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FACULTY MEMBER INFLUENCE ON STUDENT SUCCESS

by

David R. Schiess

A dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

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To the Graduate Faculty:

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Faculty Member Influence On Student Success
Dissertation Abstract – Idaho State University (2018)

There are many community colleges and Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in the United States of America. Even though these schools educate millions of students, little research has been conducted on this particular demographic. This study sought to identify how students enrolled in CTE programs perceived faculty influence on student success. The study was a qualitative analysis of three CTE programs at a community college in the intermountain west. Data was obtained through observations and interviews. The data was coded and analyzed in hopes of identifying specific actions teachers can take to help students succeed. These findings may assist students, faculty, administrators, and funding agencies improve student success.

The results suggest that students who are successful in CTE programs often credit factors outside the influence of faculty and the institution. Family and peer support was often cited as the primary reason for students' persistence. Others talked about their goals and the need for employment. These factors cannot be controlled by the university and as such were not the focus of this study.

Students indicated they rely on family, faculty, peers, and goals to graduate. Students expect faculty to be passionate, positive, and experts in their profession. They see faculty as an integral part of the program. Students rely on faculty to guide and direct them as they seek to pass certification and licensure exams, to graduate, and find employment in their selected career.

Key Words: student success, retention, faculty influence, CTE programs, family

Chapter 1 Introduction

In the 2011-2012 school year, more than eight million students enrolled in postsecondary Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in the United States of America (USA) (United States Department of Education, 2014). Although there are many students enrolled in CTE programs, very little research has been conducted on CTE programs generally and the influence of faculty on student success specifically. Because of the limited research and literature available on CTE programs, literature on community colleges in general was included. The literature shows that students and faculty in CTE settings face unique challenges.

The primary goal of CTE programs is to help students improve their life by developing technical skills, learning basic skills such as math and English, and obtaining a degree or certificate (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Dortch, 2014; Hirschy, Bremer, & Casstellano, 2011). This achievement sets graduates apart and may give them an advantage in obtaining and retaining employment. Obtaining a degree or certificate is often a difficult task for community college students. Almost one-half of the students who begin their education at a community college do not finish or complete the requirements to obtain a certificate or degree (Barefoot, 2004; Kena et al., 2016). There are many reasons students do not complete or achieve their educational goals.

Faculty members' skill and knowledge powerfully influence student learning (Barefoot, 2004; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Klem & Connell, 2004; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006; Seidman, 1985; Townsend & Twombly, 2007) and for many community college students the only contact with the college is in the classroom. Even so, there is little research on how teachers influence a student in the community college arena (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). This may be because, like the students, community college faculty are a diverse group. Many community college faculty members are part-time and generally do not have offices on campus, regular office hours,

and only come on campus to teach a specific class or group of classes (Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2004). As a result, students often feel a lack of support from faculty. This disconnect can lead to frustration for students as they navigate coursework at community colleges.

Even so, there are skills and methods that faculty members use in the classroom that may influence student success and can help to ameliorate the problems a community college may face. Faculty members who learn about innovative classroom techniques and other classroom best practices may improve student success (Brock et al., 2007). For example, students often need a mentor or someone who can give them direction and encouragement. Faculty who take time to get to know their students and develop relationships with them are often able to make a difference in their success. If characteristics and methods of faculty that promote student success could be identified, more students may be successful as they make their way through CTE programs.

Statement of Problem

Student success is the ultimate goal of higher education. Yet, the number of students who complete a degree or earn a certificate is less than one-half of those who begin (Kena et al., 2014; Dortch, 2014; Hirschy, 2011; USDOE, 2014). This is a serious problem for administration, state and local governments, communities, parents, and students (Barefoot, 2004; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). If contributors to student success could be identified and strengthened, valuable government resources of time and money could be better allocated and utilized, communities may have a more qualified workforce, and students may be better able to achieve their goals and meet their financial obligations.

There are many factors that influence student success at community colleges. Most studies of student success focus on student characteristics and external environments. As higher

education moves forward with a goal to educate the masses, community colleges will continue to play an important role. It is important that these colleges be efficient and effective if they are to serve their purpose. For this reason, research needs to be conducted on how students perceive the influence of CTE faculty and what characteristics students identify in CTE faculty as important to their success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to research the influence faculty members have on student success. It was the intent of this study to:

1. Identify faculty characteristics, qualities, actions, methods, and means that might increase or decrease student success.
2. Discover student perceptions of the impact faculty members have on student success.

The following research questions were selected as a starting point for the research.

1. In what ways do CTE faculty members influence student success?
2. How do students who persist in CTE programs perceive faculty members influence student success?

This research will add to the limited research and has the “potential to move us forward in developing much needed theories of change based on practice and the central role of higher education practitioners.” (Benismon, 2007, p. 464). The purpose of this qualitative study was to extend and expand on the existing literature and will hopefully lead to more research on this important topic.

Definition of Terms

Student success has many definitions including accomplishments such as completing remedial, developmental, or gatekeeper courses; completing educational goals; completing college level courses with a grade of C or higher; transfer; continuous reenrollment; and earning a certificate or degree (Brock et al., 2007; Hirschy et al., 2011). Some argue that completing courses is success if that was the goal of the student. Others disagree and suggest student success be measured by persistence, transfer to an accredited 4-year granting university, or obtaining a degree or certificate (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Perna, 2010). For this study, the definition of student success will be completing a program and obtaining a degree, license, or certificate.

Community college students are a diverse group of individuals who attend college for many reasons. The group includes a higher percentage of non-traditional, minority, and low-income students than those who typically enroll at 4-year colleges (Goldrick-Rab, 2017; Dortch, 2014; Hirschey, 2011). The student population at community colleges typically reflects the local population surrounding the community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). There appears to be no way to generalize community college students other than to agree that community college students are a heterogeneous group of learners with diverse backgrounds, ages, goals, and reasons for attending (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). For the purposes of this study, a community college student is an individual who enrolls in CTE classes with goals or educational intention.

Learning communities are a popular strategy that places students in common classes sequences. The theory behind learning communities is that they give students a chance to form deep relationships with each other. As they do they engage deeply with the program and the

faculty in a way that results in an additional support structure, increasing the likelihood of graduation with a credential.

Community colleges are typically identified as teaching colleges. Some refer to them as stepping stones to transfer to a 4-year college or university. Many community colleges are vocational in nature and offer a variety of terminal CTE programs. Most provide non-credit continuing education for local residents and offer two-year degrees, licenses, and certificates applicable in local area industries, local higher education preferences, local businesses, and the local manufacturing community. Typically, they offer few bachelor's degrees or graduate programs. CTE colleges typically prepare students for specific occupations or careers by teaching relevant knowledge and skills through terminal programs. Because of the limited literature, research for this study included community college and CTE literature. The terms community college and CTE program are used interchangeably in this work.

Community college faculty are unique in makeup, training, education, vision of education, commitment, and understanding of student success. Many are professionals or experts who are willing to help by teaching part time at a local community college. Many perceive themselves as professionals, business owners, researchers, and community activists who are providing service or giving back. They are typically not unified or organized as a group.

According to the most recent IPEDS data, there were over 350,000 faculty members at public 2-year institutions in the US, 68% of whom were part-time, a statistic that has been relatively stable throughout the 21st century (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017a; Barefoot, 2004; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Kena et al., 2016). For part-time faculty members, their primary income may come from other sources and their need or desire to make a career of teaching is inconsistent. Full-time CTE faculty are typically the exception. CTE faculty typically have nine

to eleven month annual contracts and often do not hold other part time jobs (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006; Wagoner, 2007). Faculty member, instructor, professor, teacher, or class activity leader is the title for the individual who guides the students, provides instruction, creates learning activities, and gives a grade at the end of the class.

Limitations and Delimitations

This research was limited to students and faculty members who participated in this study by consenting to an interview by the researcher. Since this research was limited to programs at a CTE college in the intermountain west, it may not be generalized to other CTE colleges around the nation. Other researchers, community colleges, CTE programs, and higher education institutions may use the results as a general baseline for understating how students perceived faculty members influence student success. Due to the small sample size, future research should be conducted to expand the list of faculty member characteristics and actions that have both a positive and negative influence on student success in various types of CTE programs and community college settings. The responses from students and faculty in this study should be similar to most interview research. The researcher had limited control over the responses given by those interviewed.

The sample size was limited geographically to a CTE college in the intermountain west. The sample size was limited to three programs and contained interviews with approximately six students and two instructors from each program. The students interviewed were in the last year of their two to three-year program. The researcher observed classroom instruction or labs for three to four hours in each program.

Assumptions

One of the programs selected was predominantly populated by females and two of the programs were predominantly male. It was assumed that a participant's gender would not significantly affect the reliability or validity of the data collected. Based on other studies and the number of students in each program, it was assumed that a research pool of six students and two faculty would be an acceptable representation of the programs studied. It was also assumed the study of three programs would represent the CTE college as a whole.

The research questions were carefully selected to avoid leading questions that would possibly encourage students to answer in a certain manner. It was assumed the interviewing was unbiased. It was also assumed that participants answered interview questions honestly and to the best of their abilities. Students were interviewed under the assumption they would finish the program of study they were enrolled in. In order to make this more likely, only students in the last year of their program were interviewed.

Significance of Study

Student success is a concern at community colleges in the USA. The purpose for doing a qualitative study was to research how students perceived faculty influence their success and identify faculty's characteristics and methods students recognized that were important to their success. The results of the research may be helpful in identifying characteristics and methods that are effective and encourage change where needed. The stakeholders whom may be influenced by this study are students, faculty, college administrators, and funding agencies.

Students who enroll in higher education are looking for ways to improve their lives and the lives of their families. If applicable characteristics of faculty and methods and means used by faculty were improved, it may help more students complete their goals. Generally, CTE faculty

are interested in helping students meet their goals and ultimately graduate, yet may lack valuable skills in facilitating student success. Identifying characteristics of faculty that students find most helpful may assist faculty in several ways. One way is in classroom instruction. Faculty that know and understand what works best for students in the classroom can adapt new teaching techniques. Another way faculty could benefit, is in the way they interact with students. Improving the relationships faculty have with their students may improve student success.

Administrators may benefit from this research by adapting the recommendations in training, hiring and rewarding faculty whose behaviors promote high levels of student success. If administrators could identify what faculty were doing to improve student success, they could teach those skills in professional development seminars and in-house training. Administrators may also evaluate faculty based on criteria that improves student success. Through evaluations, they may encourage faculty to improve their personal characteristics and methods of interacting with students. Another way this study may help administrators is in hiring. Hiring faculty with characteristics that positively help students is important for student success. Administrators may alter the way programs and classes are offered after a study of student success. Some decisions about class schedules may seem inconsequential; however, they may make a difference on student success.

