post program perceptions across the three key dimensions revealed meaningful shifts in professional development and institutional engagement. The findings are organized around the three research questions, the transformational impact, and culminate with cross-cutting themes that emerged from both data sources.

Participant Overview

This study included five adjunct professors from a Florida community college, each of whom completed all components of the comprehensive adjunct faculty development program. The participants represented a range of disciplines, political science, early childhood education, music, English, and public health, and varied in their years of teaching experience, from newer adjuncts to career educators with over two decades in the classroom. Their backgrounds also differed in terms of prior pedagogical training, with some entering the program with minimal exposure to teaching theory and others possessing advanced degrees in education.

Despite these differences, all participants described initial experiences of professional isolation and limited cross-departmental engagement. Through participation in the Academy, Professoriate, and renewal portfolio process, each reported significant growth in pedagogical knowledge, reflective practice, and a strengthened sense of professional identity. The program fostered cross-disciplinary collaboration, enhanced awareness of institutional resources, and promoted sustained changes in teaching practice. While time constraints and varying levels of departmental support persisted as challenges, the cohort-based structure and ongoing reflective requirements were consistently cited as transformative elements. Table 2 below summarizes key characteristics of each respondent:

Table 2

Respondent Characteristics

Respondent	Discipline	Years Teaching	Prior Pedagogy	Notable Program Impact
1	Political Science	15+	None	Transformative growth; integration of Bloom's and student-centered approaches
2	Early Childhood	10+	Some	Enhanced community and reflective practice; high-impact practices; belonging
3	Music	20+	Strong	Refined assessment and organization; strong commitment to experiential learning; desire for more collaboration
4	English	20+	Strong	Gained pedagogical terminology; reaffirmed student-centered philosophy; advocated for ongoing community
5	Public Health	<5	Moderate	Substantial gains in pedagogical knowledge and community engagement; adapted teaching for community college

These five participants provided diverse perspectives that informed the comprehensive thematic analysis that follows.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was utilized to analyze and make meaning of the data. Through this process patterns, themes, and relationships were identified within the data independent of theory and assumptions. Utilizing the theoretical thematic analysis approach, code development directly related to research questions were used for first-cycle coding of interview transcripts and portfolio documents to note remarks relating to community building, pedagogical change, and supports and barriers. Second-cycle coding with the support of AILYZE produced sub-codes and themes refined by the researcher related to each research question, each supported by evidence from participant interviews and portfolios. Each research question will be addressed individually to expound on themes identified within each.

Research Question 1: Program Design Strategies for Community Building

What program design and delivery strategies enhance the building of community amongst adjunct professors? The focal area for the first research question was Community Building (CB) during first-cycle coding. Excerpts relating to community building were extrapolated and re-examined for patterns from which themes were created. Four themes resulted in relation to community building revolving around the structured cohort experience, the impact of faculty facilitation, forming of professional identity, and challenges to sustainability of community. Supportive data relating to each theme gives credibility to each as a product of the comprehensive program.

Theme 1.1: Structured Cohort Experience. The cohort-based learning structure emerged as a powerful mechanism for building community among adjunct professors. Participants consistently highlighted the value of learning alongside colleagues from diverse disciplines, which provided varied perspectives on teaching challenges. As Respondent 3 noted, “Simply sitting in a room with others and exchanging ideas and hearing what they had to say about what they did was very helpful.” This interdisciplinary composition allowed adjuncts to discover commonalities across teaching contexts while appreciating the unique insights from different fields.

Portfolio analysis reinforced this finding through evidence of cross-disciplinary collaboration and shared learning. Respondent 3’s portfolio documented integration with Campus Galleries and interdisciplinary connections, demonstrating how cohort relationships extended into practical teaching applications. Similarly, Respondent 4’s portfolio revealed collaborative relationships with colleagues from different divisions, noting: “I have known

Professor Smith for many years, and thus I knew that our sensibilities towards the relationship between the teacher and the student are very simpatico.”

The shared learning journey created bonds through common challenges and collaborative activities. Participants described how working together through program requirements fostered supportive relationships that often extended beyond the formal program. Respondent 5 exemplified this ongoing connection: “I reach out to some members that were part of my Academy cohort... just trying to learn from them some good practices.” Portfolio documentation showed this continued collaboration through peer observations and shared professional development experiences, with Respondent 5 noting: “Jessica and I worked through the observation document together to ensure alignment with the course structure.”

Respondent 3 also valued the interdisciplinary exchange, explaining that program participation allowed meaningful interaction beyond departmental boundaries: “I wanted to meet other people and that’s what happened. The other teachers were not in my area, and that was good, and I also wanted to learn a little bit about their processes of grading and testing.” This cross-disciplinary learning extended beyond formal program sessions, as portfolio documentation showed Respondent 3’s integration of campus galleries into curriculum design and collaboration with colleagues from different divisions.

Theme 1.2: Faculty Facilitation Impact. The role of full-time faculty facilitators emerged as a crucial element in community development. Facilitators served as institutional bridges, connecting adjuncts to college culture, processes, and resources. Respondent 5 valued “the facilitator’s experience and familiarity with our culture,” which helped adjuncts navigate the broader institutional context. Additionally, facilitators provided expertise transfer through practical examples and teaching strategy modeling. As Respondent 2 expressed, “I valued

facilitators' credibility and knowledge... and practical examples from facilitators' experience.” Portfolio analysis provided evidence of this facilitation impact through participants' professional development selections and reflective growth. The portfolios showed increased complexity in pedagogical language and concepts over time, suggesting successful knowledge transfer from facilitators. For example, Respondent 5's portfolio exhibited deep understanding of evidence-based teaching practices, noting: “Implementing evidence-based teaching practices, they can create inclusive learning environments that promote equity.”

Perhaps most importantly, facilitators offered validation and recognition of adjunct contributions. This professional affirmation encouraged fuller participation in the institutional community and reinforced the value of adjunct teaching roles. The portfolio language analysis revealed this validation through participants' increased confidence in professional identity, with Respondent 1 stating: “I am honored to call myself an Adjunct Professor of Political Science.”

Theme 1.3: Professional Identity Formation. The program significantly influenced participants' sense of professional identity within the institution. The title of “Adjunct Professor” represented more than a designation; it signified a transformation in professional identity. As Respondent 2 described, “Having that title of adjunct professor has given me; I am a part of something bigger than just coming in and teaching a course, and not being noticed.”

Portfolio analysis strongly supported this identity transformation through examination of teaching philosophy statements and professional language use. The teaching philosophies revealed deeper understanding of pedagogical concepts and strong professional identity. Respondent 4's philosophy stated: “I believe that as a teacher, I have been bestowed a gift; that gift is my classroom,” while Respondent 5 wrote: “I try to remain firmly rooted in my

commitment to health and public health which ensures that my approaches to teaching and learning are characterized by enthusiasm as well as integrity.”

This enhanced identity led to greater institutional integration, with participants reporting increased awareness of college resources and opportunities. Portfolio documentation showed this through expanded service activities, with Respondent 1 engaging in Model UN board service and multiple professional development activities. For some, this resulted in a stronger sense of investment in institutional goals. Respondent 2 explained this transformation: “There’s a sense that, it’s a pride, it’s like you earned it. You did what it took to do that... made me feel credible.”

The program also fostered greater confidence in participants’ professional roles, manifested in increased self-assurance in classroom decisions, more comfort in professional interactions, and greater willingness to contribute beyond the classroom. This confidence was evident in portfolio reflections, where participants illustrated thoughtful analysis of their teaching practices and student outcomes.

Theme 1.4: Community Sustainability Challenges. Despite the program’s success in fostering community, participants identified ongoing challenges to maintaining connections. Structural limitations included a lack of ongoing structured interactions and limited opportunities for adjunct gatherings. As Respondent 4 expressed, “I do feel like we’re sort of separated a lot... I do feel like we’re not as well integrated as I’d like to be.”

Portfolio analysis revealed efforts to maintain community connections despite structural barriers. Participants documented ongoing peer observations and collaborative professional development, but these were often self-initiated rather than institutionally structured. The portfolios displayed varying levels of departmental support, with some participants documenting strong departmental integration while others showed more limited connections.

Communication gaps were also noted, including inconsistent information about opportunities and varied departmental communication approaches. Several participants expressed desire for continued connection mechanisms, such as ongoing cohort connections and informal gathering opportunities. Respondent 2 recommended “ongoing community beyond formal program,” suggesting a need for institutional structures to sustain the community developed during the program.

Research Question 2: Program Design Strategies for Pedagogical Change

What program design and delivery strategies contribute to sustained pedagogical change for adjunct professors? The focal area for the second research question was Pedagogical Change (PC) during first-cycle coding. Excerpts relating to pedagogical change were extrapolated and re-examined for patterns from which themes were created. Four themes resulted in relation to this pedagogical change revolving around the structured reflection cycle, mechanisms for application, development of student-centered approaches, and expansion of pedagogical knowledge. Supportive data relating to each theme gives credibility to each as a product of the comprehensive program.

Theme 2.1: Structured Reflection Cycle. The portfolio requirement emerged as a powerful driver of sustained pedagogical change by establishing a formal reflection cycle. Respondent 1 observed, “I think, asking us to do that every 2 years is a value, and can be because it forces you to sit down and reflect which for me, I often don’t have time to do.” Portfolio analysis revealed varying depths of reflective practice across participants, providing evidence of the reflection cycle’s effectiveness. Three types of reflection were evident:

- Technical reflection (focused on strategies and methods) was most prevalent in practical professional development reflections. Respondent 2 reflected this approach: “Using

VidGrid... helped obtain information on incorporating more technology and enhancing participation.”

