A CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS OF COURSE RETENTION AND FACULTY STATUS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

by
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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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November, 2013

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ABSTRACT

Colleges are under pressure to educate a growing student population, while economic resources in higher education are diminishing. One measure of success for colleges is the ability to retain students. Due to the varied nature of the community college population, measuring student retention is particularly challenging. One facet of student retention is course retention, defined as the successful completion of a course with a grade of C or higher. Course retention is associated with the likelihood of degree completion; therefore, it served as the measure of student retention used in this study. Theoretical models, supported by research, show a link between student retention and faculty interaction. Furthermore, faculty/student interactions, both inside and outside of the classroom, are influenced by faculty status and morale. While researchers have linked faculty interactions with broad measures of student retention, and faculty behavior with employment status and morale, limited research is available on the relationship between course retention and faculty status. In this quantitative correlational research study, student enrollment data and faculty employment data were used to examine the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status in a community college located in north Florida. Differences between course retention rates among faculty employed in permanent positions and those employed in adjunct positions were explored using ANOVA.

Acknowledgments

Writing this dissertation has been a challenging process. I would not have completed this research without the support and encouragement of others. First and foremost, I want to thank the Lord for blessing me by placing wonderful people in my path throughout my time in this doctoral program and giving me the strength and endurance I needed to complete this dissertation. I want to acknowledge the unwavering love and support of my family. I could not have done this without them. Next, I want to thank my dear friend Laurie Simpson who always provided encouragement, support, and understanding just when I needed them. I am so thankful we met. Finally, I want to thank the Liberty faculty for their support and guidance. I especially want to thank the members of my committee – Dr. Randy Tierce, Dr. Amanda Dunnagan, and Dr. Travis Bradshaw. This has been a long process and I thank you all for sticking with me until the end.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Community college enrollment has increased dramatically over the past decade, (Fry, 2009; United States Census Bureau, 2009), yet rates of "two-year degree completions have not increased substantially since the 1990s" (Tinto, 2012, p. 4). In order for these student enrollees to become college graduates, they must successfully progress through their coursework and meet their degree requirements. In other words, these students must be retained in college.

Student retention is a crucial component of students succeeding in college and, ultimately, completing their degree (McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005; Tinto, 1975). Tinto (1993) developed a theory of student retention focusing on the "role played by the academic and social environment of an institution in the success of its students" (p. vii). In order for students to remain in college, they must be integrated into the institution via academic systems (i.e. academic performance, faculty interactions) and social systems (i.e. extracurricular activities, peer-group interactions) (Tinto, 1993).

Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention identifies students' experiences in the classroom as central to student success and also recognizes faculty interaction within the first two years of college as a significant factor in retaining students. Student retention has been addressed on an institutional level by developing policies and providing programs and services to address student needs, such as offering remedial coursework, in an effort to keep students in college (Adelman, 1996; Hoyt, 1999; Tinto, 2012). Instead of concentrating on broad institutional efforts at retention, this study focused on retention in the community college classroom and the faculty members that are central to student success (Tinto, 1993).

Specifically, this study examined the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status at Florida Community College [pseudonym], a mid-sized public institution in Florida. Course retention was defined as a student's successful completion of a course with a grade of C or above. Faculty status was the employment category of a faculty member and included permanent or adjunct. As an introduction to the study, the background, problem, purpose, significance, research questions and hypotheses, assumptions and limitations follow.

Background

Federal policies enacted during the first decade of the 21st century plunged the United States into a prolonged economic recession; from which, in 2013, it is still recovering (Lazzaro, 2009; Rose, 2012; Thornton, 2012). This national economic climate has dramatically impacted, and continues to influence, higher education. During economic downturns colleges typically receive less money from funding sources, yet have more students to serve (Wolverton, 2008). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, college enrollment reached 18.2 million in 2008. Enrollment in higher education is predicted to grow, and surpass records, through 2017 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008).

In recent years, enrollment at community colleges has outpaced that of four-year universities (Fry, 2009). From 2000 to 2010, enrollment in community colleges increased 23% (NCES, 2011). According to national statistics, in 2009 over 5.5 million students – approximately 35% of the undergraduate student population and 28% of the total college student population – were enrolled in community colleges (United States Census Bureau, 2012).

The Pew Research Center reported the following:

> In October 2007, some 3.1 million young adults, or 10.9% of all 18- to 24-year-olds, were enrolled in a community college. A year later, that figure had risen to

> 3.4 million students, or 11.8% of all 18- to 24-year-olds. By contrast, enrollments at four-year colleges were essentially flat from 2007 to 2008. (Fry, 2009, p.1)

This dramatic rise in enrollment has not coincided with increases in student retention (Lederman, 2009; NCES, 2011; Tinto, 2012). Researchers examined the retention rates of students entering two-year colleges during the 2003-2004 academic year, finding that only 34% of the students had attained any degree or certificate by spring 2009 and of the non-graduates, only 19% were still enrolled in college (NCES, 2011). A majority of students (47%) left college before completing their degree and were not enrolled in spring 2009 (NCES, 2011). These outcomes indicate that despite increasing enrollment numbers, retaining students remains a challenge (NCES, 2011).

Retention is challenging in community colleges partly because of student demographics (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2012). Many community college students are employed full-time while pursuing their degree part-time. Of the 2003-2004 student cohort studied by the NCES (2011), 52% of those who did not complete college and were not enrolled in spring 2009 worked full-time. In community colleges, where over half of the students attend school part-time (AACC, 2012; NCES, 2011), it is a struggle to retain students. While students in both community colleges and four-year colleges who attended school full-time are retained at rates of 61% and 77% respectively, part-time students are retained at rates less than 50% for both types of institutions (NCES, 2011).

"Student retention is an important consideration in the life of community colleges…[it] is significant for measuring institutional effectiveness in the prevailing environment of accountability and budgetary constraints" (Wild & Ebbers, 2002, p. 503). Due to the importance of retention, Wild and Ebbers (2002) recommend that researchers refine their understanding of

student retention in community colleges by identifying "indicators of student retention" (p. 511). Course retention is one such indicator (Noel-Levitz, 2011). In community colleges, researchers have discovered associations between course retention and degree completion (Adelman, 2005; Moore & Shulock, 2009). Adelman (2005) found that the probability of degree completion is reduced by more than half if course withdrawals exceed 20%. These results were supported by Moore and Shulock (2009), who discovered that "as the percentage of courses dropped increased among community college students, the likelihood of completion declined…an effect that held for full- and part-time students and for students of all racial/ethnic groups" (p. 6). These findings underscore the importance of considering course retention as a contributing factor in overall student retention and degree completion.

Course retention contributes to student retention (Adelman, 2005; Moore & Shulock, 2009), yet it is often overlooked as a factor in retention and it is not included in overall student retention measures used in institutional reporting and evaluating institutional effectiveness (Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2012; Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2010). According to governmental data collection and reporting requirements, student retention is a focal area for both funding entities and institutions of higher education but course retention is not (FDOE, 2012; IES, 2010). In the current fiscally austere educational climate focused on measurement and accountability, a comprehensive examination of retention factors – such as course retention – is important (Wild & Ebbers, 2002).

Reductions in higher education budgets coupled with dramatic increases in college enrollment can put a strain on faculty members (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993) and impact their interactions with students (Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004). Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) noted the detrimental effect that institutional financial austerity has on faculty. "In this context of

diminishing and changing sources of funding for American higher education, many faculty may become increasingly discontent with their jobs and their employing institutions" (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993, p. 350).

Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) found that permanent faculty members – those who were employed full-time and had fringe benefits – expressed dissatisfaction with economically-dependent factors, such as salaries and the methods used to determine salaries and raises, and also with limited research assistance and support services, insufficient time for research, and the poor quality of research facilities. Canales (2008) found the majority of variability in faculty satisfaction was due to the campus climate. He identified three major campus climate issues: focusing on and rewarding teaching, treating minority (i.e. gender, race/ethnicity) faculty members fairly, and treating adjunct faculty members equitably (Canales, 2008). Researchers have noted that adjunct faculty members are not treated equitably (Todd, 2004), and with the dissatisfaction of permanent faculty members increasing (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993), the dissatisfaction of adjunct faculty members – who do not receive equitable treatment or share in the benefits of permanent employment – also increases (Canales, 2008).

The widespread hiring of adjunct instructors in lieu of hiring permanent faculty members has been justified as a cost-saving measure in higher education (State Council of Higher Education for Virginia [SCHEV], 1998; Wickun & Stanley, 2000). "With decreases in governmental funding, and sharp increases in student enrollments, institutions have sought more flexible and less expensive sources of instruction" (Umbach, 2007, p. 92) and this has led to an increase in adjunct faculty (NCES, 2012). The practice of hiring adjunct faculty members instead of permanent faculty members is most pervasive in two-year institutions (NCES, 2012).

Nearly 70% of instructors in community colleges are adjunct employees of the institution (Hagedorn, 2010; NCES, 2012). Many adjunct faculty members report feeling exploited and undervalued by their institutions (Salas, 2006), overlooked when tenure track positions are being filled (Krier, 1993), isolated from and unsupported by colleagues (Hagedorn, 2010; Louis, 2009; Salas, 2006), and pressured to take on additional work that is beyond the scope of their contract (Louis, 2009). According to Todd (2004), colleges are relying too heavily on adjunct labor and this trend "promotes faculty inequality [and] undermines [both] institutional allegiance and faculty morale" (p. 17).

Faculty morale is influenced by the employment status of a faculty member (Sutherland, 2001) and undermining this morale is problematic because morale influences behavior (Call, 1958; Guba, 1958; Organ & Near, 1985; Zeitz, 1983). In the broad field of education, the most recent wave of studies investigating faculty morale was conducted in the 1960's. Since then "researchers have tended to turn away from morale, focusing [instead] on behavior or on objective features of organizations" (Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006, p. 336). However, scholars have noted that adjunct faculty members have low morale, are less committed to the institution, and as a result are generally less effective than permanent faculty members (Sutherland, 2001; Todd, 2004; Umbach, 2007). In colleges, Pannapacker (2000) found that "when teachers come last, so do students" (n.p.).