State legislatures and others who determine funding may be interested in this research as well. Funds are limited and need to be utilized as efficiently as possible. Funding agencies may be able to use the indicators discovered in this study in making decisions about where to allocate funds. One of the goals of funding agencies is to increase student success and graduation. Programs and institutions that graduate more students show a better use of money which is a good thing for all stakeholders.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

This research was conducted in CTE programs in a community college with the intent to (a) Identify faculty characteristics, qualities, actions, methods, and means that might increase or decrease student success; (b) Discover student perceptions of the impact faculty members have on student success. Since more than one third of the students who choose higher education in the United States of America (USA) choose community colleges, it is important to understand how community college faculty members influence these students (Ginder et al., 2017a; Kena et al., 2014; Dortch, 2014; Hirschy, 2011, USDOE, 2014).

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify literature related to student success. There is abundant literature available for 4-year college student success, but less literature specifically directed toward CTE or community college faculty members and student success. The literature will be presented in the following order: community colleges, community college students, student success, community college faculty, and faculty member influence on students.

Related Research Studies

Several pertinent dissertations and scholarly articles were identified while studying student success in CTE programs at community colleges. Three in particular were helpful as research questions, preliminary codes and a data acquisition method were developed; however, none studied the same demographic as this study. The dissertation by Wood and Turner (2010) specifically studied black males. Barefoot (2004) studied student dropouts in colleges and universities. Hirschy et al., (2011) attempted to develop a conceptual model for CTE student success at CTE colleges.

Community College

There are approximately 2000 community colleges in the USA (Ginder, Kelly-Reid & Mann, 2017b; Kena et al., 2016). Community colleges often provide education close to home, which encourages more students to attempt higher education. Each community college is different based on governing boards, mission, financial support, role in the community, size, location, students, faculty members, and political climate. Knowing the history of community colleges may be helpful in understanding why there is such diversity and controversy in the mission and purpose of community colleges.

The oldest community college in the nation is Joliet Junior College located close to Chicago. In 1901, the first year it opened, Joliet Junior College had six students enrolled in arts and sciences and 25 enrolled in a course for training elementary teachers (Bulger & Salvador, 2015). Since 1901, community colleges have greatly increased in number, location, and students. Community colleges and technical institutes have become important institutions in the educational landscape, and they play several unusual roles in postsecondary education (Grubb, 1999).

Community college can mean different things to different people. Cohen and Brawer (2008) state:

During the 1950s and 1960s, the term junior college was applied more often to the lower-division branches of private universities and to two-year colleges supported by churches or organized independently, while community college came gradually to be used for comprehensive, publically supported institutions. By the 1970s, community college was usually applied to both types. (p. 4)

There is often disagreement as to the purpose, mission, and role of community colleges in higher education; however, Cohen and Brawer found that most state legislation includes five functions of a community college: academic transfer, vocational-technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and community service.

Community colleges often provide the first two years of a university education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). This collegiate function has been a common function for community colleges over the last 100 years. The vocational-technical function of community colleges has also been active since the earliest days of community colleges and the terms terminal, vocational, technical, semi- professional, occupational, and career have been used interchangeably or in combination to define vocational education in the USA (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The most recent name used for vocational education is Career Technical Education (CTE). Community colleges are the primary institutions offering licensure and certification in many occupations and at the same time helping students develop soft skills such as critical thinking and problem solving (Hirschy et al., 2011). Many community colleges also offer community education which may not provide college credit or count toward a degree granting program. These classes are for personal enrichment and typically charge a small fee to cover supplies and instruction.

Developmental education also known as remedial, compensatory, preparatory, or basic skills has always been part of the community college offerings (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Many students who attend community college participate in some form of remedial education or supplemental education. In fact, CTE programs often have remedial classes built into the curriculum (Dortch, 2014; Hirschy et al., 2011). This remedial education or supplemental education is the first step in preparing students for college level learning and is a stepping-stone to college level learning. “Community colleges continue to stand at the crossroads of social and

educational mobility in American society” (Shaw & London, 2001, p. 111). However, not everyone agrees where the crossroads of community colleges should take students.

The lines between vocational and collegiate education are blurry, as more and more students transfer from community college programs to academic programs. (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

For many decades, the term transfer in the context of community colleges has referred almost exclusively to upward transfer to a 4-year institution. It is only recently that students varied and swirling patterns of transfer between colleges have begun to receive intensive empirical attention (Bahr, 2009, p. 292).

Due to the open enrollment nature of community colleges, it is easy for students to take courses at many institutions. In fact, students often attend a variety of institutions at the same time (Bahr, 2009.)

If students decide to transfer to a university they may encounter problems because approaches to learning and academic classes vary greatly among community colleges. Currently, classes taken from accredited community colleges or CTE programs are not considered equal to accredited degree granting 4-year higher education classes in the USA. This reality has created a division among 4-year universities and community colleges. Many see community college education as substandard to an accredited 4-year university education. Community colleges exist as contested terrain in the education landscape (Shaw and London, 2001). This contested terrain may cause extra work and hardships for students who attend community colleges with plans to transfer.

The risk of taking classes at community colleges that do not transfer to a 4-year college is real and is a continuous threat to student success at community colleges. The concern of

transferability may cause some students to not consider a community college as part of their educational pursuits and thus give up on pursuing higher education altogether. While there are concerns, community colleges and CTE programs are widely supported and promoted to meet the needs of many local students. Their services can help many achieve their educational goals.

Community College Students

Community college students are a diverse group of individuals who attend college for many reasons. The literature revealed they typically have specific characteristics. They include: low income, minority, weak educational backgrounds, undefined educational goals, and desire for a specific career. Students may fall into one of these categories or several categories.

Studies show that approximately 25 percent of community college students come from families whose earning is considered poverty level (Horn & Neville, 2006; Kena et al., 2016). Because so many students come from low-income families, many students work while attending college. Almost two-thirds of community college students nationally enroll on a part-time basis and eighty-four percent of community college students indicate they do not participate in college-sponsored extracurricular activities (Kena et al., 2016; McClenney, 2007). Many students do not have time to participate in extracurricular activities because of work and family obligations. CTE students are unique because they tend to be older than a typical community college student and are lower income than students seeking bachelor's degrees (Dortch, 2011).

Community colleges have the most diverse group of students based on race and ethnicity. Thirty to fifty percent of community college students report themselves as Hispanic or Black. In addition, approximately 13,000 undocumented international students begin community colleges each year in the USA (Ginder et al. 2017b; Horn & Neville, 2006; Kena et al., 2016). There were also 87,997 documented international students studying at community colleges in the 2010-2011

academic year (Bulger and Salvador, 2015). Students of different ethnic origins often have more challenges than the typical student due to language barriers, cultural differences, and varying levels of preparedness.

“The open access mandate for community colleges results in a diversified student body entering the system with varying levels of academic preparation” (Rabito, Hoffman & Person, 2015, p. 10). “Community college students range in academic ability and preparation from high school dropouts to high school valedictorians” (Townsend & Twombly, 2007, p. 35). The low levels of academic preparation are manifest in the high percentage of entering freshmen who need remedial, supplemental, or developmental courses. Because of open-access policies, low-cost tuition, many curricular options, small class sizes, and expanding support services; community colleges are an excellent choice for students with a weak educational background (Barefoot, 2004; Bulger & Salvador, 2015; Christensen, Aaron, & Clark, 2001). Karp, Hughes and O’Gara (2008) agree:

For many students, community colleges are the primary means of entry into the higher education system. Because of their convenient locations, open-access admissions policies, and relatively low costs, community colleges tend to enroll students who are more academically, economically, and socially disadvantaged than do other postsecondary institutions. (p. 2)

Some community college students “attend community college to ‘try out’ college, develop proficiency in a specific subject area, or improve their academic resume to pursue more substantial careers” (Christensen et al., 2011, p. 34). In this way, students in CTE programs are often different from typical community college students. (Hirschy et al., 2011). Students in CTE programs often seek out direct links to their intended career field and end up in CTE programs at

community colleges. These students typically have clear career intentions and career integration prior to starting the college program (Hirschy, 2011). They are not trying out college; they enter a specific program with a specific career goal in mind.

Although CTE students often have clear career goals, they may face similar challenges to other community college students. Often, they attend “because their needs are lower, or they desire a less expensive, more convenient alternative” to the 4-year university (Christensen et al., 2011, p. 34) It seems the challenges that community college students face have existed for many years. In Tinto’s 1975 study, he also found that students enter college with many of the same characteristics found today such as family background, ability, race, gender and pre-college achievement (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000). Community college students generally continue to be a multitasking group, juggling their studies with work and family, who often bring with them an array of family, academic, and other challenges (McClenney, 2007).

It is clear that many community college students struggle to meet the multiple demands of their individual circumstances (Perna, 2010). Progress through community college is generally slow (Goldrick-Rab, 2017). The average time between enrollment and graduation from a community college with an associate’s degree was three and a half years (Becker, Horn, Clune, & Carroll, 2000). Studies that were reviewed had different statistics for the amount of time required for graduation. One reason for this was that not everyone agrees on the definition of student success. Some studies excluded students who did not intend to earn a degree and others included students who transferred to other institutions in their statistics. Cox (2009) concludes that for every 100 students who begin community college with the intention of earning a degree, 31 complete an associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree within six years. Another study reported that 45 percent of community college students earn a certificate or degree or transfer to a four-

year institution in the first six years (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2006). Community college students may need more time to complete because of the unique challenges they face. After three years, just sixteen percent of first-time community college students who began college in 2003 had attained any credential and another 40 percent were still enrolled. When students were given six years to complete, completion rates were better, 36 percent after six years with almost 20 percent still enrolled (Goldrick-Rab, 2017).

Still, statistics do not tell the whole story for these students. Many students enroll in a community college with no plans to complete a degree. Lounsbury, Saudargas, and Gibson (2004) examined the big five personality traits of agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and openness in relation to a student's intent to withdraw. They concluded that personality traits are significantly related to intent to withdraw from college and suggest personality traits may be better indicators of potential non-completers than other environmental factors. The efforts to change the learning environment and increase student faculty interactions may not alter results for these students because the intent to withdraw is already in motion when the student enrolls in community college classes.

Self-concept and Emotional Intelligence

Some research explores how self-concept and emotional intelligence influence student success. Self-concept is defined as how a person thinks about himself in different areas of life (Woodside, Wong, & Wiest, 1999). Some researchers found the quality of students' thoughts could potentially determine their academic achievement (Komarraju et al., 2011). A positive self-concept may help community college students succeed at a higher rate than those with a low self-concept.

Another characteristic that may impact student success is emotional intelligence. Strengthening emotional intelligence in some students may contribute to their academic adaptation and academic performance (Hen & Goroshit, 2012). Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, (2004) found:

Academic success was strongly associated with several dimensions of emotional intelligence (intrapersonal, adaptability, and stress management abilities) assessed at the start of the academic year. Collectively, these variables were found to be strong predictors in identifying both academically successful (82 percent of successful students were identified) and unsuccessful (91 percent of unsuccessful student were correctly identified) first-year students. (p. 169)

Some parts of emotional intelligence can be taught to students, which may increase student success (Walsh-Portillo, 2011). If faculty members are aware of a student's self-concept, personality traits, and emotional intelligence they could possibly positively influence a student to complete or change their educational goals, which could result in higher levels of student success.