- Practical reflection (considering consequences of actions) was prominent in student success analyses. Respondent 1 exemplified this: “By placing an emphasis on class lectures, class attendance, short writing assignments... students are able to gain confidence.”
- Critical reflection (questioning underlying assumptions) appeared in teaching philosophy evolution and deeper pedagogical analysis. Respondent 1 demonstrated this level: “The power of grades was becoming so great, students of the digital age... viewed grades as nothing more than a means to an end.”

The portfolio process incorporated data-informed analysis, particularly through student evaluation examination and success rate assessment. As Respondent 2 noted, “Looking at the statistics, you know, the data does not lie. So, that was very eye opening.” Portfolio documentation showed this empirical approach through detailed analysis of student success data, evaluation scores, and grade distributions across multiple semesters.

Perhaps most importantly, the reflection process facilitated teaching philosophy articulation, connecting theoretical concepts to classroom practice. As Respondent 5 explained, “I’ve been able to enhance my own teaching philosophy statement. When I first joined the College, I think it was very general, very broad. But now that I’ve gone through the program, it’s definitely changed a lot.” Portfolio analysis confirmed this evolution, revealing deepening pedagogical understanding and clear connections between theory and practice.

Theme 2.2: Practical Application Pathways. The program design created clear pathways for implementing new pedagogical approaches. Participants described a concept

integration timeline that scaffolded application opportunities. Respondent 5 valued “immediate practice of concepts” and “time to think and incorporate into course design,” highlighting the importance of structured implementation support.

Portfolio analysis provided concrete evidence of practical application through documented teaching changes and innovations. Respondent 2 exhibited immediate implementation: “As soon as I learned about it that way, what I did was I revamped one of my courses... and I required my students to actually go and shadow a director, or call and contact a director.” Portfolio documentation illustrated this course revision through updated syllabi and assignment descriptions.

Experimentation support was another key element, with encouragement to try new approaches and safety in risk-taking. Portfolios documented various teaching experiments and adaptations, particularly during the COVID-19 transition to online learning. All five participants documented technology integration and pedagogical adaptations in their professional development reflections.

The program also facilitated adaptation to diverse teaching contexts, helping adjuncts customize approaches for their discipline, modalities (online vs. face-to-face), and student populations. Portfolio analysis revealed discipline-specific applications of program concepts, from Respondent 1’s political science civic engagement approaches to Respondent 5’s health education community connections.

Theme 2.3: Student-Centered Approach Development. A notable pedagogical shift for many participants was toward more student-centered teaching approaches. Respondent 2 described gaining “insight about student awareness of course design” through reflection on student feedback. Portfolio analysis strongly supported this shift through examination of teaching

philosophies and student evaluation responses, with all five teaching philosophy statements exemplifying strong student-centered orientations that emphasized relationships, empowerment, and active learning.

Respondent 1 focused on civic engagement and democratic participation, stating the goal as “effectively teaching the informed citizenry of tomorrow.” Respondent 2 emphasized the relational foundation of learning, asserting that “the success of learning relies on the relationship between the learner and instructor.” Respondent 3 demonstrated this evolution through reflective practice, noting a conscious effort to reduce instructor-centered delivery: “I think I’ve learned to talk less. I’ve learned to be more selective in statements that I make.” Respondent 4 articulated empowerment through literacy, explaining “I aim to make my students understand that as they grow as readers and writers that language is a tool... building their self-confidence,” while Respondent 5 emphasized constructivist approaches by stating that “students create their own solutions to problems through creative thinking and discovery.”

This increased utilization of student feedback informed ongoing course improvements. Portfolio documentation demonstrated consistent attention to student evaluation data and responsive course modifications. Participants also reported more learning-focused design, with course structures and activities intentionally aligned with learning outcomes. As Respondent 1 noted, “I still apply Critical thinking, obviously is the goal... you try to help them see both sides of the issue.” Portfolio analysis revealed this learning-focused approach through detailed student success analyses and responsive teaching modifications. Respondent 5’s portfolio showed particular attention to student success patterns, noting: “I found that the success of learners was enhanced by having more time to pass the class.”

This shift included greater awareness of the community college context, with enhanced understanding of diverse student backgrounds and recognition of specific challenges faced by community college students. Portfolio reflections revealed this contextual understanding, with participants connecting their teaching approaches to community college mission and student needs.

Theme 2.4: Pedagogical Knowledge Expansion. All participants expressed substantial growth in their understanding of teaching theories and strategies. Compared to their pre-program self-assessments, participants showed substantial increases in terminology and framework familiarity. As Respondent 1 explained, “I know we’re not using the Likert scale, but I give it a 4, 4.5, maybe.”

Portfolio analysis provided concrete evidence of this knowledge expansion through advanced pedagogical language and theoretical understanding shown in teaching philosophies and reflections. The portfolios revealed progression from general teaching concepts to specific theoretical frameworks and evidence-based practices.

Participants also expanded their teaching strategies toolkit, developing a broader repertoire of techniques and more intentional selection of approaches for specific situations. As Respondent 5 described, “I definitely have a better understanding, for sure of theories of learning as well as pedagogy, and then also too I have a better understanding of how it might be different, based on the discipline.”

Portfolio documentation of professional development activities showed this expansion through diverse training topics and deep reflection on learning applications. Common professional development themes included: technology integration (all five participants), student engagement strategies, equity and inclusion practices, and assessment and feedback methods.

Many participants continued self-directed learning beyond the program, engaging in ongoing research on teaching methods and independent investigation of concepts. Portfolio evidence illustrated this through additional professional development beyond what was required and thorough analysis of teaching effectiveness. This sustained commitment to professional growth suggests the program successfully instilled a learning mindset that extended beyond formal requirements.

Research Question 3: Program Supports and Barriers

How do program supports and barriers affect adjunct faculty involvement and commitment to pedagogical change? The focal area for the last research question was Supports and Barriers (SB) during first-cycle coding. Excerpts relating to these concepts were extrapolated and re-examined for patterns from which themes were created. Four themes resulted in relation to supports and barriers revolving around time management challenges, institutional supports, motivation factors, and elements of program design. Supportive data relating to each theme gives credibility to each as a product of the comprehensive program.

Theme 3.1: Time Management Challenges. Time constraints emerged as the most persistent barrier to adjunct faculty involvement, both before and after program participation. Participants consistently mentioned multiple role demands, balancing teaching with primary employment, family commitments, and other professional obligations. As Respondent 4 stated, “It is difficult when you are a part-time employee, and you’re contracted for certain hours to carve out the time and to make it a priority when you have to balance it out with other responsibilities.”

Portfolio analysis confirmed these time constraints through documentation of scheduling challenges and competing priorities. Respondent 1’s portfolio explicitly noted: “I sometimes

have to put forth extra effort” due to balancing legal work with teaching. Portfolio submission timing and content depth varied across participants, suggesting differential impacts of time constraints on program engagement.

Part-time status created additional limitations, as adjuncts receive no paid time for professional development and have limited campus presence. These structural constraints influenced participants’ ability to engage fully, despite their desire to do so. Portfolio documentation yielded creative solutions to time constraints, such as online professional development participation and flexible scheduling arrangements.

Several time-efficient strategies were identified that helped overcome these barriers, including evening/flexible scheduling and integrated professional development. Respondent 1 specifically mentioned “evening scheduling of programs” and “set timeframes that allow planning” as supportive elements. Portfolio analysis demonstrated successful engagement despite time constraints when programs were designed with adjunct schedules in mind.

Respondent 4 articulated the unique challenge facing part-time faculty when attempting to implement pedagogical changes: “I don’t have hours built into my day, and so then I have to find them on my own. Sometimes I start a semester, and I get into Chapter four, or whatever and I’m like, Oh, God! I meant to make some changes to this.” This structural limitation affected the ability to engage in comprehensive course redesign, though participants found ways to make incremental improvements despite time pressures. The portfolio process itself became a mechanism for addressing this challenge by creating dedicated time for reflection and planning.

Theme 3.2: Institutional Support Structures. The data revealed considerable variation in departmental support across participants. As Respondent 5 noted, “Strong support from dean and department lead” was a critical factor in sustaining pedagogical changes. Portfolio analysis

provided evidence of this variation through different levels of departmental integration and support documentation. Participants with strong departmental support showed evidence of regular departmental meetings and communication, inclusion in curriculum discussions, access to departmental resources and mentoring, and recognition of adjunct contributions. Those with limited departmental support revealed isolated professional development efforts, self-directed resource seeking, and limited institutional connections beyond the program.

Resource accessibility also emerged as an important support factor, particularly awareness of available resources and access to technology support for teaching. As Respondent 5 explained, “I am definitely more involved because I’m more aware of the resources that are available.” Portfolio documentation indicated varying levels of resource utilization, with more supported participants demonstrating broader engagement with institutional opportunities.

Leadership recognition was another important institutional support, including acknowledgment from administration and inclusion in departmental decisions. Respondent 2 appreciated “the role of dean as ‘connector’” in facilitating engagement with professional development opportunities. Portfolio evidence showed this through service appointments and professional development funding for some participants.

Theme 3.3: Motivation and Incentive Factors. Financial recognition emerged as a meaningful support for participation, including stipends for program completion and pay rate increases. As Respondent 1 observed, “It’s not just the money it’s, the perceived value that’s associated with it. It’s the psychological aspect of making sure that that’s on my calendar.” Portfolio analysis revealed that financial incentives supported sustained engagement through the renewal process. The documentation requirements, while time-intensive, were viewed as

worthwhile investments given the ongoing financial benefits. This finding suggests that financial incentives provide both practical support and symbolic validation.

Professional growth desires also drove participation, with many participants expressing intrinsic motivation to improve and viewing student success as a primary motivator. As Respondent 3 noted, even without financial incentives, she would participate due to her “intrinsic motivation to learn.” Portfolio evidence supported this intrinsic motivation through extensive documentation of voluntary professional development and self-directed learning activities. Participants engaged in more professional development than required, suggesting genuine commitment to teaching improvement beyond external incentives.