Students are impacted throughout their academic careers when their institution over relies on the temporary labor provided by adjunct instructors. Faculty members' employment status has been associated with faculty behaviors that influence student retention and success (Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Kenzar & Maxey, 2012; Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004; Pannapacker, 2000; Schuetz, 2002). For example, researchers have uncovered differences

between permanent and adjunct faculty members in both teaching methods inside of the classroom and faculty behaviors outside of the classroom (Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004; Schuetz, 2002). These instructional differences can lead to less effective learning, where students in introductory courses – sections typically taught by adjunct instructors – do not learn the fundamental concepts that their future courses are built upon (Schuetz, 2002).

In addition to instructional differences, students are also influenced by the amount of support outside of class they receive from permanent and adjunct faculty members. Due to the temporary nature of adjunct employment there is less opportunity for adjunct faculty members to get to know their students outside of the classroom (Pannapacker, 2000; Schuetz, 2002). In Florida community colleges, adjunct faculty members have single semester contracts; therefore, the adjunct faculty pool of instructors may fluctuate from semester to semester (Gulf Coast State College [GCSC], 2012; Northwest Florida State College [NWFSC], 2008). As a result, long term faculty support (e.g. advising, letters of recommendation), may not be available to students from their adjunct instructors because they may no longer be employed by the college (Pannapacker, 2000).

Faculty employment status not only influences instructional methods and student support, it also has an effect on student outcomes, such as academic grades and graduation rates. Higher incidences of grade inflation have been found on campuses with a large percentage of adjunct faculty members (Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005). Researchers concluded grade inflation among adjunct faculty members was due to the fear that negative student evaluations may cost them their jobs (Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005; Pannapacker, 2000). Graduation rates are also influenced by faculty status. When a large percentage of courses on a student's schedule are taught by adjunct instructors, researchers have reported a decrease in graduation rates and an

increase in student attrition rates; this is most evident when it occurs during a student's freshman year in school (Glenn, 2008; Ehrenberg, 2012; Kenzar & Maxey, 2012).

Florida's focus on community college student retention and graduation (FDOE, 2012) coupled with the increasing use of adjunct instructors (NCES, 2012) and the impact adjunct faculty members have on student success (Kenzar & Maxey, 2012; Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005; Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004; Schuetz, 2002), makes the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status an area ripe for research. A review of existing literature found few studies that focused specifically on community college course retention and none examining its association with the employment status of faculty members. The current study begins to fill this gap in research.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study was the lack of understanding of student retention indicators in a community college setting. This study specifically addressed the lack of focus on course retention as a measure of student retention and the insufficient understanding of how course retention is related to faculty employment status (i.e. permanent employee, adjunct employee).

A variety of methods are used to retain students in higher education. Some are focused on offering institutional programs aimed at a wide range of students, while others provide targeted services for certain individual or groups of students who may be at a high risk of leaving college (Wild & Ebbers, 2002). A multi-faceted approach is recommended in addressing student retention (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012; Wild & Ebbers, 2002), yet colleges tend to focus exclusively on general measures of student retention instead of considering more specific elements such as

course retention. Tinto (2012) noted that in student retention, "the classroom [is] the domain of institutional action that [is] given the least attention" (p. viii).

Faculty members are critical in meeting the institutional goal of retaining students. The faculty/student dynamic is an important, yet overlooked, factor that contributes to retaining students in courses (Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2003; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011; Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012). Additionally, students' interactions with faculty members can either help or hinder a college's efforts to retain students (Tinto, 1993). Faculty behaviors, including engagement and interaction with students, are associated with faculty morale and the attitudes faculty members have toward the college (Call, 1958; Guba, 1958; Organ & Near, 1985; Zeitz, 1983). Morale and faculty attitudes have also been linked to faculty employment status (Hagedorn, 2010) and researchers have found variations in faculty/student interactions, both inside and outside of the classroom, based on faculty status (Jaeger, 2008; Schuetz, 2002). Given these differences, and the belief that adjunct faculty have low morale and lack both ability and institutional commitment (Sutherland, 2001), it is important to explore the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status. Therefore, the purpose of this correlational research was to study the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status.

By using course retention data as a measure of student retention, this study is unique in that it adopts a micro-level view of student retention instead of focusing on macro-level institutional retention initiatives and outcomes. This research also addressed the relationship between course retention and higher education staffing trends, such as the increased use of adjunct instructors (NCES, 2012). Examining the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status contributes to a deeper understanding of factors associated with

student retention. The link between course retention and faculty status had yet to be explored, therefore, this correlational study examined the relationship between these variables.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this correlational study was to examine the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status by applying Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention, which identified faculty interaction as a significant factor influencing the retention of students in college. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between course retention and faculty status at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public community college. The variables of interest included course retention and faculty employment status, also referred to as faculty status. Course retention was defined as the percentage of students successfully completing a course with a final grade of C or higher. Faculty status was defined as the employment classification of a faculty member, which included either permanent employee or adjunct employee. Adjunct faculty members are "employed on a temporary basis at institutions of higher education. They…have the same teaching responsibilities as regular [permanent] professors. However, their tenure is guaranteed only for a single semester" (Rubin, 2009).

Significance of the Study

The importance of retaining students in college so that they earn a higher education degree impacts both the United States as a whole and each individual state. According to the Florida Department of Education [FDOE] (2011), Florida TaxWatch stated, "the increased number of graduates in 2015–16 is projected to add over $33 billion to Florida's economy and provide economic activity that leads to the creation of 250,000 jobs" (Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2011, p. 8).

Given the increasing importance of community colleges in educating the workforce (Fry, 2009) and the fiscal importance of retaining college students (Tinto, 1993; Wild & Ebbers, 2002), this study focused on the first two years of higher education at a community college in north Florida. These first two years are critically important in students' successfully completing college (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012). Tinto (1993) noted the importance of first year student experiences in shaping students educational attainment. "Most [student attrition] either arises during the first year of college or has its roots in the first-year experience" (Tinto, 1993, p. 152).

There is a focus in higher education on providing programs and developing innovative initiatives to improve student retention rates (Tinto, 2012). However, the importance of student-specific initiatives and collecting student-specific data are often discounted in favor of implementing broad-based campus wide programs targeted towards assisting populations of students identified as having a high risk of attrition (GCSC, 2011).

Course retention is one important – yet often overlooked – piece of a college's overall student retention rate. Course enrollment data are readily accessible and able to be used in determining course retention patterns for students, courses, and faculty members. Course retention data for individual students can identify issues such as excessive course withdrawals. Students who repeatedly withdraw from classes are less likely to graduate from college (Moore & Shulock, 2009). Course retention data for specific classes can alert administrators and faculty members to possible problems with course curriculum, materials, or delivery. Likewise, course retention data for each faculty member can assist administrators in identifying and coaching faculty members who have a consistently low level of retention in their classes.

Equally important to obtaining course-based retention information is recognizing the influence of the faculty/student relationship on retention (Tinto, 1993). Faculty-student

interaction has been identified as a significant component in a student's decision to leave college prior to completing his/her degree (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993). According to researchers, the degree to which faculty members interact with students are influenced by faculty status (Jaeger, 2008; Schuetz, 2002) and faculty attitudes, specifically their sense of morale in the workplace (Lowe, Schellenberg, & Shannon, 2003; Sutherland, 2001; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Faculty status and morale are areas that have been overlooked in studies on student retention even though faculty members are a critical factor in the success or failure of students (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012).

Determining whether course retention is related to faculty status will provide college administrators with valuable insight into a meaningful component in student retention and success. The relationship between course retention and faculty status informs educational leaders of the importance of attending to staffing patterns, adjunct faculty needs, and indicators of overall student retention. College administrators can maximize the use of their adjunct faculty group, which has become the majority group (NCES, 2012), while simultaneously increasing the course retention of students.

Research Questions

Two research questions regarding the relationship between course retention and faculty status are posed in this study.

1. Is there a correlation between the employment status of faculty members and course retention?
2. Is there a difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members?

Null Hypotheses

The relationship between faculty status and course retention is tested using two null hypotheses.

1. H_o1: There is no correlation between the employment status of faculty members and course retention.
2. H_o2: There is no difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members.

Identification of Variables

Variables in this study are considered equal and were not identified as independent or dependent. In correlational and ANOVA techniques, the purpose of analyses is to examine the relationship between variables not to predict or determine causality (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Predicting the impact that an independent variable has on a dependent variable is not the goal of this study.

The first variable in this study was faculty status. Faculty status was defined as a faculty member's employment classification of either permanent or adjunct. The status of faculty members, as permanent or adjunct, was included in the data set provided to the researcher by the Director of Institutional Research at the community college.

The second variable was course retention, which was defined as the percentage of "students enrolled in each college course after the course census date and how many successfully completed the course" with a grade of C or above (Seidman, 1996, p. 19). Information on course retention was gathered by the Director of Institutional Research and included in the data set provided to the researcher.

Definitions

Inconsistent definitions for student retention exist but one similarity in the definitions is a focus on student progress towards academic goals (Hagedorn, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). In this study, course retention was measured in courses taught by permanent and adjunct faculty members at the mid-sized public community college in north Florida.

Faculty Employment Status

Faculty employment status, also referred to as faculty status, was defined as an employment classification for faculty members. Categories in the classification included permanent faculty member and adjunct faculty member.

Adjunct Faculty Member

An adjunct faculty member was defined in this study as one who works at the college in a temporary instructional position. Most adjunct faculty members receive low pay per course, no fringe benefits, and limited advanced notice of their teaching schedule (Kazar & Mazey, 2012; Schuetz, 2002).