Student Success

Because of the varied missions and educational goals of students at community colleges, one common definition for student success is difficult to achieve. Definitions of student success often include accomplishments such as completing remedial courses, developmental courses, gatekeeper courses, or college level courses with a grade of C or higher; transfer; continuous reenrollment; meeting individual goals; and earning a certificate, license, or degree (Brock et al., 2007; Hirschy et al., 2011). These definitions are measurable; however, other indicators of student success suggested are not as measurable. Braxton (2006) suggested eight indicators of

student success: Academic attainment, acquisition of general education, development of academic competence, development of cognitive skill and intellectual dispositions, occupational attainment, preparation for adulthood and citizenship, personal accomplishments, and personal development. It is clear from the literature that not everyone can agree upon the definition of student success.

Many community college students never intend to transfer or obtain a certificate or degree at the community college, yet meet their personal educational goals. This group is different from students who do not persist because their intentions were different when they enrolled. Some students enroll in community college classes to develop specific skills or obtain knowledge for personal use (Moore & Shulock, 2009). These students may only enroll in a few classes with no intention to earn a certificate or degree. Yet, many would argue for this group of students, success includes student learning and workforce outcomes (Mullin, 2015). Ireland (2015) agrees that students who move up to a better paying job or attain higher paying and more stable employment as a result of skill training should be defined as student success. There are many who believe that for career and technical education students success should refer to the degree to which students meet their educational goals (Bailey, 2005; Dortch, 2014; and Hirschy et al., 2011).

However, others believe that completion of a degree, a certificate, licensure, or transfer are commonly accepted as success in community college circles (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Mullin, 2012). Included in this definition is another unique group of community college students. These students plan to transfer. Nearly 60 percent of traditional-age students attend more than one institution before the completion of college (Adelman, 2006). If a student has no intent to

graduate from a community college or plans to transfer after the first year, those students may be an indicator of student success since the student's goals are met (Bers & Smith, 1991).

Persistence and retention are words that are used to measure student success. Though, “the words ‘persistence’ and ‘retention’ are often used interchangeably, the National Center for Education Statistics differentiates the terms by using ‘retention’ as the institutional measure and ‘persistence’ as the student measure” (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 6). In other words, institutions retain and students persist (Kena et al., 2016). “Single measures of retention do not tell the whole story of student persistence. To understand an institution's rate of student success, multiple indicators should be [used]” (Hagedorn, 2006, p. 18). Regardless of what indicators are used to measure persistence and retention; however, degree completion is the true bottom line for college administrators, parents, legislators, and students, not retention, or persistence without a degree (Adelman, 1999). The challenge facing “all community colleges is how to increase student success, whether success is defined in terms of graduating with a degree or certificate, transfer, or retaining a job” (Nitecki, 2011, p. 98).

So, what can be done to increase student success? Barbatis (2010) concludes that “failure to connect with others on campus, including peers, student organizations, faculty, and staff, contributes more to voluntary withdrawal than almost any other factor” (p. 22). In community colleges, many students do not feel connected to the university. Often, students at community colleges develop their information networks within the classroom through student-centered pedagogies (Karp, Hughes, & O’Gara, 2008). In CTE programs and community colleges the connections that are made in the classroom matter. Often, “course activities that emphasize collaborative learning among peers lead to the development of networks of peer support which

connect students with the broader social communities of a college” (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000, p. 216).

The importance of peer support can be seen in CTE programs. CTE students in certificate programs were more likely to obtain certificates than were CTE students who were in associate degree programs (USDOE, 2011). It seems the greater graduation rate results from the CTE program requirements related to start dates, sequencing of classes, and engagement with faculty and peers. These connections promote integration and engagement, which results in persistence. Persistence often results in students completing a degree or certificate (USDOE, 2011).

The sequencing of classes and continuous enrollment or momentum, which is common in many CTE programs, is a positive precursor for completion. The word momentum in the community college setting refers to students’ course taking patterns and academic progress (Paulson, 2017). Paulson refers to Adelman (1999) who adopted the term momentum to imply the forward impetus toward completing a bachelor’s degree. He summarized the three main approaches to define academic momentum as intensity-based, milestone-based, and pattern-based. The intensity based approach deals with the number of credits carried, milestone based deals with completion of foundational and gateway courses or finishing a series of program courses. The pattern based approach views a series of courses that build upon each other (Paulson, 2017).

Academic momentum, “suggests the speed with which [students] progress toward completion significantly affects the likelihood of completing a degree” (Attewell, Heil, & Reisel, 2017, p. 39). Momentum is important to student success, because those who procrastinate may have a hard time persisting until completion. Procrastination has been seen as a major impediment to student success. Stop out is similar to procrastination and can be defined as a

pause in enrollment. There are many reasons why community college students take a pause in enrollment. Similar to procrastination, they may stop out for family issues, job issues, health issues, or when intermediate goals have been achieved. Stop out or procrastination may be more common for community college students than for 4-year university students, but does not necessarily prohibit student success (Hen & Goroshit, 2014).

A student's culture can also have an impact on student success. Students from different cultures often have unique challenges, which may require using different methods to help them succeed. For Hispanic/Latino students, community college faculty members and counselors must take a more direct approach by purposefully reaching out to the students to have a more positive effect on student success and intent to persist (Tovar, 2015). While studying black male students, Wood and Turner (2011) found, that being friendly, checking often on student progress, listening, and encouraging students to succeed will greatly increase overall student success. Students from Southeast Asia struggle with the same issues that challenge students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Wagoner and Lin, 2010).

Whether students are international or from the United States, they often enter community colleges without the skills necessary to succeed. "Community colleges admit students who are unprepared for what awaits them. Therefore, in the words of sociologist Burton Clark, 'while some students of low promise are successful, for large numbers failure is inevitable'" (Cox, 2009, p. 53). Because there are so many students who are underprepared institutional programs intended to provide early support for students are associated with better student completion (Moore & Shulock, 2009). Many CTE programs and community colleges provide remedial classes. Studies have shown that participation in supplemental instruction is a "positive predictor of both final course grade and final cumulative GPA" (Rabito, Hoffman, & Person, 2015, p.

10). Some students will benefit more from supplemental instruction than others. Rabitoy et al. found differential impact of supplemental instruction for students based on gender and ethnicity and concluded that females and students of color benefited most from supplemental instruction.

The literature clearly shows that many students come to community colleges underprepared for college level coursework and require supplemental coursework to attain the entry level skills required at most colleges. Community college students who complete these gateway courses, especially math courses, were more likely to transfer and complete degrees than other students (Moore & Shulock, 2009). Many students attend community colleges and CTE programs to be trained in vocational skills and any attempt to share central questions, issues, and values of a subject is met with resistance because this type of student wants to learn with their hands (Seidman, 1985). Understanding the challenges and difficulties community college students face could help institutions and faculty members adjust pedagogy to increase learning and facilitate increased student success.

Community College Faculty

There more than 350,000 community college faculty members in the USA (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017a). Community college faculty members are typically involved in their communities, and institutions. Some also conduct research. Most are involved in some kind of faculty development activity, but teaching at a community college is not what they regard as their profession (Fugate & Amey, 2000). Townsend and Twombly, (2007) describe community college faculty as those:

whose numbers are dominated by part-time or adjunct members, even though the majority of courses...are taught by full-time faculty members. The community college faculty as a whole is about half female and half-male...Faculty members of color...are

not represented in numbers proportionate to the percentage of minority students in community college. In the aggregate, two-year college faculty members are middle-aged, with a substantial percentage advancing to retirement age in the next few years (p. 30).

Approximately two thirds of community college faculty members are adjunct, yet they teach only about one-third of the community courses taught (Twombly & Townsend, 2007).

The number of part time faculty teaching at individual community colleges depends on the community college, its mission, vision, finances, and goals. The traditional use of part time faculty could be used to enhance the quality and reputation of a school. However, sometimes they are hired for different reasons. “Part time faculty have become a permanent part of the community college culture because they offer flexibility” and capital savings (Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2006, p. 42).

It is important for administrators to evaluate part time faculty to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the students. Bettinger and Lang (2010) found that older adjunct or part-time faculty members had a positive effect on student enrollment patterns in education, engineering, and possibly science. However, Jacoby (2006) showed, “Community college graduation rates decrease as the proportion of part-time faculty employed increases” (p. 185). Because of the controversy, “leaders should evaluate their own campuses and determine if... efficiency has eclipsed human achievement and worth” (Wagoner et al., p. 42). Based on the literature, the use of part time faculty members at community colleges is a controversial subject and adds to the disjointed and varied missions of CTE programs and community colleges in the USA.

One of the draws for professionals to consider adjunct teaching is often the only requirement is teaching. Many adjunct faculty have no office, are not provided a phone, and are

not required to meet with students outside of class. This is a desirable situation for some adjunct faculty members since they have other responsibilities to take care of outside of teaching and do not necessarily want to meet with students outside of the scheduled class time. Although many part-time faculty appreciate limited responsibility, the literature shows it may not be in the best interest of the students. Since students tend to be more successful when they have access to their professors outside of class time, administrations should find ways to “encourage part-timers to make time for students outside of class and should look at providing office space, training, and additional pay for office hours to increase the value and effectiveness of part-time faculty members” (Egan & Jaeger, 2008, p.185; Wagoner & Lin, 2010).

Community college faculty members follow diverse career paths, yet most saw their primary role as teachers (Fugate & Amey, 2000). Community college faculty are typically “committed to teaching and [see] that educating students is very important” (Outcalt, 2002, p. 54). When describing community college faculty Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) said:

Teaching remains at the core of the work and identity of community college faculty, both full-time and adjunct. We suggest that teaching be regarded as a craft... Through teaching, faculty display characteristics of craftsmanship via the scholarship of knowledge. Community college faculty, both full-time and adjuncts, define their work by the integration of discipline-specific knowledge with education and training, with the development of courses and facilitation of learning. Intellectual scholarship is evidence of the craftsmanship of the profession (p. 146).

For most community college and CTE faculty, teaching is their primary responsibility. By comparison, four-year college faculty members were often less committed to teaching and educating students (Outcalt, 2002).

The work of teachers is a craft and many teachers share their knowledge because they intend to make a difference in the lives of students. It is difficult to put a monetary value on the work of teachers. The average full-time community college nine or ten-month contract had a salary of \$80,200 (Kena et al., 2016). Female faculty at community colleges receive similar rates of compensation when compared to men (Lester and Bers, 2010). However, part time or adjunct female faculty members earned more than part-time or adjunct male faculty members did (Perna, 2003).

Most often in higher education faculty are rewarded for advanced degrees through greater compensation. Although this happens in most higher education applications, it is discouraging that educational attainment and experience were sometimes seen as determinants for employment at community colleges (Perna, 2003). The doctorate might simultaneously offer the possibility of greater status and of scorn. Earning a PhD is not a good preparation for community college faculty members who will spend their days working with freshmen and sophomores. “The literature is replete with the notion that because community colleges are teaching institutions, they are not appropriate places for too many people with doctorates” (Seidman, 1985, p. 257).