Institutional validation through recognition of adjunct contributions and formal acknowledgment of expertise further supported engagement. Portfolio analysis illustrated this validation through the use of more refined language and confidence revealed in teaching philosophies and reflections.

Theme 3.4: Program Design Elements. The sequential program structure (Academy → Professoriate → Portfolio) created progressive skill development and clear pathways through program phases. Portfolio analysis provided evidence of this cumulative knowledge-building approach through increasing pedagogical understanding and application over time. The progression was evident in evolution of teaching philosophy complexity, depth of reflective practice, integration of multiple pedagogical concepts, and application of evidence-based practices.

Renewal requirements, particularly the portfolio development process and professional development tracking, maintained motivation for sustained engagement. As Respondent 2 noted, the “permanent raise was worth the effort” served as an “incentive for renewal.” Portfolio

submission quality and depth suggested that participants viewed the renewal process as meaningful professional development rather than mere compliance.

Content relevance was another critical design element, with participants valuing practical application to their teaching context. Respondent 2 mentioned more selective participation in professional development based on relevance: “I think some of the courses that were being offered... weren’t as appealing to me or they weren’t relevant at the moment.”

Portfolio analysis showed this selectivity through professional development choices that aligned with participants’ teaching contexts and student needs. The diversity of professional development topics across portfolios suggested successful customization of learning pathways to individual needs and contexts.

Transformational Impact: Pre-Post Comparative Analysis

The thematic analysis revealed significant patterns within each research question, yet the most compelling evidence of the program’s effectiveness emerges from examining participants’ transformational journey from program entry through sustained implementation. A structured comparative analysis of participants’ pre- and post-program perceptions across the three key dimensions, community engagement, pedagogical knowledge, and professional development, reveals profound shifts that validate the program’s comprehensive impact.

Community Engagement Transformation

Before Program Participation. Prior to program participation, all five participants described marked professional isolation and severely limited connections with colleagues beyond their immediate departments. As Respondent 1 candidly stated, “I didn’t really have a lot of involvement... I didn’t have a lot of time for other stuff, and I certainly didn’t hang out or talk a

lot with any of the other professors.” This isolation was not merely a function of time constraints but reflected a fundamental disconnect from the institutional community.

Most participants reported minimal engagement outside their departments, with Respondent 2 explaining that “my involvement was specifically within my department... those were the only opportunities for me to interact.” This departmental siloing was compounded by high levels of uncertainty about institutional belonging. Participants were unclear about which professional activities were available to adjuncts versus full-time faculty, creating a psychological barrier that reinforced their peripheral status. Several participants questioned whether they were “allowed” to attend campus events or utilize institutional resources, reflecting a sense of institutional ambiguity about their role and value.

Respondent 3’s pre-program experience reflected both isolation and a strong desire for connection. When asked about barriers to professional development participation, the response was direct: “I did not know about any of them if they were offered, and that’s why, when the program came along, I jumped at it.” This communication gap left adjuncts unaware of opportunities, compounding their professional isolation. Despite bringing substantial pedagogical training from previous education, Respondent 3 sought collegial interaction: “I wanted to meet other people,” demonstrating that isolation persisted even for those with strong pedagogical foundations.

After Program Completion. The transformation in community engagement following program completion was dramatic and multifaceted. Participants developed expanded professional networks that crossed departmental and disciplinary boundaries. As Respondent 5 noted, “I actually sort of reach out to some members that were part of my Academy cohort in addition to other colleagues that are not in my department.” These connections represented more

than casual acquaintances, they evolved into functional professional relationships characterized by resource sharing, collaborative problem-solving, and mutual support.

The program fostered a genuine sense of institutional belonging that participants articulated with emotional clarity. Respondent 2's reflection captured this transformation powerfully: "I love my department... community, if I could say it all over again, it's community from beginning to end." This sense of belonging extended beyond emotional connection to practical integration. Participants reported increased awareness of institutional resources, greater comfort navigating college systems, and enhanced confidence in their legitimacy as institutional members.

The conferral of the "Adjunct Professor" title significantly enhanced professional identity and institutional recognition. Participants described feeling "part of something bigger than just coming in and teaching a course," a phrase that appeared repeatedly across interviews. This enhanced identity manifested in tangible ways: participants felt more comfortable engaging with full-time colleagues as peers, more confident contributing to departmental discussions, and more invested in institutional goals and student success initiatives. Portfolio documentation confirmed these self-reports through evidence of expanded service participation, collaborative projects with full-time faculty, and institutional committee involvement.

Pedagogical Knowledge Evolution

Before Program Participation. Participants' pedagogical foundations varied considerably prior to program participation, yet patterns of limited formal preparation emerged consistently. Several participants indicated essentially no formal training in teaching theory or instructional methods. Respondent 1's candid assessment, acknowledging "0" knowledge across key pedagogical concepts including Bloom's Taxonomy, active learning strategies, and high-

impact practices, typified the experiences of participants who entered higher education teaching through disciplinary expertise rather than pedagogical preparation.

Even participants with some exposure to teaching methods through graduate programs described their knowledge as fragmented and superficial. Teaching approaches were primarily intuitive rather than theoretically grounded, with participants relying on replication of teaching methods they had experienced as students or improvisation based on common sense rather than pedagogical principles. The instructional repertoire was narrow, characterized by heavy reliance on lecture-based delivery with minimal attention to student engagement strategies, learning objectives alignment, or assessment design.

Perhaps most notably, teaching was often viewed as a secondary professional role, with participants' primary professional identities anchored elsewhere, in disciplinary expertise, professional practice, or other career roles. This peripheral identity manifested in participants' difficulty articulating teaching philosophies or engaging in substantive reflection on their teaching identity. The approach to teaching was largely transactional, focused primarily on content delivery rather than considering broader educational impacts, student development, or learning outcomes. As Respondent 3 acknowledged, her pre-program teaching was "very much flying by the seat of my pants."

After Program Completion. The growth in pedagogical knowledge following program completion was substantial and consistently evident across all five participants. Respondent 1's self-assessment improved dramatically from "0" across all categories to "4, 4.5, maybe," reflecting deep engagement with pedagogical concepts that were previously unknown. This numerical shift represented more than familiarity with terminology, it signaled fundamental transformation in how participants understood and approached teaching.

Participants developed intentional, theoretically grounded teaching approaches that replaced previous intuitive methods. They could articulate specific pedagogical frameworks, like constructivism, backward design, growth mindset, and explain how these theories informed their instructional decisions. The instructional strategy toolkit expanded dramatically, with participants demonstrating facility with active learning techniques, varied assessment approaches, technology integration, and differentiated instruction methods. As Respondent 5 explained, “I definitely have a better understanding, for sure of theories of learning as well as pedagogy, and then also too I have a better understanding of how it might be different, based on the discipline.”

The program facilitated significant professional identity development, with participants embracing their roles as educators rather than viewing teaching as ancillary to other professional identities. Teaching philosophies became well-developed and clearly articulated, demonstrating sophisticated understanding of learning theory, student development, and educational purpose. Portfolio analysis confirmed this evolution through the depth and theoretical sophistication evident in participants’ teaching philosophy statements.

Student-centered approaches replaced content-focused delivery across participants’ teaching practices. Participants evidenced understanding that effective teaching requires more than disciplinary expertise, it demands attention to how students learn, engagement with diverse student needs, and continuous reflection on teaching effectiveness. Course design reflected greater emphasis on learning outcomes, intentional alignment between objectives and assessments, and attention to creating inclusive learning environments. As Respondent 5 reflected, “I do have a better understanding of the College’s philosophy and approach to ensuring that all students are successful.”

For participants with extensive prior pedagogical training, the program provided refinement and exposure to contemporary practices rather than foundational knowledge. Respondent 3, who brought strong preparation from previous education and ongoing professional development through national workshops, gained specific insights: “I think that’s what I got, mostly is an understanding of how to present the material to the students and testing some aspects of testing.” The program also reinforced the value of observational learning, as Respondent 3 noted: “I’ve also observed one of the professors this week. It’s very interesting to watch other people. They’re delivering the same material you do and you have to wonder, you know, what really works.”

Professional Development Engagement

Before Program Participation. Prior to program participation, professional development engagement was minimal across all participants, characterized by sporadic attendance at occasional workshops when scheduling permitted. Participants reported severely limited awareness of available professional development opportunities, uncertain about what programs existed, how to access them, or whether adjuncts were welcome to participate.

Multiple barriers prevented engagement with professional development. Time constraints dominated, with competing demands from primary employment, family responsibilities, and teaching preparation consuming available hours. Many participants were uncertain which professional development activities were appropriate or available for adjunct faculty versus full-time faculty, creating a psychological barrier to participation. The absence of financial compensation for professional development time created additional disincentives, particularly for adjuncts balancing multiple employment commitments. Several participants described feeling

that professional development was designed for full-time faculty, with adjuncts tolerated as participants but not genuinely welcomed or valued.

After Program Completion. Following program completion, participants became significantly more strategic and intentional in professional development engagement. While time constraints persisted as a challenge, participants developed greater awareness of available opportunities and made more deliberate choices about participation based on relevance to their teaching contexts and professional goals.

Respondent 5's observation captured this shift: "I am definitely more involved because I'm more aware of the resources that are available." This awareness extended beyond simply knowing what programs existed to understanding how different professional development opportunities connected to their teaching improvement goals and student success objectives. Participants described feeling more legitimate in accessing institutional resources, more confident requesting professional development support from supervisors, and more strategic in selecting development activities that aligned with their identified growth areas.