Permanent Faculty Member

A permanent faculty member was defined in this study as one who works at the college in a permanent position with the associated fringe benefits and employment security.

Course Retention

Course retention was defined as the percentage of students who successfully completed a given course at the conclusion of the entire course term. Successful completion was measured by students earning a minimum grade of C in the course.

Student Attrition

Student attrition was defined as leaving college prior to degree completion.

Student Retention

Student retention was defined as persisting in college until completing a degree.

Research Summary

This quantitative research study was conducted using a correlational design. A correlational approach was selected because the research intent was to examine relationships, instead of predicting cause and/or effect. Leedy and Ormrod (2001) noted, "correlation does not, in and of itself, indicate causation" (p. 193). Non-random purposive sampling was used to select the sample. The sample included permanent and adjunct faculty members teaching during the fall 2011 semester at Florida Community College. These faculty members were under the same college leadership and were governed by the same policies and procedures regarding administrative oversight, teacher duties, and pay – factors that were both associated with morale (Baehr & Renck, 1958) and differed based on a faculty member's employment status (Kazar & Maxey, 2012; Krier & Staples, 1993).

Faculty status data was collected for the fall 2011 semester from the Director of Institutional Research at Florida Community College. Faculty members were grouped by status (e.g. permanent, adjunct) for the analysis. Course retention was determined using enrollment data provided by the community college's Director of Institutional Research. The percentage of students who successfully completed (i.e. with a minimum grade of C) courses taught by participating faculty members during the given semester, were considered "retained" in the courses. The data included an aggregate number of enrolled students and retained students for each faculty member. Individual student information was not included in the dataset.

All data was imported into the PASW Statistics 18 computer program. To analyze the correlation between faculty employment status and the retention of their students, a point-biserial

correlation was conducted. Using a point-biserial correlation showed the strength of the linear relationship between the variables and, because faculty status and course retention have not previously been examined, it provided foundational information for future studies. Correlation values range from -1 to +1. A correlation of less than zero indicates a negative association between the variables – the value of one increases while the other decreases. A correlation of more than zero indicates a positive association – the values of both variables either increase or decrease together. A zero correlation indicates no association exists between the variables. The point-biserial correlation was used because it allows for analysis of both dichotomous and continuous variables, and it does not require variables to be in the same unit of measurement nor identified as independent or dependent.

In order to examine the differences in course retention between the permanent and adjunct faculty members, as well as determine statistical significance, the data was analyzed using a one-way ANOVA. An ANOVA was selected to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means of the permanent and adjunct faculty groups. Statistical significance shows the null hypothesis should be rejected because meaningful differences between the means are found. Rejecting the null hypothesis indicates that there is a meaningful difference between the course retention rates of permanent and adjunct faculty members.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

A core assumption was made regarding the concept of faculty status in this study. It was assumed that the employment classification of adjunct included faculty members who worked in temporary positions contingent on institutional needs with term-to-term contracts that included

no fringe benefits. It was also assumed that the adjunct employment classification impacted faculty performance, morale, and student outcomes regardless of the number of courses taught or the number of institutions where an adjunct instructor was employed.

Limitations

This proposed study had several limitations, including sample size, generalizability, population, and design. Focusing on a single institution yielded a relatively small sample size. The sample was sufficient for analysis (Chang, n.d.), but obtaining a larger sample size by including multiple institutions would increase the strength of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Both permanent and adjunct faculty members at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public community college, were included in the study. The number of courses taught by each faculty member was not collected in order to maintain anonymity in the data set; however, the number of courses taught would have been informative. For example, while colleges often have policies limiting the number of courses adjunct instructors can teach each semester these limits are only in place at the employing institution. In addition, adjunct instructors often teach at multiple institutions simultaneously so their instructional responsibilities reach beyond a single institution. As a result, the number of courses an adjunct instructor teaches per semester may be equivalent to, or exceed, the number of courses taught by his/her permanent faculty counterpart (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

The population identified for this study included permanent and adjunct faculty members and their students at Florida Community, a mid-sized public community college located in north Florida. Limiting the research to a single community college may have impacted the generalizability of the findings. Florida is a very socioeconomically diverse state, with 28 public community colleges (FDOE, 2011). Unlike the selected community college, many of the other

27 colleges are located in more densely populated and culturally varied areas of the state. Therefore, the demographics may not be representative and findings may not be generalizable to the larger community college population in Florida or nationwide.

This study had a correlational design. As such, this research was not predictive. It could not determine whether faculty status caused course retention, it only identified whether a relationship existed and, if so, the type of relationship. This study did not consider other factors that may influence course retention (e.g. other courses/instructors, financial aid availability, student personal issues).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In higher education measurable student outcomes such as student retention rates have increasingly been the focus of regulatory and funding entities (Moore & Shulock, 2009). Many studies have been conducted in order to determine factors that drive student attrition in the hope of addressing these issues and increasing student retention (Adelman, 2005; Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993). Colleges offer several programs, indeed some have entire departments, aimed at increasing student retention. Yet aspects of student retention, such as course retention, have largely been ignored by both researchers and administrators. While faculty interaction has been identified as important in student retention (Tinto, 1973; Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012), the employment status of faculty members and its relationship to course retention has not been examined. This study begins to fill the existing gap in research.

The Florida Department of Education (2011) reported the following:

> During the past five years, The Florida College System has grown tremendously in size and in complexity…The challenge of the next five years will be to increase certificate and degree completion rates while making it possible for more students to enroll in our programs. Our partnerships…must focus more clearly on college readiness and baccalaureate degree completions, respectively. All of this must be accomplished in the most cost-effective way as our colleges will need to continue to thrive in a limited resource environment. The economic recovery in Florida and the welfare of its workforce will, in part, depend on how well The Florida College System steps up to this challenge. (p. 11)

The state of Florida is focused on students completing their college degrees (FDOE, 2011). In order to reach the goal of increasing completion rates at Florida colleges, students must remain in school until they complete their programs of study. Therefore, comprehensive student retention measures and efforts are critical in meeting this statewide objective.

Over forty years of research were considered in this review of literature. Three questions central to understanding faculty status and course retention are addressed in the following literature review. First, what theoretical approach addresses student retention, specifically in higher education? Second, what does the literature reveal about the current state of higher education, retaining students in college, faculty status, and faculty morale? Finally, how does the existing knowledge of course retention and faculty status frame the proposed study?

Theoretical Framework

Student Retention Theory

The interconnectedness of educational and social characteristics that influence students' decisions about persisting in college serve as the foundation for theories on student retention. Tinto's (1975) classic theory of student retention proposes dropout decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including social/individual characteristics, academic and social systems, academic and social integration, and goal and institutional commitment. Tinto (1975) classifies faculty interactions as a key component of the academic system in higher education and he traces a path between faculty interaction, academic integration, and institutional commitment. In Tinto's (1993) longitudinal model of student departure, he explores the interplay of student and institutional factors over time and how these factors influence student departure decisions.

Tinto's (1993) theoretical model is organized along a time-based continuum. It begins with students' attributes prior to college entry (e.g. family background, skills/abilities, previous

education) influencing their goals, intentions, and commitments – both institutional commitments and external commitments. These goals/commitments interact with students' institutional experiences to determine their level of academic and social integration in the institution. Key elements of the institutional experience include the academic system (e.g. academic performance, faculty/staff interactions) and the social system (e.g. extracurricular activities, peer group interactions). Students' level of integration in the institution is based upon the cumulative influence of their pre-entry attributes, goals and commitments, and their institutional experiences. Institutional integration, in turn, influences students' post-entry goals and commitments – which may have changed since entering college. Evaluating these latter goals and commitments based upon students' accumulated experiences, ultimately leads to their decision to either remain in or depart from college (Tinto, 1993).

Researchers support Tinto's (1993) focus on student experiences. "In looking at student retention, it is important to understand how negative encounters can lead students to withdraw, while positive encounters cause students to invest in the college experience" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 2). Students' classroom experiences and faculty interactions have been shown to influence whether students' decide to invest in the college experience and remain in college (Pascarella, Seifert, & Whitt, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 2012). As a result, faculty members play a vital role in meeting the institutional goal of retaining students (Tinto, 2012). Tinto (1993, 2012) specifically identified students' interactions with faculty during their first two years of college as a significant factor influencing retention. "For new students in particular engagement in the community of the classroom becomes a gateway for subsequent student involvement" that leads to integration in the institution and contributes to student retention (Tinto, 1993, p. 132).

In his theoretical model, Tinto (1993) placed faculty interactions among the institutional experiences of students in the academic system. He differentiated between formal (e.g. academic performance) and informal (e.g. faculty interaction) aspects of the academic system. Also included in the institutional experiences influencing student departure decisions, were formal and informal factors in the social system. Formal social experiences included participation in extracurricular activities and informal experiences included interactions with peers, often originating in the classroom. Tinto's (1993) theory of student retention, which emphasizes the importance of students' classroom experiences and interactions with faculty members, was used as the foundation of this study on course retention and faculty status.

Review of the Literature

Higher Education

Difficult economic times result in educational leaders enacting budget reduction measures that initiate many organizational and individual changes, such as reducing departmental funding, reorganizing or eliminating programs, restructuring jobs, terminating employees, reducing benefits, increasing tuition, offering fewer courses, and increasing class sizes. These changes not only impact the students, but the faculty as well. In a college's mission to educate the student population, faculty members are critical. Dramatic reductions in higher education budgets and the lack of job security can put a strain on faculty members. Collegial relationships, which researchers have identified as a significant factor in workplace morale and employee satisfaction, can suffer (Baher & Renck, 1958; Blocker & Richardson, 1963; Call, 1958; Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993; Lowe, Schellenberg & Shannon, 2003; Olsen, 1993).