Due the diversity of schedules and responsibilities among faculty, collegiality among community college faculty members is sometimes overlooked. Collegiality is defined as:

opportunities for faculty members to feel that they belong to a mutually respectful community of scholars who value each faculty member’s contributions to the institution and feel concern for their colleagues’ well-being. When people feel that they are included in this community in explicit, implicit, and symbolic ways, they feel that they are

respected, that they belong, and that they have sufficient status (Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007, p. 305).

In the community college setting, it is often difficult for faculty to spend time together. Without spending time together few relationships are developed, contacts made, or commonalities identified.

Community college faculty members are not easily defined as a group because of their great diversity. They differ in age, gender, ethnic group, and education. In addition, many faculty are part-time and have responsibilities outside of the community. These challenges make it difficult for faculty to have collegiality. In spite of the difficulties, the role of teaching at a community college appears to be more than a job or position; it is often perceived by the faculty members themselves as a calling.

Faculty Members' Influence on Students

It is important to understand that students who withdraw from CTE programs and community colleges do so for many reasons, some of which are outside the ability of the institution or teacher to influence. However, studies show that faculty member influence may be one of the most important influences on students in community colleges (Barefoot, 2004). There is an observable positive correlation between student success and the quality of faculty members. "Faculty do make a difference, both positively and negatively, on student outcomes" (Edno & Harpel, 1982, p. 134). As such, if we are able to quantitate positive faculty characteristics we may be able to encourage those characteristics in current faculty. Administration may be able to hire new faculty with these characteristics as well. Goe and Stickler (2008) suggests there are four lenses to examining faculty member quality: qualifications, characteristics, practices, and effectiveness.

Qualifications include credentials, knowledge, and experience. Some suggest that no other intervention can make a bigger difference than a knowledgeable and skillful teacher can; however, having desirable credentials does not necessarily translate into excellent teaching. Nothing can fully compensate for weak learning that results from poor teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Qualifications are still reviewed because they matter and they are the easiest quality to critique and compare. Credentials are important because the knowledge and experience faculty can share with students makes a difference in their ability to gain skills in their chosen area of study or a career.

Characteristics are attitudes and attributes. Even though they may be more difficult to identify and assess, the literature suggests that characteristics should be considered in the selection and training of faculty members. Grit and life satisfaction are significant predictors of faculty member effectiveness. Grit is defined as perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). When a faculty member loses the passion and desire to teach there are consequences for students. Faculty member burnout; as evidenced by physical illness, depression, and anxiousness; correlated directly with student achievement. Faculty members who have better health and high morale promote greater student achievement (Bousquet, 2012).

Faculty members who are better able to understand their own needs and students' needs may be better at initiating actions, which promote student success (Rust, 2014). Also, a faculty member's emotional intelligence may be foundational to developing teaching competencies that lead to teaching success or positive student outcomes (Vesely, Saklofske, & Leschied, 2013) "Emotionally intelligent teachers seem to indirectly influence student conduct in the classroom by creating a supportive classroom atmosphere and an effective context for learning" (Nizielski, Hallum, Lopes, & Schütz, 2012, p. 327).

A teacher who maintains a strong intrapersonal dimension may better understand his or her own emotional needs and triggers. Understanding this may enable the teacher to modify appropriately his or her own emotions to address situational needs. For example, this teacher may be less emotionally charged by student misbehavior occurring in the classroom. The teacher may be less likely to react to a student attempting to ‘push buttons’ in an effort to escalate an emotional situation. (Rust, 2014, p. 22)

Training faculty members to identify their own level of emotional intelligence may increase faculty members’ efficacy in the classroom and decrease stress and job dissatisfaction (Vesely et al., 2013).

When teachers are satisfied and happy with their job, it is easier for them to share their enthusiasm with students. Faculty members who are passionate or enthused about the subject may draw students in and learning will increase. When a faculty member is enthusiastic, “students are likely to be interested, energetic, curious, and excited about learning” (Patrick, Hisley, & Kempler, 2000, p. 99). However, faculty member enthusiasm might not be beneficial to some students based on age and cultural background. Getting to know the students will allow the faculty member to adjust enthusiasm to an appropriate level for the class (Patrick et al., 2000).

Practices are the methods faculty members employ to interact with students. As subject experts who teach, community college faculty members must stay active in their expertise and keep their skills current. This may leave little time to develop teaching skills that are effective at increasing student learning such as: good command of subject matter, explaining the course material clearly, using good examples, structuring the course logically, and using course time well (Braxton, 2006). Professional development is often not included in a part-time community

college faculty member's schedule. Although many part-time faculty do not take time to participate in training it is important for all faculty. Institutions who promote teaching skills are likely to increase student persistence and student learning (Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000).

Ultimately, student success in the form of learning depends on the professional choices made by faculty members in the classroom. "Faculty need to be made aware that in-class experiences have wide-ranging effects extending beyond academic life to impact student's social integration, institutional commitment, and intent to persist" (Braxton et al., 2000, p. 224). There is a need to look at the way we deliver instruction in the classroom if we hope to improve both student success and student learning (Barefoot, 2004). Faculty members have a responsibility to assure that material makes sense to learners so they can begin to make meaning from it (Amborse, 2014). For that to happen, learners must become active agents in making meaning of presented material. This may be accomplished through collaborative teaching and learning methods such as encouraging student-faculty contact, encouraging cooperation among students, active learning, providing prompt feedback, attention to time on task, communicating high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning (Braxton, 2006). When these methods are used, while respecting students and challenging them academically, higher levels of student engagement and learning outcomes often result (Wang, BrckaLorenz, & Chaing, 2015).

Often faculty serve as "integral actors" in determining student success and student-faculty relationships matter (Chang, 2000; Wood & Turner, 2011.) Students who receive personal attention often achieve greater engagement in the course, thus resulting in greater student success (Wood & Turner, 2011). Academic achievement increases when students know that faculty members care for them and demonstrate interest in who they are (Rust, 2014). Because of this, faculty should be more helpful and accessible to students (Edno & Harpel,

1982). Faculty must have time to build relationships with students so they have the ability to make a difference.

Relationships with faculty members has a strong effect on student motivation and there is significant evidence that adult connection with students enhances motivation and offers students a sense of belonging (Tillery et al., 2013). Research shows that 86 percent of community college faculty are interested in students' personal problems. Many community college faculty members clearly believe they should be playing a significant role in helping students shape their values and moral characters (Tillery et al., 2013). This does not always happen. Because of administrative policy, necessary student/instructor boundaries exist in regards to relationships with students. Faculty members are often unsure about the boundaries and avoid personal relationships with students inside and outside of class. The fear of making a mistake or crossing a boundary is real for many community college faculty members and often results in confused students who perceive that faculty members do not care about them or their personal struggles.

Effectiveness is another area that is used to measure the quality of faculty. Community college faculty are charged with the difficult task of meeting students where they are academically, socially, and mentally and trying to help them attain the next academic level. Even with these challenges, student achievement scores are often used to measure faculty effectiveness. This may not be a true indicator of effectiveness since community college students enter with every imaginable combination of age, intention, condition, distraction, and motivation (Goldrick-Rab, 2017).

Another way to measure quality of faculty is through a code of conduct. Braxton (2006) suggests a code of conduct for faculty be implemented at community colleges. This code of conduct should include courses carefully planned, complete syllabus information, new and

revised lectures each year to keep up to date, grading based on merit, exams that cover the breadth of the course, treating students with respect, honoring student confidentiality, and faculty keeping reasonable office hours so they are available to students for advising. Braxton further suggests two faculty member actions that should not be permitted are sexual relationships with students, and coming to class intoxicated on alcohol or drugs (2006).

Effective faculty members improve the classroom environment and increase a student's commitment to the institution and retention by minimizing or quickly eliminating classroom incivilities. Classroom incivilities are actions that disrupt harmonious and cooperative learning environments. Examples of incivilities are arriving late or leaving early, and behaviors that are rebellious, emotional, or escalating in nature. Incivilities have a negative impact on student success. Though students commit the infractions, the institution and faculty members can have policies in place that minimize this type of disruption to the classroom (Braxton, 2015).

Faculty need be reminded of how important they are to positive student outcomes (Edno & Harpel, 1982). Relationships matter for community college students and those who receive personal attention often achieve greater success. Student-faculty member relationships may be more critical for community college students because of their situations with work, family, living off-campus, age, academic preparation, and expectations built into a community college education. Often faculty are the primary contact a community college student has with the college. Yet, it is often more difficult for community college faculty members than faculty members at 4-year colleges and universities to have a positive effect on students because of the type of student, teaching environment, student distractions, lack of on campus influence, time allowed on campus, and space allocations. Faculty need resources to improve their

qualifications, characteristics, practices, and effectiveness so they can improve their influence on student success.

State of the Literature

There are some scholarly articles and studies related to faculty members' influence on student success. However, there is not an abundance of literature on community colleges generally and the topic of a community college faculty members' influence on the success community college students specifically. There is even less scholarly literature specifically directed to CTE students and faculty. The very nature of community colleges with varied missions, visions, and expected outcomes for students causes them to be inconsistent and hard to study. The heterogeneous nature of community college students and lack of a clear definition of student success combine to discourage further study of faculty members' influence on community college student success and appears to be an undesirable field of study for many scholars. For these reasons, there is not an abundance of peer reviewed scholarly work on CTE faculty's effect on student success.

Chapter 3 Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to document the relationship between student success and faculty members' influence at a Career Technical Education (CTE) program in the intermountain west. It was the intent of this study to identify characteristics, qualities, actions, methods, and means students perceive faculty members have or display, that increase or decrease student success. Qualitative analysis was utilized in this study. Due to its flexible style which converts stories or experiences into theories, a qualitative analysis is appropriate when the problem or issue that needs to be explored is complex and detailed understanding of the issue needs to be developed (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). Quantitative research did not fit the research questions that were developed. For this reason and the inadequate amount of information on this subject, as discussed in chapter 2; qualitative analysis was necessary. Quantitative methods may be appropriate as further research is conducted.

The CTE college studied has approximately 35 programs, 90 faculty and over 2,000 students. Most of the faculty have year-to-year contracts. The mission of this CTE college is to provide students with the technical skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for successful performance in the workplace. The college provides programs that are designed to meet the employment and economic development needs of local business and industry. Programs of study offer technical certificates; associate, and baccalaureate degree programs; adult basic education; and continuing education/workforce training. An Associate of Applied Science Degree (AAS) is offered for multiple programs at the college. Programs offering this degree require at least 60 credits, and mastery of a defined set of competencies. The Bachelor of Applied Science (BAS)

degree, offered at the college, is an interdisciplinary degree designed specifically for students who have completed an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.

Data Collection

After an extensive literature review, I contacted faculty to ask for their assistance with this research. The faculty agreed that I could observe classes, and interview faculty and students from each programs. In order to obtain a representative sample of the students and faculty members, I planned to interviewed six students and two faculty from three programs. The number of students and faculty in each of the programs that were studied is outlined in Table 3.1. Table 3.1 also shows how many faculty and students were interviewed from each program. The information in the table shows that a large percentage of the students in each program where interviewed. It also gives the reader an idea of the student to faculty ratio as further findings are discussed.