The financial recognition through the Adjunct Professor designation and the structured renewal process requiring documented professional development created ongoing motivation for continued engagement. However, portfolio evidence suggested this motivation extended beyond compliance. Participants documented voluntary professional development participation beyond minimum requirements, engagement with diverse learning modalities (conferences, workshops, online courses, book studies), and self-directed research on teaching methods indicating intrinsic commitment to continuous improvement.

Synthesis of Transformational Changes

The pre-post comparative analysis reinforces the thematic findings by providing concrete evidence of transformation across multiple dimensions of professional practice. The consistent patterns of growth, from isolation to community, from intuitive to intentional practice, and from peripheral to integrated institutional engagement, demonstrate the program's effectiveness in creating comprehensive professional development for adjunct faculty.

This transformation represents more than incremental improvement in discrete skills or knowledge areas. The data reveal fundamental shifts in how participants understood their roles, approached their work, and positioned themselves within the institutional community. The movement from content expert to reflective educator, from institutional outsider to integrated community member, and from passive recipient to active professional development seeker suggests that comprehensive, sustained development programming can facilitate transformational rather than merely transactional learning experiences.

The triangulation of interview data, portfolio documentation, and comparative analysis provides compelling evidence that well-designed adjunct faculty development programs can overcome the systemic barriers that typically constrain adjunct professional growth. The five participants in this study demonstrate that when institutions provide structured support, financial recognition, intellectual community, and accountability mechanisms, adjunct faculty can develop into educators who contribute meaningfully to institutional missions and student success. Beyond these dimensional transformations, the analysis revealed four overarching meta-themes that transcended individual research questions.

Cross-Cutting Meta-Themes

Review of the thematic coding results enabled the researcher to identify overarching themes that spanned multiple areas of the research and were not just confined to one given research question. These meta-themes for this research are the transformational learning experience, community/pedagogy integration, sustainability mechanisms, and institutional integration pathways. Each meta-theme is supported with evidence from participant data to demonstrate how the overarching themes evolved.

Meta-Theme A: Transformational Learning Experience

The program created profound shifts in perspective, identity, and practice for many participants. They reported changed views of their teaching role, broader institutional understanding, and new frames of reference. As Respondent 5 explained, “I do have a better understanding of the College’s philosophy and approach to ensuring that all students are successful in meeting them where there are.” Portfolio analysis provided substantial evidence of this transformation through multiple interconnected dimensions.

The language analysis revealed significant shifts in professional identity as participants evolved from describing themselves as subject matter experts in their interviews to educators with clear pedagogical philosophies in their portfolios. Respondent 4’s statement exemplified this evolution: “I believe that as a teacher, I have been bestowed a gift; that gift is my classroom.” This identity transformation paralleled theoretical integration evident in portfolio documentation, which showed progression from practical teaching approaches to theory-informed practice. Teaching philosophies indicated deeper understanding of learning theories, student development, and evidence-based practices compared to participants’ perceptions of pre-program understanding.

These interconnected transformations culminated in practice reinvention, where portfolio evidence showed fundamental changes to teaching approaches through updated course designs, new assessment methods, and innovative student engagement strategies. As Respondent 3 described, “I think I’ve learned to talk less... I’ve learned to be more selective in statements that I make,” reflecting a shift toward more student-centered teaching. The comprehensive nature of these changes across identity, theory, and practice underscores the transformational rather than incremental nature of program impact.

Meta-Theme B: Community/Pedagogy Integration

The data revealed strong interconnections between collegial relationships and teaching improvement, with portfolio analysis providing evidence of this integration through documented collaborative activities and shared learning experiences. The synergy between community building and pedagogical development emerged as a central mechanism for sustained professional growth.

Portfolio documentation showed knowledge sharing among peers and joint problem-solving that enhanced teaching practices. As Respondent 4 explained, “I’ll share something like ‘Oh, that’s a great idea I’d never thought of that.’ And we just start stealing from each other.” Portfolio evidence included shared resources, collaborative observations, and cross-disciplinary project development that extended learning beyond individual classroom contexts. This collaborative learning was further reinforced through observation and modeling practices, with portfolios documenting peer observation benefits and teaching demonstration opportunities. This practice extended the impact of program content through real classroom applications and feedback cycles.

The integration of community and pedagogy was sustained through multi-source feedback systems revealed in portfolio analysis. Participants documented not only formal evaluation processes but also informal peer consultation and collaborative problem-solving approaches. These feedback systems created ongoing opportunities for collective reflection and shared meaning-making around effective teaching practices, reinforcing the mutually supportive relationship between professional community and pedagogical development.

Meta-Theme C: Sustainability Mechanisms

Portfolio analysis revealed several mechanisms supporting ongoing engagement and growth beyond the formal program. These mechanisms operated at both structural and personal levels to maintain momentum for continued professional development and pedagogical refinement.

The renewal portfolio accountability and financial incentive maintenance created sustained motivation through structural requirements. Portfolio quality and depth suggested participants viewed these requirements as meaningful professional development opportunities rather than burdensome compliance activities. The biennial cycle established regular touchpoints for reflection and documentation that kept pedagogical improvement at the forefront of professional practice. Beyond these structural elements, portfolio evidence showed personal drive for excellence and student success motivation sustaining engagement. Participants documented voluntary professional development, self-directed research, and innovative teaching experiments beyond minimum requirements, indicating that intrinsic commitment complemented external accountability structures.

Resource continuity represented another sustainability mechanism, with portfolios showing ongoing access to materials and continued learning opportunities through institutional

resources and peer networks. However, participants noted opportunities for improvement in community connection maintenance through their renewal reflections. The combination of structural accountability, intrinsic motivation, and resource access created a multi-layered system supporting sustained pedagogical change, though the challenge of maintaining community connections beyond formal program structures remained an area for institutional attention.

The sustainability of pedagogical change also depended on institutional recognition of teaching excellence. Respondent 3 valued the professional autonomy afforded to adjunct professors: “It would be the fact that I was allowed to teach the way I wanted to. I was observed, of course, and did okay, that I like having liberty in my style. I appreciate being treated like a professional.” This sense of professional respect reinforced commitment to the institution and encouraged ongoing innovation in teaching practice. Portfolio evidence showed that when adjuncts felt trusted and valued, they invested more deeply in continuous improvement and institutional engagement.

Meta-Theme D: Institutional Integration Pathways

Portfolio analysis provided evidence of routes to fuller participation in college life and culture through documented service activities, professional development engagement, and departmental integration. These pathways operated through both formal recognition systems and informal connection networks that gradually shifted participants from peripheral to more central institutional roles.

Portfolio documentation showed title and position acknowledgment through official communications, service appointments, and professional development opportunities. The “Adjunct Professor” designation appeared throughout portfolio documentation, suggesting successful integration of this identity into participants’ professional self-concept and institutional

standing. This formal recognition created legitimacy that facilitated access to opportunities typically reserved for full-time faculty. Complementing these formal structures, portfolio evidence included peer relationships and cross-campus interactions that supplemented official pathways. Participants documented collaborative relationships, mentoring activities, and cross-departmental projects that enhanced institutional integration through organic relationship building rather than administrative mandate.

The cumulative effect of these formal and informal pathways manifested in belonging development, with portfolio language analysis revealing psychological sense of membership, investment in institutional goals, and long-term commitment to the college. As Respondent 3 reflected, “This College is a nice place to work. It’s a nice place to teach, and you feel like you’re doing something worthwhile.” This sense of belonging represented the culmination of multiple integration pathways working in concert to transform adjunct faculty from temporary instructional labor into invested institutional community members.

Summary of Results

The triangulation of interview and portfolio data provides compelling evidence that the comprehensive adjunct faculty development program successfully achieved its goals of building community, facilitating sustained pedagogical change, and addressing barriers to engagement in professional development. The analysis revealed that community building and pedagogical development are interconnected processes that reinforce each other through structured reflection, peer collaboration, and institutional recognition. Portfolio documentation confirmed the transformational nature of participants’ experiences, showing evolution from content experts to educators with strong pedagogical foundations and institutional connections.

While persistent barriers such as time constraints and variation in departmental support continue to challenge adjunct faculty engagement, the program's design successfully mitigated many obstacles through financial incentives, flexible programming, and meaningful recognition. The sustained engagement evident in portfolio quality and ongoing professional development participation demonstrates that comprehensive, sequential programming can create lasting changes in adjunct faculty practice and institutional integration. These findings provide a foundation for understanding how institutions can effectively support adjunct faculty development and, in turn, enhance student learning outcomes through improved teaching quality and faculty commitment.

Chapter V

Conclusion

This study examined how the design of a comprehensive adjunct faculty development program at a Florida community college builds community among adjunct professors and contributes to sustained pedagogical change over time. Given that adjunct faculty teach approximately 58% of community college classes yet often face systemic barriers to professional development and institutional integration (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014), understanding effective approaches to adjunct faculty support has become increasingly critical for institutional effectiveness and student success. The purpose of this research was to explore the program design and delivery strategies that enhance community building, facilitate sustained pedagogical change, and address the supports and barriers affecting adjunct faculty involvement in professional development.

The findings of this study align with and extend existing literature on adjunct faculty development in several important ways. The transformational impact observed among participants supports Polk's (2006) assertion that sustained, deliberate professional development is "paramount to successful teaching," while the community-building effects validate Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework as applied to higher education faculty development. The persistence of time constraints as a primary barrier confirms Yakoboski's (2015) findings about adjunct faculty challenges, yet the program's success in mitigating these barriers through financial incentives and flexible design demonstrates practical solutions to documented

problems. Most significantly, the pedagogical development evidenced in participants' teaching philosophies and reflective practices challenges assumptions about adjunct faculty capabilities and supports Austin and Sorcinelli's (2013) call for comprehensive approaches to faculty development that recognize the complex realities of contemporary academic work.