In order to counteract the impact of the economic recession, and associated funding cuts, some educational leaders in the Southeast have taken both immediate action and planned long-

term strategies to reduce costs. Immediate actions taken by schools include enacting a college-wide, five-day, mandatory furlough for faculty and staff; delaying construction projects; eliminating faculty, adjunct, and staff positions; encouraging early retirement; cutting nonessential expenses (e.g. travel); raising student tuition; and foregoing employee raises ("Colleges Struggling," 2008; Davenport, 2008; Davenport, 2009).

Long term plans included consolidating or eliminating programs, reducing administrative costs, encouraging programs to become self-supporting, and expanding alternative revenue streams such as summer school, camps, and conferences ("Colleges Struggling," 2008; Davenport, 2008; Davenport, 2009). Both immediate and long-term budget-cutting measures affect college faculty. These actions increase faculty workloads, while lowering both morale and job satisfaction (Blocker & Richardson, 1963). "In this context of diminishing and changing sources of funding for American higher education, many faculty may become increasingly discontent with their jobs and their employing institutions" (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993, p. 350).

In addition to the recent trend of budget restriction measures in higher education, the past three decades have seen a dramatic shift in the employment status of instructional personnel. Since 1975, the number of permanent faculty members has decreased more than 10%, while the number of adjunct faculty members has risen over 15% (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2012). At community colleges this increase has been even more drastic, with over 70% of faculty members working as adjuncts in 2011 (NCES, 2012).

Studies conducted within the past decade indicate that the overuse of adjunct faculty can have negative effects on faculty as well as students. Faculty members experience an erosion of morale and a lack of institutional credibility and support (Krier & Staples, 1993; Sutherland, 2001). Students experience a decreased likelihood of persistence after their freshman year

(Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jaeger & Egan, 2011), and graduation or transfer to another college (Egan & Jaeger, 2009; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Egan, 2009).

Student Retention

McClenney and Waiwaiole (2005) noted the following:

> If one thing is clear in the community college world, it is that access to higher education—while critically important—is no longer enough. Unless followed by persistence and meaningful attainment access can become an empty promise. Understanding the importance of postsecondary education, both to individuals and to the society, people are turning their attention to the attainment issue. On campuses and in capitol buildings, in committee rooms and conferences, the search is on for ways to improve student persistence and promote higher levels of student success. (p. 33)

Student retention is a critical component of persistence in college and, ultimately, degree completion (McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005; Tinto, 1975). As a result of this increased focus on the role of retention in degree completion, colleges are required to report student retention data to governing bodies as well as funding and accreditation entities. Many studies have been conducted and programs developed to assess and increase student retention. Researchers have found student retention to be associated with State expenditures on higher education (Chen & John, 2011), effective instruction (Pascarella, Seifert, & Whitt, 2008), and faculty interactions (McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005; Tinto, 1975).

Open-door admission policy. Community colleges have open-door admissions policies, which offer college admission to all students who have earned a high school diploma or GED and wish to attend community college to further their education (Allen, 2012). Craig and Ward

(2007) noted, these institutions "are more likely to lose students due to their open-door admissions policies that exclude few [partly because] they have taken on the responsibility of remedial education" (p. 506). In 2000, 42% of freshman students entering public community colleges required remediation in at least one course (NCES, 2003).

Adelman (1996) found that 45% of college students who took one remedial course earned a bachelor's degree, while only 24% of those students who took three or more remedial courses earned a bachelor's degree. Hoyt (1999) examined this relationship between remedial education and student attainment in a large urban community college. By tracking the 1993, 1994, and 1995 fall cohorts, he was able to longitudinally study the graduation, transfer, and attrition rates of students at the college. Like Adelman (1996), Hoyt (1999) found a consistent, negative relationship between student retention and remedial coursework. As students' remedial course loads increased, student retention decreased (Hoyt, 1999).

Course retention. Classrooms are central to creating a sense of community in college. This is particularly true in non-residential campuses where course attendance is a student's primary source of interaction with faculty members and fellow students. Withdrawing from class can have detrimental effects on student persistence towards graduation as well as institutional measures of success, such as student retention and graduation rates. "Excessive course withdrawals have a negative impact on degree completion… making measures of a student's rate of successfully completing courses an important indicator of likely success" (Moore & Shulock, 2009, p. 5). For community college students, Moore and Shulock (2009) found this pattern to be consistent regardless of full-time or part-time enrollment, or racial/ethnic group.

In his study of college degree completion, Adelman (2005) emphasized the importance of maintaining student momentum in the progress towards graduation. Momentum could be maintained through a variety of methods, such as (a) continuous course enrollment, including summer, (b) earning a minimum of 20 credits within the first calendar year of enrollment, (c) minimizing no-penalty course withdrawals and repeats, and (d) focusing on academic preparation in high school. When examining college degree completion, Adelman (2005) identified excessive course withdrawals and course repetition among the most detrimental factors to students. Students "who withdrew from or repeated 20 percent or more of their course attempts…[cut] the probability of completing a degree in half" (Adelman, 2005, p. 28).

Online courses. Increasingly, online courses are offered as an alternative to campus-based courses, thereby increasing flexibility and availability for students. In their study on student retention in community college online courses, Liu, Gomez, and Lin (2009) examined the predictability of course retention and final grade based on social presence. Social presence was defined as "the degree of one's feeling, perception and reaction to another intellectual entity in the online environment" (Liu, Gomez, & Lin, 2009, p. 165). Focusing on the relational aspect of online education is strikingly similar to the emphasis on faculty and peer relationships in studies on traditional classroom-based education. Their findings, like those for face-to-face courses, emphasized the importance of relationships in retention. Liu and colleagues (2009) showed that social presence in online courses significantly predicted both student retention and final grades.

Student and faculty interaction. Tinto (1993) noted the critical importance of faculty members in fostering student development and encouraging student persistence in college. In a study by Schreiner et al. (2011) students identified faculty behaviors that create positive

connections with students. These included professors who knew each of their students by name, recognized when a student was absent, were available during office hours to provide advice or assistance, and interacted with students at social activities such as sporting events or field trips (Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011).

Lundquist, Spalding, and Landrum (2003) focused on the faculty-student dynamic and how it impacted retention. Specifically, they examined the relationship of faculty attitudes and behaviors on students' consideration of leaving college. They found the top faculty attitudes that prompted students to consider leaving the institution were having a lack of empathy and exhibiting an uncaring demeanor. The top faculty behaviors included insulting students and failing to compromise course requirements for extenuating circumstances in students' lives. Three items on the survey were found to predict student responses to the statement "I have thought about leaving the university because of faculty attitudes or behaviors" (Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2003, p. 128). These included exhibiting a lack of support for students, failing to promptly respond to student communication (e.g. phone, email), and seeming unapproachable.

Despite the importance of faculty interaction with students and the ability of faculty to respond to student concerns in person, over the phone, or even electronically, studies have found that students are hesitant to interact with faculty. Survey results from the Center for Community College Student Engagement (2011) found that 58 percent of students frequently use email to contact their professors and 48 percent regularly discuss grades with their professors. Only 26 percent of students often discuss career plans with faculty members, 46 percent have never discussed course readings with their professors outside of the classroom, and 70 percent of students have never worked on non-course-related activities with their professors. This

hesitancy to interact with faculty members is exacerbated by the lack of availability of adjunct instructors to meet with students outside of the classroom.

Faculty Status

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that 1.3 million people were employed as faculty members at degree-granting institutions in fall 2010. Of these, 45% were permanent faculty and 56% were adjunct faculty. In community colleges the imbalance is even more pronounced, with nearly three-fourths of faculty members employed as adjuncts, and the remaining fourth holding permanent appointments (NCES, 2012).

According to Todd (2004):

> The extensive use of adjuncts in place of [permanent] positions reflects a crisis in higher education. The policy not only demeans the professoriate, it also erodes the process of shared governance in colleges and universities, promotes faculty inequity, undermines institutional allegiance and faculty morale, eliminates common standards for professional responsibilities and working conditions, and perhaps worst of all, by creating an atmosphere of arbitrary procedures and chronic job insecurity, it destroys the intellectual and creative self-confidence of professors that is central to the integrity of any college or university. (p. 18)

Institutional support and control. Wickrun and Stanley (2000) identified the lack of institutional support as a weakness in the adjunct faculty system. They found the unsupportive environment for adjuncts was evidenced in a variety of ways, namely low salaries, no fringe benefits, and a lack of respect from permanent faculty members. In addition, many adjunct instructors were not provided with office space, phones, job descriptions, syllabi, orientations, or guidance in teaching methodology. The only tools some adjuncts received included a copy of

the textbook, a class roster, and the room number where the class meets (Wickrun & Stanley, 2000). Low salaries and lack of office space were themes repeated in several studies about adjunct instructors (Salas, 2006; Schuetz, 2002; Wickrun & Stanley, 2000). Adjunct faculty members were also found to be isolated from other colleagues and prevented from participating in professional development opportunities (Schuetz, 2002).

Salas (2006) noted the following issues with adjunct labor: low salaries, no health or retirement benefits, limited office space, and little time for campus involvement outside of their classroom responsibilities. Salas (2006) also found that many adjunct faculty members teach the same number of courses as their permanent counterparts, yet compensation levels are dramatically different. For example, the average adjunct salary ranges between $1,500 and $2,500 per course (Salas, 2006), whereas the average annual salaries for permanent faculty at public two-year colleges is $62,300 (NCES, 2012). Permanent community college faculty members typically teach five courses during the fall semester and five courses during the spring semester (K-20 Education Code, 2012), for a total annual course load of ten and an average per course salary of $6,230. An adjunct faculty member teaching ten courses per year at the highest salary of $2,500 per course is earning only $25,000 per year. The difference in the earnings per course between permanent and adjunct faculty members is $3,730 and the difference in their annual earnings is $37,300.