Table 3.1

Details for programs studied

Group	Cosmetology	Robotics	Automotive Technology
Total students	40	40	30
Total faculty	5	7	4
Students interviewed	6	7	7
Faculty interviewed	2	1	1

The researcher was the primary research instrument used to collect the data. Observations of students and faculty members during classroom instruction in their natural setting were conducted. I observed lectures and floor time in each of the programs for three to four hours each

for a total of approximately 11 hours. During the observations, I tried to develop relationships with the students so they would be more comfortable consenting to an interview. I also developed field notes of reactions, facial expressions, sounds, actions, and situations that occurred. Open-ended observation was used instead of Likert Scales or checklists to document my findings. I coded observations or non-occurrences of behavior using a preliminary list of codes, listed in Appendix C keying on faculty member practices and characteristics.

The Institutional Research Requirements (IRB) were followed for this study. In order to comply with these requirements, I received consent to a 20-minute recorded interview from students and faculty. Participation in the interviews was voluntary and each participant was apprised of how the discussion would be transcribed and used in the study. The consent forms, in Appendix A, were signed by each participant and filed to document participant understanding of the interview and transcription process. In order to protect participants, all responses have been kept anonymous and data security measures have been kept as suggested by the IRB.

“Creating effective research questions for the interview process is one of the most crucial components to interview design” (Turner, 2010, p. 575). The research questions should be open-ended, neutral, worded clearly, and not be a why question (Turner, 2010). I developed open-ended, standard questions based on these recommendations and my understanding of CTE students and faculty. The questions developed for the interviews are included in Appendix B. After the questions were carefully written, the interviews were held in an office in the student or professor’s program area.

Research has shown that asking one question at a time, remaining neutral, encouraging responses with an occasional nod of the head, being careful about note taking during the interview, and providing proper transition between major topics, helps the interviewer gather

better results (Turner, 2010). I attempted to follow these suggestions. I took minimal field notes during the interview to encourage the interviewees to be open and truthful during the interview. It was necessary to guide the interview carefully through the predetermined questions. I found that some interviewees were very talkative while others were more reserved. During the interviews, it was easy to get off topic and it was necessary to transition back to the predetermined questions. I was careful to remain neutral and not react to responses. When the interview was complete, field notes were written to summarize the interview.

Data Analysis

Research suggests that memoing or field notes be given priority. The researcher should stop and write down ideas as soon as the data is obtained, rather than waiting until all the data is obtained (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I began memoing as soon as I began to collect data. I took field notes during observations and immediately after each interview. These field notes along with the transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews were then analyzed. The data analysis method selected was based on the recommendations of Saldona (2016), Miles and Huberman (1994), Maxwell (2013), and Creswell (2013). The procedure for analysis followed this general outline:

1. Developed preliminary codes based on literature review information.
2. Read transcripts, field notes and wrote memos.
3. Adjusted the codes based on findings.
4. Coded the data by assigning each part to a selected code.
5. Created a top ten list of the most common ideas or phrases.
6. Made contrasts and comparisons of the codes and categories.
7. Organized the data according to codes using matrices.

8. Tried to reduce the codes to themes or categories.
9. Interpolated the data by interconnecting the themes and categories.

This method of analyzing the data was intended to organize and understand the data: what it means, how it relates to the literature review, and how to present it in the study.

The first step in analyzing the data was to identify a preliminary list of codes based on the literature review and my research of how to best analyze the data. The list of preliminary codes is included in Appendix C. Some preliminary codes such as: creating a talkative climate, easy to talk to, providing prompt feedback, and clear communication were not identified during the coding process of this data set.

Coding is analysis and codes should be used as labels for assigning units of meaning to data. It is not the words themselves, but the meaning of the word that matters for coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Saldona (2016) said that all coding is a judgement call. As I assigned meaning to data, I tried to use good judgement. I read and reread comments to ensure I was not taking words out of context.

As I read the field notes and transcripts of the recorded interviews, I continued memoing which is writing sentences or paragraphs that documents an idea or concept. They are a sense-making tool for the analyst (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). An analyst should create a memo when he finds something pulling, something that identifies an alternative hypothesis, to propose a specific new code, to summarize reflections or notes on the text, or when struggling to have a clear concept of the meaning of the data. Memoing helps the analyst move easily from empirical data to a conceptual level and then move toward a greater understanding of events, processes, and interactions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The memos I wrote were about ideas, thoughts, and hypotheses I had as I read and analyzed the data. Memoing contributed strongly to the development of subsequent coding events. The act of coding was broken into several steps as suggested in the literature. It included initial coding, looking for similarities and differences, and using a very open-ended approach to analysis. During this process, I adjusted codes based on the results of previous coding events. I assigned data to the revised codes and tried to find meaning in the words that were spoken.

After several coding cycles were completed, a top ten list was generated to identify the most often quoted ideas or passages from the data (Saldona, 2016). The top 10 list became the final codes and are included as Appendix D. I used several techniques to make sense of the data as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). These include developing displays, matrices critical event charts, context charts, and mapping of concepts. These and other graphical methods were used as I made meaning of the data gathered during interviews and from observations. I drew and verified conclusions to generate meaning, by noting patterns and themes in the data, seeing plausibility and clustering, counting, making contrasts and comparisons, noting relationships, and building logical chains of evidence that make the conceptual coherent (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After data was analyzed, conclusions were drawn by comparing what was learned to findings from the literature review.

There are several personal attributes a coder should have such as: being organized, persistent, willing to deal with ambiguity, flexible, creative, rigorously ethical and honest, and having an extensive vocabulary (Saldona, 2016). I tried to use and develop these attributes as I was memoing and coding the data. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest several tactics for testing the findings such as checking representativeness, checking researcher effects, weighing

evidence, checking the meaning of outliers, following up on surprises, making if-then scenarios, ruling out spurious relationships, and getting feedback.

Reliability and Validity

Validity is the trustworthiness and credibility of the conclusions and it is similar to credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2013).

Validity is also defined as the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other account (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell suggests that researchers ask four questions when considering validity:

1. How might the results be wrong?
2. What are the plausible alternative interpretations to my results and conclusions?
3. How does my data support or challenge my ideas about what is going on?
4. Why should we believe the results?

As the data was analyzed, each of these questions were considered. I looked at conclusions to see where I may have made false assumptions. For instance, there was one student who felt belittled. In comparison, there were 43 references to the family. As I compared results and counted the number of times that students and faculty mentioned different codes, it helped verify conclusions.

I was very surprised how many students talked about peer support. Faculty did not value peer support in the same way students did. The difference in how the two groups view peer support is meaningful. Other data that challenged my assumptions was the impact faculty have on students. I was under the impression that faculty had more influence than students indicated that it does. Students did not speak negatively of faculty, but they did not indicate they were as dependent upon faculty for their success as I assumed.

With any research, the question that must be asked is: Can we believe the results? The questions asked during the interviews were open-ended and straight forward. Several of the questions asked the same thing in a different way. This was done to see if the answers were consistent. Coding and memoing was used to make sense of the data. The results of the data were compared to the literature. Throughout the entire process, I attempted to use reliable means to ensure that the research was valid.

In order to increase the validity of my research, I identified some areas that may threaten the correctness or credibility of my research. In a qualitative study, researcher bias is a common threat to validity. One bias I identified was my preconceived opinion that faculty members have an impact on student success and that the actions, beliefs, attitudes, selected learning activities, and personality can strongly influence student success in CTE settings. To avoid reactivity, I avoided leading questions, tried to stay neutral, and avoided “why” questions. An observer is typically much less of an influence on participants behavior than is the setting itself where the observation takes place (Maxwell, 2013). Due to the fact that students were observed in their natural setting. This should not be a threat to validity.

A validation strategy consisting of triangulation, member checking, and a review will give the conclusions trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell, 2013). I applied Creswell’s validation strategy by gathering data from three sources including: observations in the classroom, student interviews, and faculty interviews. I attempted to implement member checking, but found the faculty were generally uninterested in reviewing the transcript of their interview. I will receive a peer review by members of the dissertation committee which will complete the triangulation strategy.

Chapter 4 Research Findings

Introduction

The issue of student success has been debated and will continue to be debated in educational forums, governing bodies, and in faculty break rooms. Those who enroll in higher education, those who fund higher education, and those who work in higher education agree that student success needs to be improved. This qualitative study was conducted to gain a greater understanding of how faculty members influence student success at a CTE college. As the data was analyzed three clear categories emerged with respect to the research questions. The data will be presented accordingly. First, key faculty characteristics that students and faculty perceived were important to student success will be discussed. Then, the reasons students drop out and persist will be reviewed.

Faculty Characteristics Important to Student Success

Given the central premise of this study, that faculty are integral to student success, one of the most intriguing findings of the study was many students did not perceive faculty as the most important reason for success. Students viewed faculty as an integral part of the program and experts whom enabled them to graduate. Many students had a feeling similar to a student who replied, “Well teachers do influence you. They give you like the guidelines and stuff.” Some students expected faculty to be in class every day prepared to give instruction and help them work through homework or projects. They trusted the assignments would prepare them for a career. Other students gave the faculty more credit, “I would definitely say the instructors help. If they didn’t help there’s no getting through it.”

Faculty acknowledged there were many things that influenced student success that were outside of their control. However, they were confident they make a difference. One faculty

member said, “And I think you can make a difference for them.” During the interviews, it was apparent that many faculty have chosen the important work of education because of a prodigious desire to make a difference and be a positive influence on students. Many students felt their concern, as one said, “I feel like they actually care whether you succeed or don’t.” For many students, feeling like faculty cared about them was very important. It was valuable to find how many students reported they felt genuine concern from faculty. This feeling may be hard to quantify, but it was apparent that it was important to the students.

Several faculty members referred to counseling. “There is a lot of times where they will sit in our office and wonder what to do about specific situations. Because of their age and our age sometimes you do give them a bit of advice or counseling.” Faculty said they counseled most of the day every day. They were not complaining. For them, it was part of their job. Faculty members said students come to their programs with emotional and other needs.

We see everything from sexual abuse, to physical abuse, to emotional instability, and depression. We get it all and we are not really equipped to be counselors, but at the same time hopefully we have enough wisdom to steer them in the right direction where they can get [help].

It was evident as I observed student/faculty interactions during classroom instruction and labs that most faculty members wanted their students to succeed and were willing to help them in any way possible. Often the concern for students’ well-being led faculty members to influence students in a positive manner beyond the material they were teaching. A faculty member said, “Some of them have not had positive role models in their life and I think [I] can make a difference with them to some degree.”

Another faculty member discussed what she did to try to develop good relationships with her students, “I have to show them that I’m invested in them and their time is important.” One of the things that makes it possible for the faculty to take the time to develop relationships with their students is the small class sizes in the CTE programs studied. Even the students recognized this. “We are lucky enough here that the classes are small enough that the contact is really high. I mean where the student one-on-one time is very high.” Class size was integral to the ability of the faculty to discern the needs of students and offer their support when needed.