Through a qualitative case study methodology guided by constructivist learning theory and Community of Practice frameworks, this research employed triangulated data collection including in-depth interviews with five adjunct professors who completed all program components and systematic analysis of their renewal portfolios. The multi-source approach enabled comprehensive examination of participants' experiences from program entry through sustained implementation, revealing not only immediate program impacts but also long-term changes in teaching practice, professional identity, and institutional engagement. The comparative analysis of pre and post program perceptions provided compelling evidence of transformation across multiple dimensions of professional practice, while portfolio analysis offered concrete documentation of sustained pedagogical growth and advanced reflective practices over time.

Enhanced Understanding Through Triangulation

Triangulation serves as a foundational strategy for enhancing the quality and credibility of qualitative research by addressing what Patton (1999) identifies as three distinct but interconnected inquiry concerns: rigorous techniques for data collection and analysis, researcher credibility, and philosophical beliefs about the value of qualitative methods. Drawing from Patton's work on qualitative evaluation, triangulation represents a systematic approach to strengthening research validity through the strategic use of multiple sources, methods, or perspectives.

Patton (1999) identifies four primary types of triangulation that contribute to verification and validation in qualitative analysis: (1) methods triangulation, which examines consistency across different data collection approaches; (2) data triangulation, which compares information from various data sources within the same method; (3) researcher triangulation, which employs multiple researchers to review findings; and (4) theory triangulation, which applies different theoretical frameworks to interpret data. Each approach serves to guard against accusations that findings result from methodological artifacts, single sources, or individual researcher biases.

This study employed three distinct forms of triangulation to strengthen credibility and validity. Methodological triangulation was implemented through the integration of interviews, program documents, and participant portfolios, with all data sources analyzed in conjunction with the research questions. The integration of portfolio analysis with interview data strengthened the findings of this study considerably by providing concrete evidence of the long-term impact of the comprehensive adjunct faculty development program. The triangulation revealed consistent patterns across both data sources while offering deeper insights into the mechanisms driving community building, pedagogical change, and sustained engagement.

Data triangulation was achieved by collecting data from five participants who completed program components at different times, brought diverse educational backgrounds, and taught across various disciplines. Portfolio analysis confirmed the transformational nature of the program experience while highlighting the depth of each participants' pedagogical development over time. The evolution visible in teaching philosophies, reflective practices, and professional language illustrated sustained growth that extended well beyond program completion. This evidence strongly supports the program's effectiveness in creating lasting change rather than temporary engagement.

Theoretical triangulation was achieved by applying both constructivist theory and community of practice theory as interpretive frameworks for data analysis. This dual-lens approach reflects Patton's observation that multiple theoretical perspectives can reveal how findings are affected by different assumptions and fundamental premises, thereby strengthening the analytical foundation. The following section will expand further on these concepts.

Theoretical Framework Alignment

The findings from this study align well with both theoretical frameworks that guided the research design. Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice framework provided a particularly robust lens for understanding the program's success, with participants' experiences mapping directly onto the four key components of community, practice, identity, and meaning-making.

The community (belonging) component was evidenced through the structured cohort experiences and faculty facilitation that created genuine connections across disciplines. Participants consistently valued the cross-departmental interactions and described lasting professional relationships that extended beyond program completion. The practice component manifested through the practical application pathways that enabled collaborative problem-solving and shared pedagogical experimentation. As one participant noted, the collegial sharing of strategies created a dynamic where "we just start stealing from each other" in productive ways.

The identity component was perhaps most dramatically exemplified through the professional identity formation that accompanied the "Adjunct Professor" designation. This title represented more than institutional recognition, it signified participants' transformation from content experts to educators with clear pedagogical philosophies. Finally, the meaning-making

component was embodied in the structured reflection cycle that required participants to connect their experiences to broader educational purposes and institutional missions.

The constructivist learning theory that underpinned the program design was equally well-supported by the findings. Participants demonstrated the shift from passive to active learning approaches, both in their own development and in their teaching practices. The metacognitive development evidenced through portfolio reflections showed participants becoming more aware of their learning processes and more strategic in their pedagogical decisions. This aligns with the constructivist emphasis on learners actively building knowledge through experience and reflection.

The theoretical frameworks not only explained the program's success but also illuminated why certain elements were particularly effective. The Community of Practice model helped explain how isolated adjunct faculty could develop strong professional networks through structured interaction, while constructivist principles clarified how experiential learning and reflection could drive sustained pedagogical change. Together, these frameworks provided a comprehensive foundation for understanding how comprehensive faculty development programs can create transformational learning experiences for adjunct faculty.

The analytical approach employed in this study also highlighted strong theoretical alignment with contemporary best practices in qualitative research. The reflexive thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2021, 2022) proved particularly well-suited for examining the complex, interconnected dimensions of community building, pedagogical change, and institutional support. By embracing researcher subjectivity as a resource rather than viewing it as bias to be eliminated, the reflexive approach allowed for deep engagement with participants' experiences while maintaining analytical rigor. The progression from descriptive to interpretive

coding, the iterative refinement of themes, and the identification of meta-themes that cut across research questions all reflect the sophisticated analytical framework that Braun and Clarke (2022) advocate. This methodological alignment strengthens confidence in the study's findings while illustrating how contemporary qualitative methods can effectively illuminate complex educational phenomena.

Implications for Practice

Community Building Through Structured Engagement

The findings demonstrate that community building among adjunct faculty requires intentional, structured approaches rather than informal networking opportunities. The cohort model proved particularly effective because it created shared learning experiences across disciplines and provided regular interaction opportunities with clear purposes. The cohort model also facilitated peer learning and resource sharing while establishing relationships that persisted beyond formal program completion. Portfolio evidence further supported these findings showing these relationships continuing through collaborative observations, shared professional development, and ongoing consultation, suggesting that structured community building creates sustainable professional networks.

Pedagogical Change Through Reflective Practice

The portfolio requirement emerged as a critical mechanism for sustaining pedagogical change by institutionalizing reflective practice. The analysis revealed three levels of reflection, technical, practical, and critical, with participants demonstrating growth in reflective practice over time. This progression suggests that structured reflection, supported by accountability measures, can drive continuous improvement in teaching practice.

The portfolio process also provided evidence that pedagogical change requires both theoretical understanding and practical application opportunities. Participants who evidenced the most pedagogical development had engaged in multiple cycles of learning, implementation, reflection, and refinement, suggesting the importance of ongoing support for experimentation and growth.

The diversity of participants' backgrounds underscores the program's ability to serve both novice and experienced educators. Respondent 3, with decades of teaching experience and extensive prior pedagogical training, still found value in structured reflection and peer observation, demonstrating that even highly experienced adjuncts benefit from formalized professional development opportunities. Meanwhile, Respondent 4's journey illustrated how the program validated and refined existing student-centered philosophies while providing pedagogical terminology to articulate practice: "I've always been student centered, but the program helped me understand the language behind what I was already doing." This range suggests that effective adjunct development must accommodate varying experience levels while maintaining rigor and relevance for all participants.

Integration of Supports and Barrier Mitigation

The findings indicated that effective adjunct faculty development requires comprehensive approaches that address multiple barriers simultaneously. Time constraints, while persistent, could be mitigated through flexible programming and meaningful incentives. The variation in departmental support highlighted the need for institutional coordination to ensure consistent experiences across academic divisions. Portfolio analysis showed that participants with strong institutional support had deeper engagement and more sustained pedagogical change, suggesting that institutional integration strategies are crucial for program effectiveness.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are directly informed by the challenges and successes documented in this study, as well as the meta-themes that emerged from the data. Drawing on this, the recommendations are presented to enhance the effectiveness of adjunct faculty development programs. These recommendations are organized by stakeholder group to provide clarity and actionable direction for institutional change, program design, and future scholarship.

Recommendations for Administrators

Strengthen Post-Program Community Structures. While the cohort experience during the program effectively built community, participants expressed desire for ongoing connection opportunities after program completion. Institutions should consider implementing regular reunions or roundtable discussions for program graduates, which could serve as anchors for sustained professional relationships. These gatherings could be complemented by cross-disciplinary learning communities that extend beyond the formal program, providing structured opportunities for continued collaboration across disciplines and cohorts. To accommodate geographic and scheduling constraints, virtual platforms for resource sharing and discussion would enable asynchronous connection among cohort members while maintaining accessibility for adjuncts with complex schedules. Finally, establishing mentoring relationships between experienced and new adjunct faculty would leverage the expertise developed through program participation while strengthening the community's sustainability. As Respondent 2 suggested, there is a need for "ongoing community beyond formal program," and these interconnected strategies would address the community sustainability challenges identified in Theme 1.4 while building upon the successful cohort model that participants valued so highly.

The need for ongoing community structures was particularly acute for adjuncts with limited departmental interaction opportunities. Respondent 3 noted the absence of structured gatherings post-program: “The first one I can answer, because there are no occasions on which assembly of adjuncts occurs.” Creating regular touchpoints for the adjunct community, whether through quarterly meetings, online forums, or discipline-specific gatherings, would help sustain the connections formed during formal programming and reduce the isolation that many adjuncts experience.

Enhance Departmental Integration and Support. The variation in departmental support shown in Theme 3.2 suggests a need for more consistent approaches to adjunct integration across academic departments. Institutions should develop standardized onboarding processes for new adjunct faculty that ensure all adjuncts receive consistent orientation to departmental expectations, resources, and support structures regardless of their division or supervisor. These processes should be complemented by regular departmental meetings scheduled at times accessible to adjuncts, with explicit inclusion of part-time faculty in agenda development and decision-making processes. Beyond formal meetings, departments should systematically include adjuncts in curriculum development and programmatic planning, recognizing their instructional expertise and classroom insights as valuable contributions to departmental goals. Finally, designating departmental mentors specifically responsible for supporting adjunct faculty would provide consistent points of contact and ongoing guidance. These integrated measures would address Respondent 4’s concern about feeling “separated” and “not as well integrated as I’d like to be” while ensuring that all adjuncts experience the institutional support necessary for sustained pedagogical development.