The salary imbalance between permanent and adjunct faculty is evident (Flaherty, 2013; Salas, 2006), but less evident is the difference between administrative oversight and control of the faculty groups. Krier and Staples (1993) noted that the increased institutional dependence on adjunct faculty and the methods administrators use to supervise these faculty members signaled

"a decline in the professional status of college instructors…[and rendering adjunct] faculty invisible but controlled" (p. 119).

In their study, Krier and Staples (1993) focused on the faculty management practices of community colleges since these institutions are the most dependent on adjunct faculty labor to meet their instructional needs. For example, the methods used by community colleges to evaluate and control adjunct faculty members were described as impersonal "surveillance and disciplinary techniques" similar to those originating from other institutional settings, such as prisons, factories, and asylums (Krier & Staples, 1993, p. 120). These techniques included administrative control over textbook selection, course policies, assignments, and syllabi. In addition, Krier and Staples (1993) found that adjunct faculty members are monitored through attendance/sign-in sheets, electronic key card access, periodic classroom visits from supervisors, teaching evaluations by students, and by student data (e.g. course enrollment, grade distributions, final exam grades). These impersonal and objective supervisory methods can contribute to the sense of isolation cited by many adjunct faculty members as a source of dissatisfaction with their status in the college (Hagedorn, 2010; Schuetz, 2002).

Student outcomes. Pannapacker (2000) qualitatively examined the ways in which using adjunct faculty negatively impacts students. Using a combination of personal interviews, letters, and observations conducted at six colleges over a 14-year period, he identified ten ways that dependence on adjunct instructors harms students: faculty inaccessibility, inadequate advising, incoherent curricula, declining faculty expertise, impaired academic freedom, lowered academic standards, grade inflation, lowered value of degree, student cynicism, and costs to students and their families.

Additionally, courses taught by adjunct faculty members are often added to the schedule at the last minute leaving limited time to prepare, or cancelled at the last minute leaving no time to secure replacement income (Pannapacker, 2000; Street, Maisto, Merves, Rhoades, 2012). Street and colleagues (2012) termed this practice of last-minute hiring "just-in-time employment" (p. 5) and noted the negative impact this managerial strategy has on instructional preparation and teacher effectiveness.

Instructional practices. Kuh et al. (2004) studied instructional practices and student engagement using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement. Their examination revealed differences in the instructional methods of permanent and adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty members were less likely than their permanent counterparts to encourage the consideration of diverse perspectives and provide activities and assignments that were academically challenging (Kuh, Laird, & Umbach, 2004).

Research by Schuetz (2002) supports these findings. Using data from the 2000 Center for the Study of Community Colleges survey, she studied the differences in instructional practices used by permanent and adjunct community college faculty. Techniques that enhanced student learning, such as student collaboration, group projects, and teamwork activities were three times more likely to occur in a permanent faculty member's course. Adjunct faculty members were less likely than permanent faculty members to have made revisions to their course(s) within the past three years, including updating the syllabus and developing multimedia materials. (Schuetz, 2002).

Grading. In addition to instructional differences between permanent and adjunct faculty, students experience grading distinctions as well. When studying grade inflation, Kezim, Pariseau, and Quinn (2005) found an upward trend over the past two decades, which corresponds

with the increased institutional dependence on adjunct faculty. They examined the grading practices of full-time tenured, full-time non-tenured and adjunct faculty members in a small business school in the Northeast. Significant grading differences were found between both adjunct and tenured faculty and adjunct and non-tenured faculty. Adjunct faculty grades were consistently higher than those of both groups of full-time faculty, indicating that grade inflation intensified with the increased use of adjunct faculty (Kezim et al., 2005). Kezim, Pariseau, and Quinn (2005) noted this tendency is due to the insecurity of adjunct employment, instructors inflate grades in an effort to obtain more positive student evaluation scores (Kezim et al., 2005).

Faculty/student interaction. Student persistence in higher education is correlated with faculty interaction (Tinto, 1993, 2012), which is influenced by faculty status (Jaeger, 2008; Schuetz, 2002). Schuetz (2002) discovered that adjunct faculty members "are twice as likely [as permanent faculty members] to report spending no time with students outside of class on their most recent working day" (p. 42). When studying the persistence of students at public institutions in the Southeast, Jaeger (2008) found exposure to adjunct faculty has negative student outcomes relating to persistence, degree completion, and transfer to other institutions.

According to Jaeger (2008), over one-third of the freshman level courses were taught by adjunct faculty, and students taking over 75% of their first-year courses with adjunct instructors were significantly less likely to persist in college. In community colleges, nearly half of a student's freshman credit hours are taught by adjunct faculty. This negatively influences both persistence and the likelihood of transferring to a four-year institution (Jaeger, 2008).

Campus interactions and institutional commitment. "Social inclusion is a basic means of developing a connection – a sense of organizational belonging – between adjuncts and the colleges that depend upon them" (Spaniel & Scott, 2012, p. 10). Researchers note that

adjunct faculty members who have a strong sense of belonging to the institution also have strong institutional commitment (Hardcastle, 2010; Merriman, 2010). Duhn (2013) examined the institutional commitment and job satisfaction of adjunct faculty. Studying 180 adjunct faculty members at multiple campuses of a state university, Duhn (2013) found that variations in the commitment of adjunct faculty to the institution was predicted by job characteristics, such as autonomy and task significance. The level of adjunct faculty members' job satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with their level of commitment to the institution (Duhn, 2013).

During the course of studying differences in the interactions and satisfaction of community college faculty members based on gender, Hagedorn (2010) discovered that employment status was more influential than gender. For reluctant adjunct faculty members – those who hoped to secure a permanent position – the differences in levels of satisfaction with the institution and interactions with both administrators and colleagues were stark. She found distinct status divisions among the faculty, with adjunct instructors feeling exploited by administrators and isolated from their colleagues. Despite being the faculty majority, adjunct instructors were not included in meetings of permanent faculty and were not offered opportunities to meet with fellow adjunct instructional personnel (Hagedorn, 2010).

Adjunct faculty members' isolation from campus life has been supported by other researchers and when comparing the collegial and institutional interactions of permanent and adjunct faculty several differences are revealed. For example, Schuetz (2002) found that nearly half of adjunct faculty members had no contact with colleagues, compared to only one-fourth of permanent faculty. Participation in institutional activities (e.g. committees, governance) increase campus interactions, yet nearly 70% of adjunct faculty members report no involvement in institutional activities (Schuetz, 2002). When studying adjunct faculty isolation, Dolan (2011)

identified the primary issues of faculty concern as "(a) inadequate frequency and depth of communication, regardless of the means used, whether online or face-to-face; (b) lack of recognition of instructors' value to the institution; and (c) lack of opportunities for skill development" (p. 62). The isolation of adjunct faculty from campus life leads to a lack of knowledge of the institutional services and supports available to both students and staff (Kezar & Maxey, 2012; Schuetz, 2002).

With the nature of adjunct faculty employment as temporary, instructors are often not provided with the tools they need in order to sufficiently interact with students, including office space and a campus e-mail account or phone number (Kezar & Maxey, 2012). Lacking access to adequate space to meet with students, adjunct instructors are twice as likely as permanent faculty to report spending no time with students outside of the classroom (Kezar & Maxey, 2012). Faculty interaction with students is an influential factor in student retention (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012), so students suffer without this out-of-classroom access to adjunct faculty personnel (Kezar & Maxey, 2012).

Faculty morale

Sutherland (2001) found that adjunct faculty members "powerfully resent the inequities they endure, and the inequitable treatment often affects their morale and their commitment" (p. 10). Examination of the literature on employee morale reveals that a consistently used operational definition of morale fails to exist. Definitions of morale range from support of organizational policies and procedures (Blocker & Richardson, 1963) to joyfully performing duties above and beyond those that are required (Guba, 1958; Organ & Near, 1985; Roth, 1958). Oftentimes, morale and satisfaction are used interchangeably, and in many studies the concept of morale is left undefined.

Many researchers have classified morale in terms of internalization of organizational goals and achievement of group rapport (Call, 1958; Guba, 1958; Zeitz, 1983). Call (1958) described morale as an employee's loyalty and attitude towards his or her job. In conceptualizing morale using a broader view, including feelings of belonging and shared goals, Guba (1958) defined morale as "a predisposition on the part of persons engaged in an enterprise to put forth extra effort in the achievement of group goals or objectives" (p. 198). Good morale was evident when employees were willing to go above and beyond their assigned duties to meet the organization's needs. Zeitz (1983) also described morale as a collective trait, which concerned employee's "affective or emotive responses to the organization – their general sense of well-being and enthusiasm for collective endeavors" (p. 1089).

This collective orientation and occupational enthusiasm was mirrored in Roth's (1958) description of morale. He explained occupational morale as "those occupational attitudes and values held by its members which seem to be built-in, and provides them with satisfying identification symbols and esprit de corps" (p. 145). Baehr and Renck (1958) viewed morale as a state of being resulting from group goal achievement, plus personal satisfaction. Organ and Near (1985) noted the importance of personal and emotional traits, in their evaluations of historical definitions of morale. Historically, definitions of morale described affective states of being, including words such as hopeful, cheerful, and individual well-being (Organ & Near, 1985). Running contrary to the broader, collective and individual aspects described in morale research, Blocker and Richardson (1963) viewed morale as a limited term relating solely to personnel policies and procedures.