Some students even felt like they were friends with the faculty. One student said, “I feel like I’ve made friends with my instructors. I feel like I will be able to email them or call them after I graduate if I forget how to do something or have a question about something.” Several faculty members also commented on being friends with the students. One in particular recognized the need to keep the relationships with her students professional and worked to keep the balance between being their friend and their teacher. Repeatedly students talked about how important it was to them that their teachers knew them and cared about them. “They get to know you. They are very personal and they actually care about your future.” The interactions between students and faculty during classroom instruction and labs indicated the efforts of faculty to build relationships with their students were successful. Students were very comfortable talking to the faculty. Students requested help during labs and asked questions that exhibited trust.

Confidence, or lack thereof, was a struggle faculty recognized in students. One of the faculty members interviewed said, “I don’t know if there’s one thing you can say that is the greatest need. But I think a lot of it has to do with feeling like they can accomplish what it is they have set out to do.” It was interesting how many students also commented on their lack of confidence and how faculty helped them. One student talked about how her instructor joked with

her when she was not confident and expressed doubt in herself and her abilities. She said, “I would always tell Leo, I suck, I can’t do this and he would always be like, you don’t suck. . . the fact that he would say that and [meant] it was like, OK fine, I can do this.” I was surprised how many students and faculty talked about feelings of inadequacy. Many students indicated that they appreciated faculty who encouraged them and built their confidence. It seemed that many students questioned their abilities and relied on faculty to reassure them. This may be important for faculty and administrators in the future. Often faculty question their ability to counsel and build confidence in students. This may be an area where training would be beneficial.

Another way faculty built confidence, was to teach students the skills necessary to practice in their chosen career. One student said it best, “They influence us by showing us the potential of what we can do.” After skills were taught, they allowed students to explore and try new techniques on their own. One student said, “And they will actually say, ‘Go for it’ and then when [we] put forth effort and we can’t figure it out, they are always there to help us.” Many students agreed and commented on the willingness of faculty to help students. Another student said, “If you are willing to work hard, they are willing to help you in any way to overcome obstacles.”

Students recognized that although faculty gave them needed help it was important to become autonomous. One student said, “Faculty don’t cradle us and coddle us all the way through. They give help when needed . . . They want you to be able to work through problems and be able to solve stuff on your own.” Students wanted faculty to push them and encourage them to do better, be better, and make “sure we are doing everything right”.

The expertise of faculty was recognized by students. “They all know a lot” and “I trust their judgement” were comments made by two different students. These comments and others

like them indicated that students looked to the faculty as experts who helped them achieve their goals. Although students saw faculty as experts, they did not erroneously believe they knew all the answers. However, they appreciated faculty who took time to find answers when the need arose. One student had this to say, “They know enough to answer any of the questions that we have, and if they don’t know then they put in the time and effort to look up the answer for what we are looking for.”

The students understood the expertise of the faculty was key to their success. They felt faculty were doing a good job of teaching them and preparing them. Many echoed the words of this student, “They are doing so well in getting us prepared.” Often students talked about the efforts of the faculty in preparing them for the “real world” or getting a job. One student talked about how being on time was stressed. He thought this was important and said, “They’re doing that to try and get us ready for the real world.”

Students appreciated faculty who had real life experience before teaching. “They’ve all got experience. And they all really know what they are doing.” Many students enjoyed the life experiences that teachers shared. “When they were talking about theories they would get into ... stories of when they were building engines. Like Phil he likes to do snowmobiles.” Real life experiences gave faculty credibility and helped students see the application of what they were learning. It seems the efforts of faculty to help students see the applications of what they are learning is key. Anything faculty do to bring the real world to the students is beneficial.

One student reported, “A lot of the times they get excited about the application of what they are teaching.” Many students noticed this excitement or passion in the classroom. “So, Leo was my absolute favorite teacher. . . He was just so passionate.” Students commented on faculty being passionate about products, concepts they were teaching, and students learning and

applying what they were being taught. One student observed, “They really get excited about certain things we can do, I would say every one of my instructors is very passionate.” Students and faculty mentioned passion and realized the importance of it. One faculty member said, “I think students that see instructors [who] love their job are more likely to succeed in the program and graduate and then go on to succeed in the industry.” The data students shared about passion in faculty supports the findings in the literature. It seems that passionate faculty who are excited to engage with students make a difference.

Faculty expressed their desire to help students learn and described different learning techniques they used in the classroom. One interviewee described her efforts this way,

You know I try to make it vary, if I’m going to do groups in the morning I might do some paper review game in the afternoon. And then give them a hands-on activity for 20 minutes and then maybe review again to talk about it. I just always try to keep it moving and different.

Students talked about different teaching styles and about understanding concepts better with different teachers. One student commented, “I did not understand anything up to this point until he got in the classroom. I was like okay this makes sense like the way he taught things.” It was meaningful to find that students liked some learning activities better than others. They were also very resilient and used their resources to find understanding of the information when they didn’t understand a particular faculty member. Students reported that they would ask other faculty members or their peers for assistance.

I observed that most students enjoyed the labs and hands on application of the theory they were learning. In fact, several students talked about how much better they learned when it was hands on. Given the nature of the programs, much of the time is spent engaged in hands on

activities. The students also enjoyed working in groups. Faculty who encourage group work and allow students to collaborate may meet the needs of more students.

Many students thought the programs were set up well. They enjoyed seeing the progression of projects and increased complexity of skills. Students and faculty alike found satisfaction in discovering the application of concepts while increasing their ability. “Most of the time we don’t see how it applies [so when] we start putting it together, and we start looking, they love us [discovering]. . . like seeing the evolution of what we are learning.”

I observed that faculty were present and busy with students during labs and floor time. The students seemed willing to wait their turn for faculty members to offer their expertise and advice; however, the biggest frustration students had with the faculty was their unavailability. Most were quick to acknowledge that the unavailability was often because the faculty member was helping another student. “You know they can’t. . . give their full attention to every single student. We have to wait our turn.” Students, like this one, often admitted they were not very patient when he said, “Kind of sounds selfish.”

One student commented that sometimes faculty have favorites and another student talked about faculty who are unprepared. A few students expressed concern that teachers belittle students in front of other students. These concerns were mentioned by only a few students, most did not report any negative experiences. In fact, overall students were extremely complimentary of the faculty. The sentiment of one student was shared by many. “I was on lower campus for a while and through high school and through my other studies these [CTE professionals] have been some of the best teachers and instructors I have ever dealt with.”

Why Students Drop Out

Faculty and students expressed disappointment when students who withdrew from school were discussed. Most faculty agreed, "It usually doesn't happen after the first semester or even the first few weeks." It is valuable to note that most students drop out in the first few weeks. These students do not have time to form relationships with faculty or with the students. Given the emphasis that students and faculty put on confidence and goals, these students may not have either. When students who withdraw later in the program were considered, everyone seemed to concur that these students usually quit despite the best efforts of faculty. They agreed that, "Most of the time it is a circumstance outside of here." One caring faculty member said,

It makes a big difference when the students can see that you do care and that you want them to succeed and that you are doing everything you can to help them...sometimes it doesn't matter what you do as an instructor they're not going to [finish].

It was obvious that the faculty really cared about what happened to their students. They try to help students and encourage them, but still some do not persist.

Faculty gave examples of students who quit because of medical problems and pregnancy. Financial problems were also cited as a reason why students withdraw from school. One faculty member cited other reasons, "Sometimes it's disabilities, disorders, sometimes it's family situations. I had a girl last year that was a single mom and she had a very difficult time taking care of her kids and being in the program fulfilling the requirements." Sometimes the students are not prepared for what awaits them in a college setting, one faculty said, "Sometimes it's just maturity. Students come right out of high school and now they're here trying to figure out [college] and they just don't have the responsibility that it takes or [sometimes] it's just laziness."

Students and faculty alike were saddened when students quit for reasons that were outside the control of the student. However, when students quit because they lost motivation or just couldn't get to class, peers and faculty were not as sympathetic. One student said, "I just don't think some people are willing to put in the time and effort to do it." Both students and faculty expressed frustration with students that had a hard time getting to class. Some students were capable of doing the work and performed well when they attended, but they didn't attend school consistently enough to pass. One student was especially vocal about students who quit. He said, "You know persistence is the key. Whether you do well or whether you do poorly. You know. Just keep at it."

Students and faculty observed that some students who quit at the beginning of a program found the material too difficult. This was meaningful data. In a conversation I had with student services, they indicated that when students drop they often say the course work was too difficult or they blame faculty. It is hard to say if these are the real reasons students drop out or if they are looking for an excuse or someone to blame for their perceived failure. For this research, students who had persisted were interviewed. The data may have been different if students who dropped out were interviewed. This data may be difficult to acquire because the students are not affiliated with the program making it difficult to contact them. Students may drop out because of faculty, but most students did not indicate they persist simply because of faculty.

Some faculty talked about helping students find a different program when students found the program was too challenging or if they discovered they did not like the profession. When faculty talked about these situations, they expressed genuine satisfaction in helping a student find a path where they could succeed, "There are students who don't belong in a hands-on field. . . if I can recognize that and get them where they need to be, then they're going to be successful." This

is another reason why having faculty available to advise students is so critical. Often, faculty may be able to guide a student in a different direction when they are frustrated with their chosen path. Faculty have knowledge of programs and resources available to students that may assist the student in finding a successful path. Overall, faculty expressed deep concern for students and worked to help each student succeed. One faculty member said, “We try so hard cause I want everyone to succeed in life.”

Why Students Persist

For this study, I interviewed students that had completed most of their chosen program. These students were well on their way to completion. There was obvious excitement and a sense of accomplishment in these students. When asked why they persisted, the students’ answers were different of course but, some common themes emerged. Students said that they persisted because of: family, teachers, goals, grit, and peers.

Many students cited family as the number one reason they persisted. In one form or another they said, “I have a lot of family support. So, like I said it’s probably the main reason is because of my family I’m still here.” Some talked about living with family members who supported them. Others talked about spouses who motivated them. Many talked about parents who encouraged them to finish. Others indicated their family supported them financially. One indicated that after her mom was diagnosed with cancer, she asked her daughter to stick with school and finish.

It was evident that family could be the reason students persisted, but it was also the reason they dropped out. One student’s observation summarized what many students had to say. “I would say your family has to be the most important... Cause if your family doesn’t understand then you are going to have trouble in family life which is going to cause stress.” Negatively or

positively, the importance students placed on their family situation was surprising to me.

Institutions are limited in the impact they have on the family situations of students. However, as the importance of the family is validated measure may be taken to increase the awareness of the importance of the family in our society and for institutions to make adaptations that facilitate students from diverse family situations to succeed.

Another reason students cited for their persistence was faculty. As discussed, faculty do make a difference and there are characteristics faculty can develop or improve that will benefit students. Faculty who had experience in the “real world” and could share their experience were appealing to students. When talking about teachers, students often referred to their expertise, “Teachers know the material.” I observed that students connected with faculty who cared about them and encouraged them. I observed that they appreciated faculty who listened to them and offered them advice.