Enhance Financial and Recognition Structures. Portfolio analysis supported the importance of financial incentives while also emphasizing the need for additional forms of recognition that validate adjunct contributions beyond monetary compensation. Building on the impact of the “Adjunct Professor” title, institutions should systematically include adjunct accomplishments in institutional communications, newsletters, and public recognition events, positioning adjunct faculty as integral contributors to the institution’s educational mission. Similarly, developing multiple levels of recognition and advancement opportunities for adjunct faculty would create pathways for continued professional growth and increasing responsibility over time. Institutions should also provide dedicated funding specifically earmarked for adjunct faculty professional development, ensuring equitable access to conferences, workshops, and other learning opportunities typically available to full-time faculty. Finally, creating systematic mechanisms for documenting and celebrating adjunct faculty excellence, such as teaching awards, spotlight features, or innovation showcases, would reinforce institutional valuing of adjunct contributions while providing models of effective practice for other faculty. These recognition structures work synergistically with financial incentives to create comprehensive support systems that honor both the practical realities and professional aspirations of adjunct faculty.

Recommendations for Faculty Development Coordinators

Expand and Refine Reflective Practice Requirements. Portfolio analysis revealed varying depths of reflective practice, suggesting opportunities for enhanced guidance and support in developing critical reflection skills. Institutions should provide explicit instruction and modeling in the three levels of reflection, technical, practical, and critical, helping adjuncts understand the distinctions and develop capacity for deeper analytical work. This could be

complemented by structured reflection prompts that guide participants toward critical examination of underlying assumptions rather than purely descriptive accounts of activities. Additionally, incorporating peer review processes for portfolio drafts would create opportunities for collaborative reflection while providing formative feedback before final submission. To support ongoing reflective practice beyond formal requirements, institutions might establish reflective practice circles or digital reflection journals that normalize continuous self-examination as part of professional identity. These enhancements would build upon the portfolio's demonstrated effectiveness as a driver of sustained pedagogical change while addressing the variation in reflective depth evident across participant portfolios.

Showcase Successful Teaching Innovations. Building on the high-impact practice focus of the Professoriate program, institutions should create multiple platforms for sharing successful teaching innovations developed by adjunct faculty. Annual symposia featuring adjunct-led teaching innovations would provide formal venues for presenting pedagogical experiments and their outcomes to broader campus audiences, positioning adjuncts as thought leaders in instructional practice. These events could be supported by digital repositories of effective practices and materials where adjuncts can share syllabi, assignment designs, assessment strategies, and other instructional resources with colleagues across disciplines. Moreover, establishing formal recognition programs specifically for teaching excellence among adjunct faculty would incentivize pedagogical innovation while celebrating outstanding contributions to student learning. To extend the impact of these innovations, institutions should facilitate peer observation opportunities beyond minimum program requirements, creating structured processes for faculty to learn from each other's classroom practices. This recommendation aligns directly with Respondent 5's suggestion to "showcase successful high impact practices" and would

reinforce the value of pedagogical experimentation while extending the program's impact throughout the institution.

Refine Portfolio Process. While the portfolio requirement emerged as a powerful driver of pedagogical change, participants suggested several modifications to enhance its effectiveness while reducing unnecessary burden. Institutions should streamline documentation requirements to focus on meaningful reflection rather than compliance-oriented record-keeping, eliminating redundant elements while preserving those components that demonstrably support pedagogical growth. This refinement could be complemented by incorporating collaborative reflection components that allow adjuncts to engage in peer dialogue about their portfolio artifacts while maintaining individual accountability for their own learning and development. To reduce anxiety about expectations, a concern particularly evident in Respondent 4's feedback, institutions should provide clearer guidelines accompanied by exemplars from previous submissions that illustrate varying approaches to successful portfolio development across different disciplines and teaching contexts. Finally, strengthening explicit connections between portfolio elements and classroom practice would reinforce the portfolio's role as a tool for continuous improvement rather than a periodic assessment requirement disconnected from daily teaching work. These refinements would preserve the portfolio's reflective benefits while addressing barriers to meaningful engagement that emerged in participant experiences.

Develop Integrated Support Systems. The interconnections between community building, pedagogical change, and institutional supports identified in this study suggest the need for integrated approaches that recognize these elements as mutually reinforcing rather than discrete program components. Institutions should coordinate professional development offerings, community-building activities, and support services to create coherent pathways for adjunct

faculty development rather than isolated opportunities. This coordination should extend to aligning incentive structures with stated institutional values and student success goals, ensuring that reward systems reinforce desired practices and outcomes. In addition, establishing feedback loops between classroom practice and institutional policy would enable responsive program development informed by faculty experiences and student needs. Rather than implementing isolated initiatives, institutions should develop comprehensive adjunct success strategies that address multiple dimensions of professional development simultaneously, recognizing that effective support requires attention to pedagogical knowledge, professional community, institutional resources, and ongoing recognition. This integrated approach would reinforce the “transformational learning cycle” identified in the findings, where community connections facilitated pedagogical growth, which revealed support needs, which in turn strengthened community bonds through shared problem-solving and collaborative improvement.

Recommendations for Researchers

Conduct Longitudinal Assessment. To better understand the long-term impact of adjunct development programs and guide continuous improvement efforts, institutions should implement systematic tracking of student outcomes in courses taught by program participants compared to non-participants, controlling for relevant variables such as course level, student preparation, and class size. This assessment should be complemented by gathering longitudinal data on adjunct retention and satisfaction over multiple renewal cycles, examining whether program participation correlates with sustained institutional commitment and continued teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, institutions should systematically assess the transfer of learning from professional development experiences to actual classroom practice through structured observations, student feedback analysis, and self-reported implementation data. Finally,

evaluating the cumulative impact of program participation over multiple renewal cycles would show whether benefits plateau, continue growing, or require additional support structures to maintain momentum. This recommendation acknowledges the importance of data-informed decision-making that participants valued in their own teaching improvement while providing evidence to justify continued institutional investment in comprehensive adjunct faculty development. Such assessment would also contribute to the broader literature on effective practices in adjunct faculty support, addressing the research gap identified in this study regarding longitudinal impacts of comprehensive development programs.

Explore Informal Learning Networks and Comparative Program Effectiveness. The strong evidence for community building and sustained peer relationships suggests need for research on informal learning networks among adjunct faculty. Future studies could examine how professional relationships formed through development programs continue to influence teaching practice and institutional engagement over time. From a methodological perspective, future research could leverage emerging approaches to qualitative data analysis. Morgan's (2025) query-based framework for using AI in qualitative research offers promising possibilities for analyzing large-scale portfolio data or conducting comparative analyses across multiple institutional contexts. Such approaches could enable researchers to examine patterns across larger datasets while maintaining the depth of interpretation that characterizes quality qualitative research. However, as Morgan emphasizes, human expertise must remain central to the analytical process, with AI tools serving as supportive mechanisms rather than autonomous analyzers.

Summary

These recommendations build directly on the findings from both the thematic analysis and the comparative pre-post impact, emphasizing that intentional, structured support can transform adjunct faculty experiences and outcomes. By tailoring actionable steps to the needs of administrators, faculty development coordinators, and researchers, institutions can foster a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable environment for adjunct faculty and the students they serve. The evidence from this study suggests that such investments can yield substantial returns through enhanced teaching effectiveness, stronger institutional community, and sustained commitment to excellence in education.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study provide a foundation for longitudinal research examining the long-term impact of comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs. Future research should track participants over multiple renewal cycles to assess sustained engagement and continued pedagogical growth. Portfolio analysis suggests rich data sources for such studies, with potential to examine teaching evolution, student outcome impacts, and institutional integration over time.

A promising direction for future inquiry involves comparative studies of different adjunct faculty development approaches. Examining variations in program design, delivery methods, and support structures across institutional contexts can help identify best practices and inform the evolution of faculty development models. The emergence of new conceptual frameworks for faculty work in the 21st century offers valuable lenses for such comparative research, enabling deeper understanding of how diverse institutional models support professional growth across appointment types (Culver, Kezar, & Koren, 2025).

Expanding the scope of future research to include demographic and disciplinary variables will further enrich the understanding of adjunct faculty development. Investigating whether there are meaningful differences in participation rates, completion, and outcomes based on gender can illuminate equity issues and inform targeted support strategies. National trends indicate that women and underrepresented minorities are disproportionately concentrated in adjunct roles, making it essential to explore how gender may influence access to professional development, experiences within cohort-based programs, and the sustainability of pedagogical change (Finkelstein et al., 2016).

Similarly, examining trends by primary discipline may reveal important patterns in program engagement and impact. Future studies should consider whether adjuncts from social sciences, technology, humanities, or other fields are more likely to participate or complete comprehensive development programs, and whether disciplinary context influences the experience or effectiveness of professional development. Understanding disciplinary representation can help institutions tailor outreach, support, and program design to better meet the needs of adjunct faculty across the academic spectrum. Comparative analysis across disciplines may also provide nuanced insights into how professional development programs can be adapted to maximize relevance and effectiveness for diverse faculty populations.

Another important avenue for future research involves the systematic analysis of course success data before and after adjunct faculty participate in comprehensive development programs. While the current study included portfolio reflections on student success, a more rigorous approach would involve collecting and analyzing quantitative data on course completion rates, grades, and student evaluations for courses taught by program participants. Comparing these metrics before and after program completion can provide evidence of the direct

impact of professional development on student outcomes. Such research could also explore whether improvements in course success are sustained over time and whether they differ by gender or discipline, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between adjunct faculty development and student achievement.