Dictionaries define morale in an encompassing manner that seems to go beyond simply being satisfied with one's circumstance. Morale is defined as "the degree of mental or moral

confidence of a person or group; [a] spirit of optimism" (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.). It is also described as "an emotional or mental condition with respect to cheerfulness, confidence, zeal…especially in the face of opposition [or] hardship" (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

Morale and job performance. Organizational factors and the perceived healthiness of a work environment influence both employee attitudes and performance (Lowe, Schellenberg, & Shannon, 2003). Lowe, Schellenberg, and Shannon (2003) examined employees' perceptions of the health of their workplace environment and how those perceptions influenced employee's attitudes (i.e. job satisfaction, organizational commitment, feelings of morale) and job performance (i.e. absenteeism, intent to leave). Healthy working conditions included those that offered employees "jobs with reasonable demands…high intrinsic and extrinsic rewards…good social supports…[and] influence in workplace decisions" (Lowe et al., 2003. p. 394). A significant relationship was found between employees perceiving their workplace as healthy and their job performance. Specifically, as the perception of workplace health increased, employee absenteeism and intent to leave decreased (Lowe et al., 2003).

Other researchers have found support for a relationship between morale and job performance. Weakliem and Frenkel (2006) investigated the influence of morale on workplace productivity in a variety of organizational settings. They found a linear relationship between morale and productivity, with higher levels of morale yielding higher levels of productivity. At higher levels of morale, the relationship between productivity and work effort strengthened.

Faculty morale in higher education. Call (1958) reviewed morale research conducted in businesses as well as higher education. He noted ten significant factors identified in research as influencing employee morale: Worthy objectives, good leadership, homogeneity, symbolism, decentralization, personnel techniques, work environment, training, and organization confidence.

Fluctuations in the economy, including downward movement and associated negative consequences, influence the morale and satisfaction of higher education faculty. Hagedorn (2010) found morale was an issue when adjunct faculty members desired permanent faculty employment. Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) explored faculty morale at a large public university in relation to the tightening national economic climate. Using a three-part case study comprised of questionnaires, interviews, and university reports, they examined the relationship between organizational funding and employee attitudes regarding compensation, morale, satisfaction, and institutional commitment.

Despite economic hardships at the University of Oregon, Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) found their respondents to be satisfied in a number of areas: Colleague quality, geographic location, opportunities to participate in campus decision-making, individual authority, job benefits, freedom to pursue outside work, and institutional reputation. Faculty members expressed dissatisfaction with salaries and the methods used to determine both salaries and raises. Limited research assistance and support services, insufficient time for research, and poor quality of research facilities were also areas of faculty displeasure.

Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) observed disparities in salary and satisfaction levels based upon academic field. Upper tier disciplines were those able to secure supplemental financial support, such as physical sciences, business and computer science. These disciplines were in a stronger position to counteract economic tightening than lower tier disciplines without supplemental funding. A program's ability to supplement salaries and provide comparative job security was associated with higher levels of faculty satisfaction.

Cost-cutting measures taken by the university (e.g. program reorganizations, program eliminations, reductions in faculty and staff) had been found to disproportionately affect some

fields more than others (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993). Programs that suffered the most were human services, education, and community health – the lower tier disciplines. As a result, job security was tenuous and faculty members typically earned $40,000 or less annually, which was significantly lower than faculty in other academic areas of the university. Faculty members in these programs reported lower levels of satisfaction than those in other disciplines. Faculty satisfaction, morale, and collegial relationships suffered due to departmental resource inequalities. One respondent stated, "the pecking order between disciplines has been, not so slowly, destroying the collegiality that this institution was once known for" (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993, p. 360).

Faculty with high levels of dissatisfaction expressed a corresponding high likelihood of departure (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993). Over 50% of respondents were considered "at risk" faculty, meaning individuals who indicated a likelihood of searching for new employment in the near future. Those most at risk of leaving were new faculty, with less than seven years at the university, and faculty in lower tier disciplines. Concerns of at risk faculty included salary, research opportunities and support, job security, teaching load, and administrative responsibilities. Notably, as salary increased, numbers of at risk faculty declined (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993).

The first few years of a faculty member's appointment are difficult. Olsen (1993) reported that faculty members viewed this early period of their careers as "a time of high stress and low satisfaction" (p. 454). In order to better understand this phenomenon, she examined the satisfactions and stresses experienced by new faculty in the first three years of their academic career.

Olsen's (1993) longitudinal study was performed at a large public university. She conducted open-ended interviews with, and administered questionnaires to, all newly hired, tenure-track, assistant-level faculty members. Information was collected following the first and third year of employment, with 52 and 47 respondents respectively. Olsen (1993) used statistical analyses to verify the validity and examine differences in the measures of satisfaction and stress.

In Olsen's (1993) study, satisfaction was viewed as a multi-faceted concept. Therefore, specific aspects of satisfaction with work were measured along with overall job satisfaction. She referred to specific aspects of satisfaction as "facet-specific" and overall satisfaction as "global" (p. 460). Stress was considered a physical or mental response that occurred when one perceived the requirements in an environment as exceeding his or her abilities or resources.

Olsen (1993) found that global measures of both stress and satisfaction were high during the study period. However, over time, she noted a significant decrease in faculty satisfaction and a moderate increase in work stress. These findings are counter to the notion that satisfaction increases and stress decreases as one becomes acclimated to a job.

Facet-specific satisfaction analyses showed that the most satisfying qualities of faculty membership included having a feeling of autonomy, the opportunity to exercise skills and abilities, and experiencing a sense of accomplishment (Olsen, 1993). The least satisfying facets were salary, recognition, conflicting work commitments, and time pressures. In the facet-specific measures, satisfaction did not increase over time. "Overall, the findings appear to show a fairly high, consistent level of satisfaction with the autonomous, intellectually challenging nature of the academic enterprise, and a lower, steadily eroding level of satisfaction with compensation and governance" (Olsen, 1993, p. 461). An interesting longitudinal decrease in satisfaction was observed in the facet of colleague support.

Analysis of facet-specific satisfactions in relation to global satisfaction yielded noteworthy results. Olsen (1993) found that global satisfaction during the first year was related to organizational recognition and support, and the ability to manage work demands. During the third year, global satisfaction was associated with feelings of autonomy, challenge, and accomplishment in their work.

This seems to support the notion that the hierarchy of needs satisfaction changes over time (Baher & Renck, 1958). Hierarchy of needs theory is based upon the developmental progression of need satisfaction. Initially, basic physiological needs must be met. Once physiological needs are satisfied, one moves to the satisfaction of social needs and ultimately to the actualization of self. In the employment arena, Baehr and Renck (1958) identified pay as a basic need. Once this need is satisfied, other higher-order needs dominated (e.g. personal satisfaction, self-actualization). In her longitudinal study, Olsen (1993) observed this developmental progression of need satisfaction in her examination of factors influencing global satisfaction.

Faculty relationships and morale. Several researchers have noted the importance of interpersonal relationships between co-workers and supervisors as significant factors influencing employee morale and job satisfaction (Baher & Renck, 1958; Blocker & Richardson, 1963; Call, 1958; Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993; Lowe, Schellenberg & Shannon, 2003; Olsen, 1993). When these workplace interpersonal relationships are disrupted, decreases in employee morale and satisfaction follow (Kerlin & Dunlap, 1993; Norman, Ambrose, & Houston, 2006; Olsen, 1993).

Relational disruptions could occur as a result of organizational policies and procedures, such as resource allocation. Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) found that faculty satisfaction, morale, and collegial relationships suffered due to departmental resource inequalities. Lowered levels of

morale and satisfaction are examples of latent consequences of resource inequities. When allocating resources to departments, colleges should be mindful of disparities and strive to minimize or eliminate these when possible.

Social support among co-workers can decrease over time. Olsen (1993) noted a decline in social support among colleagues between the first and third year of faculty employment. This decrease in collegial support is concerning because one would expect relationships to improve, and the support associated with them to increase, over time as individuals became better acquainted with one another.

Dissatisfaction and low morale early in a career is particularly problematic. As Kerlin and Dunlap (1993) observed, when levels of dissatisfaction were high there was a corresponding high likelihood of departure. Faculty members who were employed seven years or less were included among the faculty identified as "at risk" of leaving the institution.

Norman, Ambrose, and Huston (2006) found that faculty dissatisfaction centered around four issues: Lack of collegiality, ineffective leadership, lack of mentoring, and flawed reappointment/promotion/tenure processes. The most frequently cited reason for dissatisfaction was lack of collegiality – including departmental incivility, lack of intellectual community, and disinterested or preoccupied senior faculty.

The erosion of interpersonal relationships in the early stages of faculty membership can be addressed as part of the college socialization process. New faculty could be assigned a senior faculty mentor, who would serve as a resource and guide for the new employee. In addition, programs specifically designed for new faculty could be offered to help them feel integrated in the college community and develop relationships with their colleagues.

Measuring morale. It is difficult to untangle and measure the related concepts of employee morale and satisfaction. Baehr and Renck (1958) approached the measurement of morale using field theory. This theory adopted the view that "levels of motivation and morale are a result of the total work situation and of its many overlapping dynamic interrelations which involve both the individual and the smaller groups in a larger social field" (Baehr & Renck, 1958, p. 160).

Baehr and Renck (1958) analyzed specific factors associated with morale based upon responses to an Employee Inventory survey, a questionnaire used to measure employee attitudes. Seventy-six questions were part of the factor analysis. These questions covered fourteen categories of job-related influences on workers: Job demands, working conditions, pay, employee benefits, co-worker friendliness and cooperation, interpersonal relationships with supervisors, confidence in management, technical competence of supervision, administration effectiveness, communication adequacy, job security and work relations, status and recognition, identification with the company, and opportunity for growth and advancement (Baehr & Renck, 1958).

After conducting a factor analysis, Baehr and Renck (1958) found six factors that were correlated with employee morale: Organization/management, immediate supervision, material rewards, collegiality, and job satisfaction. Organization and management was the first factor identified. This factor encompasses the relationship between employees and management, sense of job security, and connection with the organization.