Students also referred to their willingness to help. It was evident during observations and interviews that students trusted the faculty and were comfortable working with them. “Your teachers are always willing to help you if you are willing to help yourself.” Students listed teachers as important, but surprisingly not as the most important reason for persisting. One student said it this way, “Teachers do influence you and they give you the guidelines and stuff. . . They help you out when you need it, but . . . I feel like it’s you that needs to determine if you can do it”.

Many students referred to their goals as a prime reason for their persistence. “Your personal goals, why go to college? Why come into this program if you didn’t have some goal of getting through it?” The students all seemed to know what they wanted before they began their chosen program. Most went looking for a school that had a good program in their chosen career.

Their goals were enough to help them get through the hard times and persevere. CTE students are often the exception to students entering community colleges. The students who were interviewed had well defined goals. The recommendations for future research includes studying how these students acquired their goals. Student success in all venues would increase if students entered with clearly defined goals like these students had.

Often the goal for these successful students included seeking employment and earning a living. When asked why he persisted one student said, “Well I guess just because I want a job and I know that the people who graduate from this program are pretty much guaranteed a job.” Another student said, “My drive and goals. . . most jobs are asking for an associate [degree].” Having a career, holding a job, obtaining a certificate, earning a living, and graduating were all words that students used to describe their goals.

Obtaining a job and earning an income are measurable goals; grit and motivation are less definable. Yet, grit and motivation were cited as important reasons why students persist. One student said, “I think sometimes a lot of it is personal. If they have that instinct in them, that if they start something they need to finish it. . . I think a lot of it is self- motivation.” This self-motivation is what pushed many students when things were hard.

Students spoke of the importance of their peers or classmates in their ability to persist. It appeared that the cohorts or relationships formed among the students helped them get through the challenges. Many students indicated they relied on peers to help them out and even keep them in the program. One student said,

A lot of these guys are the reason why I’m where I’m at today. I’ve learned a lot from these guys. . . I mean some of them would stay after school, and help me out. . . I enjoy working with these guys.

Many students talked about doing homework together and explaining things to each other in a way they could understand when the instructor did not make sense. “If an instructor can’t help me understand it my way, a lot of these students can help me understand it.”

It was valuable to discover that faculty did not discuss the importance of peers in the same manner as students. The students talked about how their classmates were their friends. One talked about texting at night when he was doing homework. Another said that one of his classmates was going to be the best man at his wedding. Another student talked about the brotherhood he felt with his classmates he studied with. He said, “So yeah there is definitely a brotherhood between the peers.” This brotherhood, friendship, and teamwork that is built into the CTE programs studied was recognized by the students as a very important element to their success. This may be an area that faculty and administrators can assist with student success. Faculty can encourage students to work in groups on assignments and projects. The relationships that are formed through these activities may benefit students in many programs.

Conclusion

Although students did not rank faculty as the main reason for their persistence, they appreciated the efforts of faculty and realized that without an expert to help them prepare they could not obtain licensure, certification, or a degree required to work in their chosen field. Students responded to faculty who developed a caring relationship with individual student as they built their confidence while teaching them the skills and information necessary for a successful career. They learned best from passionate faculty who had real experience in the profession and used varying teaching strategies to engage students.

Not all students succeed. It was evident from students and faculty there are a variety of reasons why students do not persist. The reasons included family, finances, health, lack of

ability, and lack of motivation. The reasons were varied and dependent on the individual student. Faculty and even other students tried to keep students in school, but despite their best effort some students still withdrew.

The students who persisted credit faculty, but considering the topic of this research, it was meaningful to find that they did not consider faculty the most important influence on their persistence and success. They perceived faculty were part of the program and a requirement for their graduation. Students expected faculty to be caring, present, friendly, positive, and experts in their fields. They were considered by students to be part of the system that helped them obtain good jobs. Family was the most cited reason for students' persistence. Other motivators for graduation were goals, which included the need for employment, and motivation, or grit. When things were difficult, students often turned to their peers. The characteristics students and faculty perceived were important to student success and the reasons students quit and persist will be discussed in relation to the literature in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Recommendations

Introduction

Student success is the ultimate goal of higher education. Yet, the number of students who complete a degree or earn a certificate is less than one-half of those who begin (Dortch, 2014; Hirschy, 2011; Kena et al., 2014; USDOE, 2014). Little research has been conducted on the influence of faculty on student success in CTE programs. This qualitative study sought to discover student perceptions of the impact CTE faculty members have on student success and to identify faculty characteristics, qualities, actions, methods, and means that might increase or decrease student success. The research questions were carefully selected for the purpose of increasing understanding in this important area. The research questions were:

1. In what ways do CTE faculty members influence student success?
2. How do students who persist in CTE programs perceive faculty members influence student success?

Review of Methodology

After conducting an extensive literature review, I developed a series of questions and preliminary codes I expected to discover during the data gathering portion of the study. I then observed students and faculty in Cosmetology, Automotive Technology, and Robotics at a CTE college in the intermountain west. I observed lectures and labs in these programs for approximately eleven hours during a three-week period in the fall of 2017. Throughout the observations, I looked for nonverbal communication during student-faculty interactions and listened for recurring words and ideas. I did not observe as much student-faculty interaction during lectures as I did during the lab or floor time as students were working on projects and completing practice exercises. The interactions I observed indicated the students trusted the

faculty. Students were not afraid to ask for help. The questions they asked were relevant and trusting. Faculty and students were very engaged, but they also spoke about things outside of the curriculum. This indicated that faculty knew students on a personal level and were interested in them.

After my observations, I conducted interviews with five faculty and 20 students in the three programs. I believe I reached saturation after about twelve interviews. Faculty encouraged their students to participate in the study. Most students were willing to be interviewed; however, several faculty and one student were resistant to an interview. I did not extend additional invitations for interviews after two attempts.

The observation notes and typed transcripts of my interviews were used during the coding process to make meaning of the data. I first analyzed the data by highlighting words that occurred multiple times. Codes were identified during several coding events and became major themes in this data set. The major themes were the characteristics students perceived in faculty, why students quit programs, and why students persist.

Discussion

For this qualitative study, I looked at three programs: Cosmetology, Automotive Technology, and Robotics. After being accepted into the program based on qualifications, students begin on a specific date with a consistent anticipated graduation date. For each of these programs, it was required that students attend school full-time. They move through their selected program as a group, taking the same classes, with the same faculty, and spending many hours in practical hands-on application together. Because of this, learning communities were natural. One student indicated that a brotherhood is developed among peers. I found these built-in learning communities helped many students persist through their programs and lasting friendships were

created. The students felt very connected to the career, program, faculty, and peers. This is a major difference from the literature. According to the literature many community college students do not feel connected to faculty, peers, or the university. The students in this study felt very connected to the faculty and some felt that they had developed a friendship with faculty.

The students liked the short duration of the programs: Cosmetology 1.5 years, Automotive Technology 1.5 years to 2 years, and Robotics 3 years. Completion rates in the programs studied were significantly higher than those reported in the literature. I spoke with student services about graduation rates. IRC data was unavailable; however, unofficially student services report the graduation rate is approximately 80% in all of the college programs. The three programs studied were consistent with the general average for the college. This graduation rate is about twice the national rate for community colleges which is estimated at 31 to 45 percent (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2006; Cox (2009).

Each of the programs studied issue a certificate at the completion of the program if the requirements are met and the students pass the third-party exams. If the students desire an associate degree they may attend extra semesters to receive one, but many elected not to do so. The students were not concerned that many of the classes taught in these programs do not transfer as academic classes to other programs or universities. Students did not plan to transfer to a four-year degree granting university, they planned to get a job and work in their preselected career.

The literature reveals that often students who attend CTE programs have need of remedial classes. The programs studied require an ACT score of 14 in English and math to be accepted into the program. Robotics requires a score of 19 in math for acceptance. These scores are lower than those for assured acceptance into many universities. Each of the programs studied

have remedial classes built into the programs. All of the students are required to take the remedial classes, to assure they are able to pass the certification exams.

The programs at the CTE are designed to meet the employment and economic development needs of local business and industry, which is consistent with the literature findings. Students specifically in the robotics program talked about individuals from industry coming to the school to talk with instructors about their hiring needs. These students were very motivated because they knew there is a high demand for their skills in the workplace as soon as they graduated.

The students in the CTE programs studied had some similarities and many differences from the literature for community colleges in general. One of the most significant differences is the students studied were all full-time. If they held a job, they were still required to be at school five days a week for 7-8 hours a day. In the literature McClenney (2007) and Kena (2016) found that almost two-thirds of community college students nationally enroll on a part-time basis. Students in the CTE programs studied fall into the one-third who enroll full-time. The programs studied discouraged part-time work and indicated that those who work often do not have time to complete the requirements of the program.

Another important difference was the students in these programs had very refined educational expectations and goals compared to community college students in general. The CTE students typically chose a career prior to starting the program and were driven to get a specific degree, license, or certificate so they could work in their chosen career. Their well-defined goals seemed to positively impact their self-concept and emotional intelligence as well as their engagement with the program, peers, and faculty.

The student makeup was similar to other community colleges studied in the literature. They are a heterogeneous group with widely varying ages and backgrounds. There were several veterans who were older and had life experience. On the other end of the spectrum, were recent high school graduates. I observed minority students in all of the programs. During my observations, there were only male students in the Robotics and Automotive Technology programs. The Cosmetology students were predominantly female. Based on my limited observations, it appeared they came from a variety of economic conditions.

The CTE college studied has approximately 35 programs and just over 2,000 students. There are approximately 90 faculty in the programs with most having nine to eleven-month year-to-year contracts. In the programs I studied, there were 16 full time faculty members and no part-time faculty. This was different from the findings of the literature for community colleges, but is typical for CTE programs.

Faculty taught the core classes in each program. In addition to teaching, the faculty spent many hours with students practicing skills. Student to teacher ratio were low so faculty could spend one-on-one time with students. Because students spent so much time with faculty, they often developed close relationships. The literature promoted faculty-based advising because of the positive impact on retention. Faculty talked about counseling with their students and the good relationships they developed. The faculty in this study agreed with the literature; the relationships students have with faculty matter. Students who receive personal attention often achieve greater engagement in the course thus resulting in greater student success (Wood & Turner, 2011). In this regard, the findings of the study were consistent with the literature.

When studying career focused CTE programs, the research shows the most successful programs create a unique program culture that reflected its respective profession (Nitecki, 2011).

This was consistent with the research findings. Each of the programs had a very unique culture, career identity, and common passion for the career. Each culture was different and depended upon the students and the chosen career. The students liked to identify themselves as “car guys” or made statements such as “we like hair and nails”.

The literature showed that administrative support was important for faculty. When asked about the administration faculty responded very positively. Faculty indicated the administration was supportive. One example that was cited was having needed supplies for their program. One faculty member expressed frustration at meetings that were held during key instruction time, but indicated this was usually an exception. Faculty overall felt the administration supported their efforts.