Investigating underrepresentation within adjunct faculty development programs is another critical area for future research. If certain disciplines or demographic groups are less likely to participate or complete these programs, it is important to understand the underlying causes. Structural barriers, such as scheduling conflicts or lack of targeted outreach, may disproportionately affect specific groups. Institutional policies may inadvertently limit access for adjuncts in particular fields or with certain backgrounds. Research in this area should not only identify patterns of underrepresentation but also seek to understand the reasons behind them, using qualitative interviews, focus groups, and surveys to explore adjunct faculty perceptions of program accessibility, relevance, and value. Findings can inform the development of more inclusive and equitable professional development initiatives, ensuring that all adjunct faculty have the opportunity to benefit from comprehensive support.

The strong evidence for community building and sustained peer relationships suggests the need for research on informal learning networks among adjunct faculty. Future studies could examine how professional relationships formed through development programs continue to influence teaching practice and institutional engagement over time. Longitudinal research can reveal whether the benefits of professional development programs are sustained, while comparative studies can identify contextual factors that influence program effectiveness. By incorporating variables such as gender, discipline, and course success data, these studies can

provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of how comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs contribute to individual, departmental, and institutional outcomes.

From a methodological perspective, future research may benefit from leveraging emerging approaches to qualitative data analysis. The integration of artificial intelligence and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software offers promising possibilities for analyzing large-scale portfolio data or conducting comparative analyses across multiple institutional contexts. These approaches can enable researchers to examine patterns across larger datasets while maintaining the depth of interpretation that characterizes quality qualitative research. However, human expertise must remain central to the analytical process, with AI tools serving as supportive mechanisms rather than autonomous analyzers (Morgan, 2025).

Future research may also continue to explore the application of constructivist learning theory and Communities of Practice frameworks to adjunct faculty development. Longitudinal and comparative studies grounded in these theories could illuminate how reflective practice, identity development, and belonging evolve within adjunct faculty communities. These theoretical perspectives provide valuable tools for examining how professional learning communities support sustained pedagogical change and how participation influences identity transformation and institutional integration over time.

In summary, expanding future research to include analysis of gender, primary discipline, trends in participation and completion, disciplinary representation, and course success data will deepen understanding of the impact and equity of adjunct faculty development programs. Integrating theoretical frameworks and methodological innovations will enable more comprehensive insights into the relationship between professional development, teaching effectiveness, and institutional culture. Collectively, these future research directions point toward

a broader, more holistic agenda that situates adjunct faculty development as a catalyst for both pedagogical transformation and institutional advancement across higher education.

Delimitations

This study focused specifically on adjunct faculty who had completed all components of the revised adjunct faculty development program at a single community college in Florida. The program comprised three distinct parts: The Academy (part 1), The Professoriate (part 2), and the Renewal Portfolio process. The deliberate choice to include only those who had completed all three components allowed for a comprehensive examination of the full program experience, from initial participation through sustained engagement.

Additionally, the study was further delimited to include only participants who completed the program after its revision in Fall 2018. This decision was intentional, as the revised program incorporated a project-based approach in part 2 (Professoriate) with a focus on high-impact practices, as well as the implementation of the reflective portfolio process for biannual renewal. The revised program structure represented a significant shift in design and delivery, warranting focused investigation separate from earlier iterations.

The study was also delimited to a specific timeframe, including only participants who completed the Professoriate component during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, or Fall 2019. This timeframe ensured that all participants had completed at least one renewal cycle at the time of the study, providing insights into the sustainability of changes beyond the initial program experience.

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the small sample size represents a notable limitation. Out of the eight adjunct professors

who met all inclusion criteria, only five ultimately participated in the study. This limited sample was a result of the program's recent revision and the specific requirement that participants had completed all three components, including at least one renewal cycle.

Attempts to include additional participants who had completed earlier versions of the program or who had not yet submitted renewal portfolios produced incompatible data that did not align with the study's focus. These potential participants lacked familiarity with key terminology (e.g., growth mindset, high-impact practices) that was central to the revised program and had not completed the project-based component that was fundamental to the current program design. As such, their experiences were not appropriate for inclusion in this particular study.

The single-site nature of the study also limits the generalizability of findings. While the results provide valuable insights about this specific program at one community college, the unique institutional context, departmental structures, and participant characteristics may limit direct application to other settings. The findings should be considered within this specific institutional context.

In addition, the study relied on participants' self-reported perceptions and experiences, which may be subject to recall bias, particularly when describing pre-program experiences and knowledge. While portfolio document analysis provided some triangulation, direct observation of teaching practices before and after program participation was not feasible within the study design.

The timing of data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic represents another limitation. Participants' experiences with the renewal process and their reflections on teaching were inevitably influenced by the rapid transition to online instruction and the unique challenges of this period. This context may have shaped participants' perceptions of institutional support,

pedagogical change, and community engagement in ways that might differ from typical circumstances.

Finally, the study focused exclusively on adjunct professors who successfully completed all program components, which may introduce selection bias. The experiences and perceptions of those who began but did not complete the program, or who chose not to participate at all, remain unexplored. Understanding the barriers that prevented their full participation could provide valuable additional insights about program accessibility and effectiveness.

Despite these limitations, the in-depth qualitative approach provided rich data about the experiences of those who fully engaged with the adjunct faculty development program, offering meaningful insights about the program's impact on community building, pedagogical change, and the supports and barriers affecting adjunct faculty engagement.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that comprehensive adjunct faculty development programs can successfully build community, facilitate sustained pedagogical change, and address barriers to professional growth when thoughtfully designed and implemented. The integration of interview and portfolio data provides compelling evidence that structured, sequential programming with ongoing accountability measures creates transformational learning experiences for adjunct faculty.

The findings show that effective adjunct faculty development requires attention to multiple interconnected factors: community building through structured interaction, pedagogical growth through reflective practice, and institutional support through coordinated efforts across departments and administrative levels. The portfolio analysis particularly highlighted the

pedagogical development possible through comprehensive programming and the importance of ongoing support for sustained growth.

Most significantly, this study provides evidence that adjunct faculty, given appropriate support and recognition, can develop into educators who contribute meaningfully to institutional goals and student success. The transformation visible in participants' teaching philosophies, reflective practices, and professional engagement challenges assumptions about adjunct faculty capabilities and suggests the potential for expanded roles and responsibilities.

The implications extend beyond individual faculty development to institutional effectiveness and student success. As community colleges continue to rely heavily on adjunct faculty, investing in comprehensive development programs represents a strategic approach to improving teaching quality, faculty retention, and student outcomes. The evidence from this study suggests that such investments can yield substantial returns through enhanced teaching effectiveness, stronger institutional community, and sustained commitment to excellence in education.

Future implementation of similar programs should attend to the interconnected nature of community building, pedagogical development, and institutional support while recognizing the importance of ongoing accountability and reflection in sustaining change over time. The portfolio analysis particularly emphasized the value of structured reflection and documentation in maintaining momentum for continuous improvement and professional growth.

As community colleges navigate the dual challenges of resource constraints and increasing student diversity, this study demonstrates that strategic investment in adjunct faculty development yields measurable returns. The five participants in this study represent not just individual success stories, but evidence of an institutional model that recognizes adjunct faculty

as partners in the educational mission rather than temporary labor. Their transformation from isolated content experts to connected, reflective educators' challenges deficit narratives about adjunct faculty while providing a roadmap for other institutions committed to educational excellence and equity.

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Appendix A:
Dissertation Interview Questions

Q1: What is your educational background, specifically the degrees that you hold in the disciplines of focus. (BIOGRAPHICAL)

PRE-PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS

Q2: Describe your level of involvement in professional development here at TCC before your involvement in adjunct programming?

Q3: Describe your involvement with teaching and learning activities or events at the college?

Q4: How would you describe your level involvement with the community of teaching colleagues at the College?

Q5: What barriers prevented you from taking part in professional development at the time, or teaching and learning activities at the college?

Q6: What enabled you, or encouraged you to take part in the professional development and teaching/learning activities during that time?

Q7: What would you describe as your level of knowledge or your level of understanding of teaching pedagogy or andragogy, or theories of learning?

Q8: Prior to your participation in the programming, how you would describe your knowledge or use of the following concepts using this scale:

0 – no awareness

1 – had heard the term

2 – had heard the term and made an attempt to use once

3 – know the concept and use at times

4 – understand the concept and use frequently

5 – understand the concept and integrate routinely in teaching

Q8a: Blooms taxonomy.

Q8b: Backwards Design

Q8c: Growth Mindset.

Q8d: Active learning concepts in the classroom

Q8e: Student Engagement concepts for the classroom.

Q8f: Technology tools in the classroom

Q8g: Campus and community resources

Q8h: Community of CARE. And that's the community that we refer to now for our students, which is communication, academics, resources and education.

Q8i: AACU's High Impact Practices.

POST-PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS

Q9: After completing the Adjunct Programming, what would you describe as your level of professional development at the college?

Q10: How would you describe your level of involvement with teaching and learning activities or events at the college?

Q11: What would you describe as your level of involvement with the community of teaching colleagues at the college, whether full time or other adjuncts; colleagues here at the college?

Q12: What barriers exist now that may inhibit you from taking part in professional development or teaching and learning activities?

Q13: What supports are in place that enable you to participate or encourage you to participate in professional development or teaching/learning activities at the college?

Q14: How would you describe your current level of knowledge or understanding of pedagogy or theories of learning?

Q15: What do you contribute any growth in your knowledge, behavior, or skills, as it relates to pedagogy from before you started the adjunct programming to now?

Q16: What barriers existed that inhibit you from changing your teaching style or approach in a particular course even though you may have wanted to?

Q17: What supports exist that enabled you or encouraged you to make changes to your teaching style or approach at the college?

Q18: Following your participation in the programming, how would you describe your knowledge/use of the following concepts currently.

0 – no awareness

1 – have heard the term

2 – have heard the term and made an attempt to use once

3 – know the concept and use at times

4 – understand the concept and use frequently

5 – understand the concept and integrate routinely in teaching

Q18a: Blooms taxonomy.