The next significant factor identified by Baher and Renck (1958) was immediate supervision, which included the interpersonal and administrative aspects of the immediate supervisor's job. Based upon their analysis, immediate supervision was highly correlated with

every other measure of morale, except material rewards. As a result, they concluded that immediate supervision plays a critical role in employee morale (Baher & Renck, 1958). This supports other research findings in the field that emphasize the importance of supervisor and employee interaction (Blocker & Richardson, 1963; Call, 1958; Guba, 1958).

The third factor identified was material rewards (e.g. salary, benefits). The friendliness of co-workers and positive interpersonal relationships with colleagues were also found to be significant determinants of morale. Material rewards were found to have a low correlation with all other measures of morale; therefore, it was determined that salary was independent of the other factors (Baher & Renck, 1958). Baehr and Renck (1958) suggested that this finding supported the hierarchy of needs framework where pay was a basic need that must be met in order for employees to function. Once the pay expectation was met, other factors would become dominant and employees could then pursue the satisfaction of their social and emotional needs. The final factor identified by Baehr and Renck (1958) was job satisfaction, described as "intrinsic satisfactions associated with actually doing the job and with the belief that the job is worthwhile and affords opportunities for personal growth and development" (p. 172).

Similar to Guba (1958), Organ and Near (1985) described going "above and beyond" job requirements as indicative of good morale. Spontaneous altruistic behaviors such as assisting co-workers with an issue, or offering to handle an unforeseen problem, were more likely to be influenced by one's affect (i.e. morale) than by one's cognitive appraisal of the situation (Organ & Near, 1985).

The elements associated with good morale – effective management, sufficient salary, collegiality, advancement potential, altruism – are largely unavailable to adjunct instructors. Adjunct faculty members have limited, if any, input in institutional governance, course design

and curriculum (Sutherland, 2001). "The resulting credentialing without credibility, responsibility without authority, and expectations without rewards mean that [adjunct] faculty are asked to serve with loyalty and dedication without enjoying reciprocal trust and professional respect from their institutions" (Sutherland, 2001, p. 8).

Summary

Student retention has traditionally been addressed and measured on an institutional level. Institutions develop policies and programs in an effort to retain students in college (Adelman, 1996; Hoyt, 1999; Tinto, 2012). Course retention is often overshadowed in data collection efforts by college-wide measures of student retention and the effectiveness of retention-oriented programs, yet course retention has been related to overall student retention and ultimately degree completion (Adelman, 2005; Moore & Shulock, 2009). Tinto (1993) identified classroom experiences as central to student success, noting the importance of faculty members in retaining students. The interaction students need with faculty members in order to support retention efforts and graduation is institutionally constrained by the very nature of adjunct employment (Scheutz, 2002). For example, adjunct instructors are not compensated for work outside of the classroom and they are not provided with the resources necessary to participate in campus life beyond their instructional responsibilities (Kazar & Maxey, 2012).

Instead of concentrating on broad institutional efforts at retention, this study focused on the classroom and the faculty members that are central to student success (Tinto, 1993). Specifically, this study examined the relationship between course retention and faculty employment status at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public institution in Florida. A detailed description of the research methodology follows.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this correlational research was to study the relationship between course retention and faculty status. The study took place at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public community college located in north Florida. A correlational statistical analysis was used to examine the correlation between course retention and faculty status and an ANOVA was used to determine differences in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty groups. Approval for this research was granted by the Liberty Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). The following is a discussion of the research participants, setting, instrumentation, procedures, design, and analysis.

Design

This quantitative research was conducted using a correlational design. A correlational approach was selected because the research intent was to examine relationships between the variables, instead of predicting cause and/or effect (Howell, 2011). This design served as an appropriate starting point because there was limited information available on the association between faculty status and course retention. The purpose of this correlational analysis was solely to determine whether a relationship existed between the two variables, not to determine whether one variable caused the other (Howell, 2011).

Non-random convenience sampling was used to select the sample. Time and resource constraints led the researcher to study an accessible population of community college faculty members. This method allowed the study to focus exclusively on one college where the researcher was allowed access to data. The sample included permanent and adjunct faculty members working at Florida Community College. These faculty members were under the same

college leadership, governed by the same policies and procedures, and exposed to the same administrative oversight regarding responsibilities and salary – factors previously found to be associated with employee morale and performance (Baehr & Renck, 1958).

Faculty status data and course retention data were collected from the college's Director of Institutional Research. Students who successfully completed with a minimum grade of C courses taught by faculty members during the fall 2011 semester were considered "retained" in the courses. The percentage of retained students represented the course retention for each general education class. All students of faculty teaching general education courses during the fall 2011 semester were included in the data set. The data did not include individual student information but an aggregate number of enrolled and retained students for each of the participating professor's classes.

All data were imported into the PASW Statistics 18 software program. To analyze the correlation between faculty status and course retention, a point-biserial correlation was conducted. In order to examine the differences in course retention between the permanent and adjunct faculty groups, as well as determine statistical significance, the data were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA.

Research Questions

Two research questions regarding the relationship between course retention and faculty status were posed in this study.

1. Is there a correlation between the employment status of faculty members and course retention?
2. Is there a difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members?

Null Hypotheses

The relationship between faculty status and course retention was tested using two null hypotheses.

1. H_o1: There is no correlation between the employment status of faculty members and course retention.
2. H_o2: There is no difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members.

Participants

Faculty participants included permanent and adjunct faculty members at Florida Community College, a public community college. Data for permanent and adjunct faculty members teaching during the fall 2011 semester were included in the data set.

Students were involved indirectly in the study via aggregate course enrollment and retention data supplied by Director of Institutional Research at the college. Course retention data were collected for all general education courses taught during the fall 2011 semester. Data for 451 general education courses offered during the fall 2011 semester were included in the data set. Only data from general education classes offered during the fall 2011 semester were collected and analyzed.

Setting

This research was conducted at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public community college located in north Florida. Similar to 22 of the 28 community colleges in Florida, this two-year community college has transitioned into an institution that offers not only associates degrees and career/certificate training, but bachelor's degrees as well (FDOE, 2011). Despite the addition of bachelor's degree programs, the focus remains on the 2-year degree and certificate programs. There are currently two bachelor's degree programs offered at the college,

and over 80 associate degree and certificate programs. The college has a total student population of 27,012, with 40% male and 60% female. The racial makeup of the student population is 73% White, 15% African American, 5% Hispanic, and 7% other. Approximately 57% are part-time students and 42% attend school full-time (FCC, 2011).

Instrumentation

The study used existing data that were already collected by the college for other reporting purposes. Information on course enrollment, course retention, and faculty status were included in the data set. The Director of the college's Institutional Research office provided the course enrollment, retention, and faculty status data to the researcher.

Course retention was measured using student enrollment data and faculty status was measured using college employment data. The college provided an aggregate list of course enrollment and retention for all general education courses offered during the fall 2011 semester. This list included the number of students who were officially enrolled in each course following the end of the drop/add period, the number of students retained in each course at the end of the semester, and the employment status of the faculty member teaching each course. Course retention was calculated as the percentage of students retained in each course. Individual student data and identifiable faculty data were not collected.

Procedures

Data were imported into the PASW Statistics 18 software program. Once the data were imported into PASW Statistics, faculty members were divided into two groups depending on their employment status: permanent, adjunct. These groups were used in the ANOVA analysis of retention differences based on status to determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean retention rates of faculty members who were permanent or adjunct employees.

Course retention data for faculty members during the fall 2011 semester were collected from the Director of Institutional Research at the community college. The data set included the number of students enrolled in the course following the drop/add deadline at the beginning of the semester and the number of students who successfully completed the course with a grade of C or higher. These data were imported into the PASW Statistics data set for analysis.

Data Analysis

A point-biserial correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength of the correlation between faculty status and course retention. Howell (2011) noted that the point-biserial correlation, which is calculated in PASW using Pearson's correlation, is used to measure the correlation between a dichotomous variable (i.e. faculty status) and continuous variable (i.e. course retention). The point-biserial correlation test is not required to have an independent or dependent variable; therefore, it is an appropriate statistical test to use in this study (Howell, 2011). The correlation coefficient may range between -1 and +1 to indicate the degree of relationship between the two variables. A coefficient near -1 shows a strong negative relationship between faculty status and course retention, which means that they change in opposition to each other (e.g. permanent status, low retention; adjunct status, high retention). A coefficient near +1 shows a strong positive relationship between the variables, which means they vary together (e.g. permanent status, high retention; adjunct status, low retention). A coefficient of zero shows no relationship between the variables (Brewer, 1996). Finding a correlation between faculty status and course retention does not indicate that one variable causes the other variable; it simply shows that a relationship exists between the variables.

A one-way ANOVA was used to examine the difference in course retention rates for the permanent and adjunct faculty groups. This yielded information on the statistical significance of

any difference between the means of the faculty groups. Finding statistical significance leads to rejecting the null hypothesis because meaningful differences between the means have been found. A rejection of the null hypotheses indicates that course retention differs between faculty members with permanent status and those with adjunct status.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This research examined the relationship between course retention and faculty status. Two research questions were addressed. First, is there a correlation between course retention and faculty status? Second, is there a difference in the course retention of permanent and adjunct faculty members? The null hypothesis for question one – there is no correlation between course retention and faculty status – was examined using point-biserial correlation. The null hypothesis for question two – there is no difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members – was explored using one-way ANOVA. The course retention variable represented the percentage of students retained (i.e. earning a grade of C or better) in the course. The faculty status variable represented two types of faculty employment: permanent and adjunct.

Data Set

The data set included information on course enrollment, course retention, and faculty status for a total of 451 general education courses offered during the fall 2011 semester at Florida Community College, a mid-sized public community college located in north Florida (Table 1). A sample of the data set used in this study is included in Appendix B (Table B1).