Conclusions

There are several findings from each of the questions that may be relevant to improving student success. The first research question was: In what ways do CTE faculty members influence student success? Many students did not acknowledge that faculty was the number one influence on their success. However, it was clear from the research that faculty do influence student success. Students perceived they were most influenced by caring faculty who built relationships and confidence as they answered questions and shared their passion and expertise.

Students often talked about relationships they had with faculty. Knowing that faculty cared was important to students. They wanted to talk to the faculty about more than just assignments. Several students talked about their friendship with faculty. Some students needed reassurance that they were capable of completing the course or even an assignment. Students appreciated faculty who believed in them and encouraged them to keep trying.

The students perceived that faculty were experts who were passionate about their career. They provided the knowledge and skills necessary for the students to certify in their chosen career. Students trusted that faculty would help them acquire the necessary skills to certify and practice their chosen profession. Students wanted faculty to be available to answer their questions and help them attain knowledge and learn new skills. They appreciated and were motivated by teachers who were passionate about the subject and had real-life experience.

It is important for faculty to understand that what they do every day in the classroom matters to students. Often faculty do not understand how much their comments influence students whether they be negative or positive. It is vital that faculty are positive and encourage students. Sarcastic and funny comments at students' expense were not appreciated. Faculty need to make an effort to connect with students in a positive way. Sometimes faculty are reluctant to be friendly with their students because they are anxious about perceived unethical conduct and; therefore, are identified as uncaring or uninterested.

Based on the findings, faculty are most effective when they share their passion and experiences with students using active and varied teaching styles. When they do, it gives them credibility and students are able to see the application of what is being taught. Students liked hands on learning and being able to practice what they were learning in the classroom. Students expect faculty to be experts who know the material and stay current with the skills they are teaching so they prepare students appropriately for their chosen career.

The second question was: How do students who persist in CTE programs perceive faculty members influence student success? Students perceived that faculty have an influence on student success. However, some students had differing opinions on how much of an influence they have. Most students agree faculty are important because they are experts in the field and they can help

prepare the students effectively and efficiently for a job. Faculty that develop caring relationships with students may have more influence than those who do not. For this relationship to develop, faculty must have time to engage with the students and take a personal interest in each one.

While faculty are important, many students cite factors that are outside the control of faculty or even the institution as important to their success. These include family, goals, and peers. It is important for faculty to understand the importance of these other factors, by doing so faculty can increase their ability to help a student succeed.

Because family situations were the most cited factor influencing student success it is important for faculty to understand each student's family situation in order to help her or him succeed. Faculty can do this by talking to students about their families. Some students come from family situations that make it difficult for them to succeed. When faculty are aware of these situations, they may offer their concern and, at appropriate times, make adaptations that will enable the student to succeed.

The brotherhood that students feel with their fellow classmates was perceived by many students as important to their success. Knowing this may be one of the most unexpected findings of this study. Administrators and faculty at community colleges may be able to create environments where students attend multiple classes together, work together, and have an opportunity to form deeper friendships. Encouraging peer interaction is something that can be implemented to improve student success.

Knowing a students' goals and motivation may also be beneficial for faculty. When they understand what motivates a student, they may be able to help a student understand how the information they are learning will help them reach their goals. Faculty may find it helpful to invite practicing professionals to the classroom to encourage students and help them understand

the application of the skills they are learning and see the potential they have in their career.

Career integration is often the reason students choose CTE programs so additional interaction with practicing professionals helps students refine their desires and gives them direction.

Recommendations for Research

Completing this study has been enlightening. There is need for more research on the topic of student success in several areas. I feel it would be beneficial to complete further research in the following areas: 1) Completion rates in CTE colleges compared to other community colleges. 2) How institutions of higher learning can help families be a positive influence on students. 3) How faculty influence students during recruiting. 4) How do students who enter CTE programs acquire their goals? 5) How to encourage relationships among students?

Recommendations for Practice

In order to implement findings from this research, faculty need to make an effort to develop caring relationships with their students. This will be uncomfortable for some and will challenge some long standing traditions of higher education. Faculty will need to have time and make time for student interactions. As they listen to students in a caring manner, positive faculty/student relationships may develop. Often students are unsure of their abilities and a faculty member who offers encouragement may help them have confidence to persist.

Students learned best when they practiced the skills being taught. Whenever possible faculty should allow students to have hands on experience. During lectures, faculty may consider using varied active teaching styles based on the learning characteristics of the students and the expected career learning techniques. One way to involve students is to allow students to teach different concepts in a student-centered teaching atmosphere. Some students learn best from other students.

Students expect faculty to be the experts in their field. This will require faculty to aggressively pursue up to date innovations in technology and work practices. This may be accomplished through conferences and other outside learning opportunities. Faculty and students may also benefit when outside experts are invited into the classroom to share their expertise. Students and faculty can also participate in professional organizations and clubs as a means to stay current with industry. As faculty promote career integration, student engagement and learning will deepen.

Based on the findings in the study, students relied heavily on their peers. They appreciated the relationships that were formed by working together and helping each other. Students will benefit as faculty and administrators cooperate in structuring programs and classes so that students are in a cohort as much as possible. At a minimum, faculty can encourage and even require students to work in groups on projects and other assignments. As they imitate the future work environment, students will be in a setting that encourages friendships and support from peers which may help students persist.

As administrators increase their understanding of quality faculty as perceived by students, their hiring practices may change. Although qualifications are important when hiring faculty, characteristics and practices must not be overlooked if effectiveness is going to be improved. Administrators who hire faculty with a high level of emotional intelligence and are capable of relating to students may see students persist at a higher rate. Administrators may consider ways of determining the teaching practices of future faculty as well.

Administrators may also hire and promote faculty who are willing to counsel and mentor students. This may require changes in how workload is distributed and teaching environments are set up. Administrators should encourage and allow faculty time and space to interact with

students both in the classroom and outside the classroom. It may be needful to define the code of conduct as it relates to faculty/student relationships. The guidelines must be clear so faculty can interact with students confidently and appropriately.

Administrators may promote good teaching practices by rewarding faculty who use effective teaching strategies. In order for faculty to improve, they must have opportunities for learning. Administrators can provide workshops or conferences on teaching strategies and reward faculty for attending and incorporating best practices in their teaching. Ongoing evaluation of faculty will help in this endeavor.

Often, funding is a roadblock to change. Administrators should continue to educate funding and government agencies on the importance of faculty interaction with students and the value of small class sizes. Funding for faculty career development and teaching improvement needs to be considered and valued by funding decision makers as well. Since families are essential for student success, government officials must carefully consider the implications that legislation has on the family.

Summary

In the CTE programs studied, the faculty and students were together throughout the day and learning communities were naturally formed which enabled students to connect and engage with peers, the program, and faculty. These connections and friendships appeared to be critical to student success. Students who persisted and graduated appreciated certain characteristics in faculty. They thrived when faculty were experts and passionate about their career. Most students in the CTE programs had well defined goals and career intentions before starting the program. Students want faculty who prepare them to be successful in a career.

The findings of this study clearly indicate there are many variables in a student's success. Faculty influence is one of the important variables that can be improved. Students noticed when faculty were available to answer students' questions and were viewed as approachable and caring. When faculty built confidence in their students and established an environment where students could work together, students thrived. As students, faculty, administrators, and funding agencies work together to make changes that enable faculty to positively influence students, student success may improve and all stakeholders in higher education will benefit because of increased students' success.

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Appendix A: Consent Forms

Adult Consent Form

Dear Participant:

We are asking for permission to interview you for a study about a faculty member's influence on student success. The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of the impact on student success. The interviewer will ask you questions about your interactions with students.

Your responses will be anonymous. Your name will not be requested to assure complete privacy will be guaranteed.

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating.

For further information regarding this research, please contact, or Dr. Richard Wagoner at (208) 282-2053, email: wagorich@isu.edu.

If you have any questions about this research project, you may contact David Schiess at (208) 313-2460, email: schidavi@isu.edu, or Dr. Richard Wagoner at (208) 282-2053, email: wagorich@isu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Idaho State University Institutional Review Board at (208)282-2179.

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

Student Consent Form

Dear Student:

We are asking you to help us with a study about student success. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of how faculty members influence student success.

Submitting to a interview is voluntary, which means you do not have to take part if you don't want to. Nothing will happen to you if you decide not to participate.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed. The interviewer will ask questions about your time at ISU and your interactions with faculty members. You do not have to give your name during the interview and your answers will be recorded for transcription.

Please read the following and sign below if you agree to participate.

I understand that:

- if I don't want to be interviewed that's ok and I won't get into trouble
- anytime that I want to stop participating that's ok
- my name will not be known and my answers will be completely private

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____

There are two copies of this letter. After signing them, keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

For further information regarding this research please contact David Schiess at (208) 313-2460, email: schidavi@isu.edu, or Dr. Richard Wagoner at (208) 282-2053, email: wajorich@isu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Idaho State University Institutional Review Board at (208)282-2179.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Faculty Member Interview Questions

What is the greatest need your students have?

How much time do you spend advising to students on an average day?

How do you promote student success?

How do you keep the students engaged?

What learning activities do the students like best?

How do you feel when a student quits the program?

What could administration do to help with student success?

Student Interview Questions

What has been the most important influence on your persistence in the program?

Tell me what you do not like about the teachers?

Tell me what you do like about the teachers?

Tell me what you do not like about the program?

Tell me what you do like about the program?

Describe a time when you thought the teachers were passionate about the topic being taught.

How has your family situation affected your success to date in the program?

Describe your teachers' attitudes about teaching and helping you succeed.

When do you feel supported and excited to learn in the program?

When have you felt unsupported and alone in the program?

Describe your feelings when someone quits this program?

How have other students helped you succeed in school?

Appendix C: Preliminary Codes

Theme/Category	Code
<i>Teacher Practices</i>	Friendly
	Interested
	Listening
	Encouraging
	Validating environment
	Active learning
	Teaching values/morals
	Preparation for adulthood/citizenship
	Talkative climate
	Prompt feedback
	Communicate clearly
	Good examples
	Applicable testing
	Learning activities
<i>Teacher Characteristics</i>	Personal attention
	Mentor
	Personality
	Attitude
	Attributes
	Grit
	Life satisfaction
	Emotional intelligence
	Respect for student

Teacher Qualifications

Credentials

Experience

Knowledge

Command of subject

Teacher Effectiveness

Persistence

Retention

Learn a skill

Gain knowledge

Student connections/networking

Grades

Certificates

Degree

Transfer

Other influences

Family

Institution

Money

Personal goals

Lack of preparation

Appendix D: Final Codes

Final codes selected, January 2018

Faculty member Practices

Friendly

Interested

Listening

Encouraging

Validating environment

Active learning

Talkative climate

Prompt feedback

Communicate clearly

Good examples

Learning activities

Faculty member Characteristics

Personal attention

Mentor

Personality

Attitude

Grit

Life satisfaction

Emotional intelligence

Respect for student