Q18b: Backwards Design

Q18c: Growth Mindset.

Q18d: Active Learning Concepts in the Classroom.

Q18e: Student Engagement Concepts in the Classroom

Q18f: Technology Tools in the Classroom.

Q18g: Campus and Community Resources for Students.

Q18h: Our Community of CARE

Q18i: AACU's High Impact Practices

PROGRAM DESIGN QUESTIONS

Q19: What aspects of the program made you feel more connected to the community of adjuncts and faculty at the college, if any?

Q20: How often do you collaborate with other faculty, or adjuncts and in what ways?

Q21: How did you learn concepts that were new as they were introduced throughout the adjunct program?

Q22: You went through each of those programs in a cohort with other adjuncts from across the college. How did the design of the members in the program impact your learning and your participation?

Q23: The program was led by a full-time faculty member who was the facilitator. How did that impact you throughout the program?

Q24: How does having the title, “Adjunct Professor,” impact your role at the college?

Q25: What insights, if any, did you gain through the reflections of practice in your renewal portfolio?

Q26: What type of professional development activities did you participate in during your renewal period? And why did you choose those particular activities?

Q27: What do you believe led to any sustained changes in your teaching methods?

Q28: If you could change anything about your experience in the program. What would it be? And why?

Q29: If you could identify one thing that made the biggest difference to you as an adjunct throughout your experience in the program, what would it be and why?

Q30: Is there anything that you would like to add that I might have missed that you would like to bring up related to the programming, or anything related to sustainability of changes in teaching practice, or the community of collegiality?

Q31: Each phase of the program offers a financial incentive to participate, whether it's a stipend for completion, the salary increase for completion or maintaining that salary increase with the portfolio. To what extent, if any, does the financial incentives contribute to your willingness to participate in the program, or to continue with the renewal to maintain the incentive?

Appendix B:
Interview Question to Research Question Matrix

Interview Question	RQ1: Community Building	RQ2: Pedagogical Change	RQ3: Supports and Barriers
Q1: Educational background and degrees		✓	
Q2: Level of involvement in professional development before adjunct programming	✓		✓
Q3: Involvement with teaching and learning activities or events at the college	✓	✓	
Q4: Level involvement with the community of teaching colleagues	✓		
Q5: Barriers preventing participation in professional development or teaching/learning activities			✓
Q6: Enablers/encouragement for participation in professional development and teaching/learning activities			✓
Q7: Level of knowledge/understanding of teaching pedagogy/andragogy or theories of learning		✓	
Q8a-i: Knowledge/use of specific teaching concepts before programming		✓	
Q9: Level of professional development after completing Adjunct Programming	✓	✓	
Q10: Level of involvement with teaching and learning activities/events post-programming	✓	✓	
Q11: Level of involvement with the community of teaching colleagues post-programming	✓		
Q12: Current barriers to participation in professional development or teaching/learning activities			✓
Q13: Current supports enabling/encouraging participation in professional development or teaching/learning activities			✓
Q14: Current level of knowledge/understanding of pedagogy or theories of learning		✓	
Q15: Factors contributing to growth in knowledge, behavior, or skills related to pedagogy		✓	✓
Q16: Barriers inhibiting changes to teaching style/approach		✓	✓
Q17: Supports enabling/encouraging changes to teaching style/approach		✓	✓
Q18a-i: Current knowledge/use of specific teaching concepts post-programming		✓	
Q19: Aspects of the program creating connection to community of adjuncts and faculty	✓		
Q20: Frequency and types of collaboration with other faculty/adjuncts	✓		
Q21: Learning process for new concepts introduced in the adjunct program		✓	

Q22: Impact of cohort design on learning and participation	✓	✓	
Q23: Impact of full-time faculty facilitator	✓	✓	✓
Q24: Impact of “Adjunct Professor” title on role at the college	✓		✓
Q25: Insights gained through reflections in renewal portfolio		✓	
Q26: Professional development activities during renewal period and reasons for choices		✓	✓
Q27: Factors leading to sustained changes in teaching methods		✓	✓
Q28: Desired changes to program experience	✓	✓	✓
Q29: Most impactful aspect of program experience	✓	✓	✓
Q30: Additional comments on programming, sustainability of changes, or community of collegiality	✓	✓	✓
Q31: Impact of financial incentives on participation and renewal			✓

Summary of Alignment

Research Question 1: Community Building

15 interview questions address aspects of community building among adjunct professors

Research Question 2: Pedagogical Change

22 interview questions address aspects of sustained pedagogical change

Research Question 3: Supports and Barriers

16 interview questions address program supports and barriers affecting involvement and commitment to change

Appendix C:
Institutional IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)
For the Protection of Human Research

Protocol Number: 04290-2022

Responsible Researcher(s): Summer Dusek

Supervising Faculty: Dr. Robert P. Yehl

Project Title: Adjunct Faculty Development: Building Community and Sustaining Pedagogical Change.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- Upon completion of the research study, all collected data (e.g. data set, name lists, email lists, payment log, etc.) must be securely maintained and accessible only by the researcher(s) for a minimum of 3 years. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.
- VSU's Participant Payment Log is subject to audit. The payment log must be up to date at all times. Participants must sign the log sheet upon receipt of the gift card. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, participant names and signatures on the log sheet must be covered, preventing accidental review of previous signatures/names.

- Exempt guidelines **permit** the recording of interviews for the purpose of creating a transcript. Recordings are to be permanently deleted from recording and storage devices immediately upon creating a transcript. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings.
- The research consent statement must be read aloud to participants at the start of each interview session and documented in the final transcript.

If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *05.04.2022*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix D:
Consent to Participate

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled “*Adjunct Faculty Development: Building Community and Sustaining Pedagogical Change.*” This research project is being conducted by Summer Dusek, a student in Public Administration at Valdosta State University. The purpose of this research is to examine and describe a two-part adjunct faculty community of practice training program and subsequent bi-annual renewal process at a community college in the southeastern United States in order to understand how the structure of the program builds community amongst adjunct professors and contributes to sustained pedagogical change over time. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

As described in more detail below, we will ask you to participate in an interview related to your involvement, perceptions, and experiences in the programs leading to adjunct professor status as well as the two-year portfolio renewal process. Someone in your position might be interested in participating because it will help us learn more about how a community of practice oriented professional development program can build a sense of community amongst adjunct faculty on campus and how the organization of the programming leads to sustaining pedagogical change over time. Because there may be some risks, you may not wish to participate. It is important for you to know that you can stop your participation at any time. More information about all aspects of this study is provided below.

This form includes detailed information to help you decide whether to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and ask any questions that you have before you agree to participate. Please be sure to retain a copy of this form for your records.

Procedures: Your participation will involve an in-person interview with Summer Dusek to answer questions and provide feedback based on your individual experiences with the adjunct faculty programming components of The Academy, The Professoriate, and the two-year portfolio renewal process. Your interview will be audio-recorded and notes taken to ensure all information is collected correctly. It is estimated that your participation in the initial interview will take 60 minutes. After all participants have completed their interview there may be a need to follow-up with additional interview questions that arose during the process to ensure that all necessary information is gathered from all participants. If a second, follow-up, interview is needed this should not exceed 30 minutes; total estimated time is expected to be 90 minutes for your involvement in this study. If you agree to participate, the researchers will also collect information related to your participation during The Academy and Professoriate programs, along with your submitted two-year renewal portfolio for review. These documents will be collected from the Center for Teaching and Learning at the institution.

Possible Risks or Discomfort: This is a minimal risk research study. That means that the risks of participating are no more likely or serious than those you encounter in everyday activities. Although there are no known risks associated with these research procedures, it is not always possible to identify all potential risks of participating in a research study. However, the University has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize potential but unknown risks.

By agreeing to participate in this research project, you are not waiving any rights that you may have against Valdosta State University for injury resulting from negligence of the University or its researchers.

Potential Benefits: Although you may not benefit directly from this research, your participation will help the researcher gain additional understanding of the connection a community of practice model of professional development has with adjunct faculty finding a sense of community within the institution. Knowledge gained may contribute to addressing how pedagogical changes can be sustained long term following adjunct faculty development programs that embed reflective practice over time.

Costs and Compensation: There are no costs to you for your participation in this research project as interviews may be held in person or via Zoom to reduce the need for travel. Participants will receive a \$50 Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for participation in the study.

Assurance of Confidentiality: Valdosta State University and the researcher will keep your information confidential to the extent allowed by law. Members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a university committee charged with reviewing research to ensure the rights and welfare of research participants, may be given access to your confidential information.

Information gathered will be stored in a database that will link information obtained from interviews (audio recordings and notes) and document reviews to each individual by a code number. Identifying information will be removed from stored documents and records to enhance anonymity. The database will be stored electronically in a password-protected location that only the researcher has access to. Data will be kept for three years after the completion of research and will be destroyed through deletion of electronic files at the end of this time.

Data from the study will be reported in combination with information obtained from other participants with no names included or other identifiable information included. The institution and name of the training programs will also be changed to further protect anonymity of participants.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate in this research project is entirely voluntary. If you agree now to participate and change your mind later, you are free to leave the study. Your decision not to participate at all or to stop participating at any time in the future will not have any effect on any rights you have or any services you are otherwise entitled to from Valdosta State University.

When participating in the interview, you may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you choose to withdraw your participation after data collection is complete, your information will be deleted from the database and will not be included in the research results.

Information Contacts: Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Summer Dusek at sswashington@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

Agreement to Participate: The research project and my role in it have been explained to me, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, I am indicating that I am 18 years of age or older. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I would like to receive a copy of the results of this study: Yes No

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

This research project has been approved

_____ by the Valdosta State University Institutional

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

December 15, 2024