Table 1

Course Retention

	N	Range	Mean	SD	Variance
Course Retention	451	.71	.75	.16	.024
Valid N (listwise)	451				

Of the 11,499 students enrolled in the general education courses at the beginning of the fall 2011 semester, 8,562 were retained (i.e. earned a grade of C or above) yielding an overall course retention rate of 75%. Table 2 shows 183 of the 451 general education courses were taught by

adjunct faculty members (*M* = .77, *SD* = .16) and 268 were taught by permanent faculty members (*M* = .74, *SD* =.15).

Table 2

Course Retention by Faculty Status

	N	Mean	SD
Adjunct Faculty	183	.77	.16
Permanent Faculty	268	.74	.15

Research Analysis Assumptions

This study included assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. The assumption of normality was evaluated using Q-Q plots (Figures 1 & 2) and histograms (Figure 3).

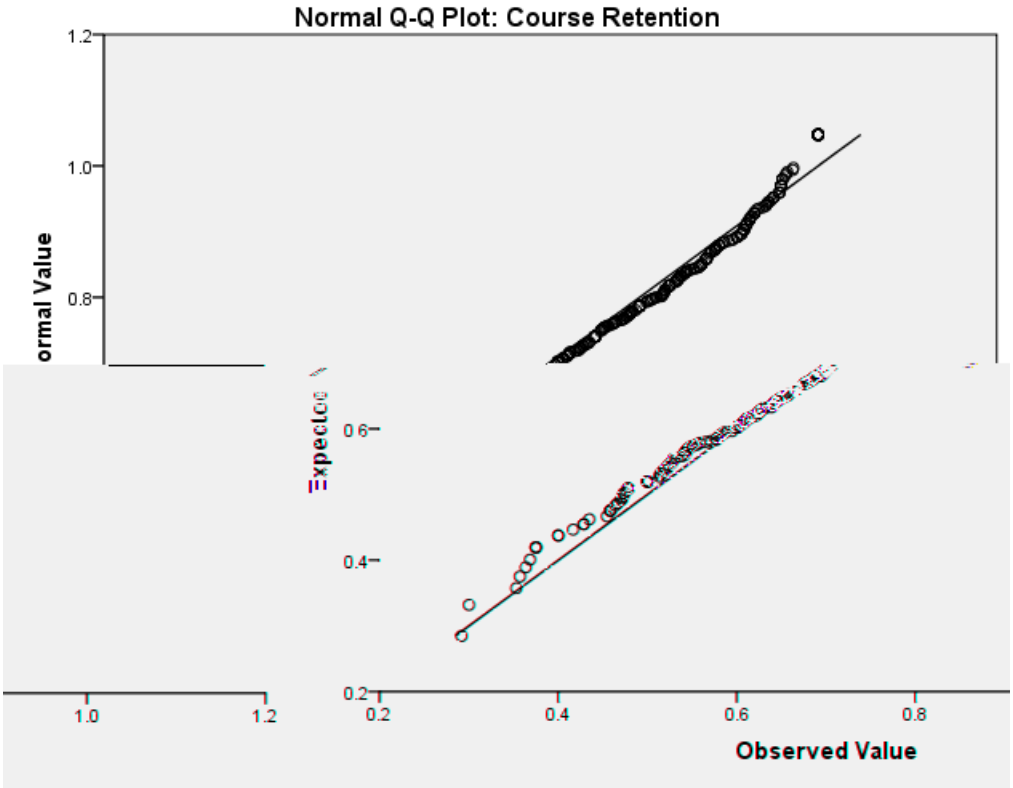

Figure 1. Q-Q Plot of course retention for permanent faculty.

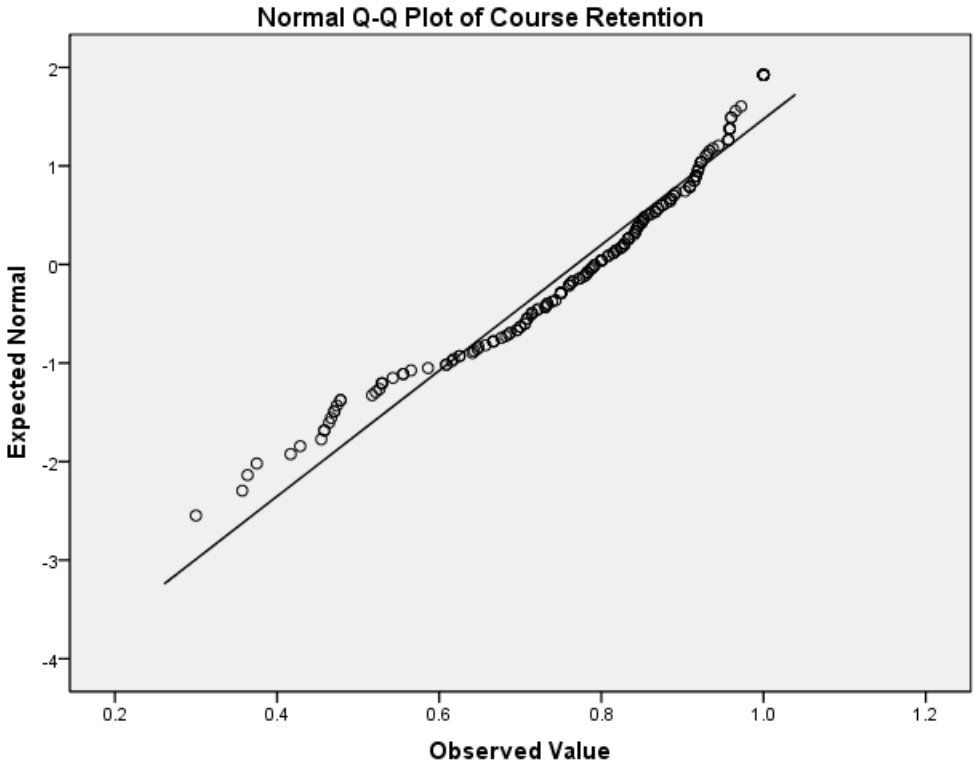

Figure 2. Q-Q Plot of course retention for adjunct faculty.

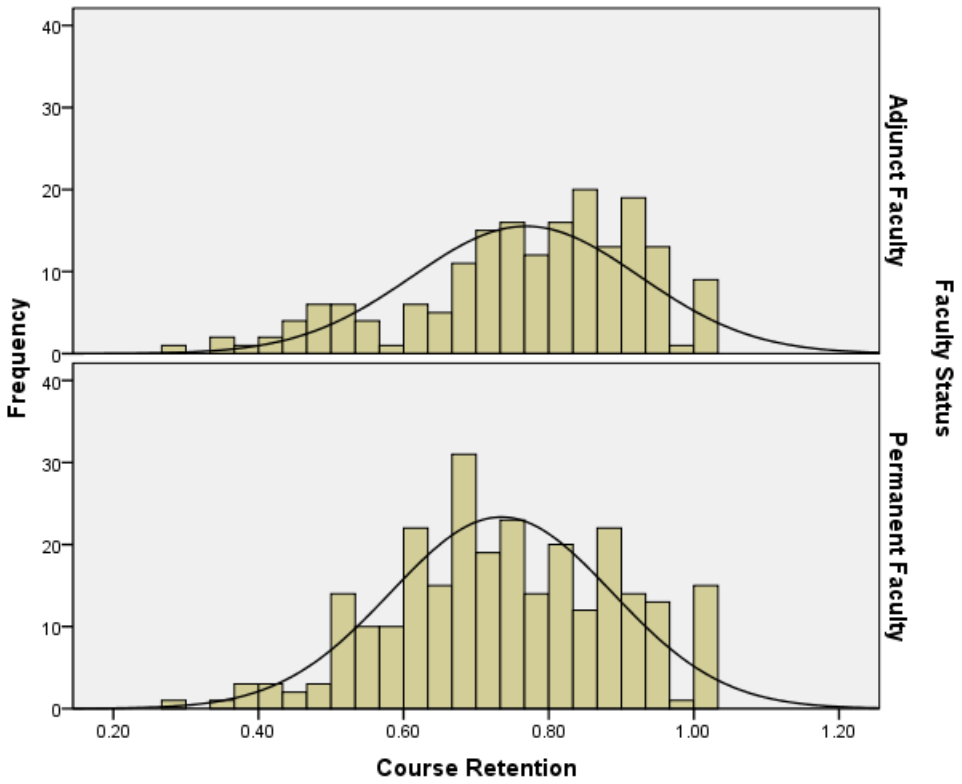

Figure 3. Histograms of course retention for adjunct and permanent faculty with normal curves.

Outliers in the course retention data were revealed, so a Kolmogorow-Smirnov test was conducted to determine whether the assumption of normality was violated. Results of the test showed a significance level of 0.07 for permanent faculty and 0.01 for adjunct faculty, indicating the assumption of normality was met for the permanent faculty group ($p > .05$) but not for the adjunct faculty group ($p < .05$). Closer examination of the data confirmed that the number of outliers in the data were limited. Therefore, the determination was made to perform the ANOVA test, yet confirm the results by also conducting a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test which does not include the assumption of normality.

In addition to the normality assumption, a one-way ANOVA also assumes homogeneity of variance. Due to the unequal sample sizes (268 permanent faculty, 183 adjunct faculty), there was concern that the homogeneity of variance assumption would be threatened. Therefore, the

homogeneity of variance assumption was assessed using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (Table 3).

Table 3

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

% of Students Retained

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Significance
.002	1	449	.965

Levene's Test produced a significance level of 0.97. This level, which was greater than .05, indicated that the variances of the permanent and adjunct faculty groups were not significantly different from each other. Therefore, the assumption of equal variance was not violated and the ANOVA test was appropriate.

Correlation between Course Retention and Faculty Status

A point-biserial correlational analysis was conducted to evaluate whether a statistically significant correlation existed between course retention and faculty status. Table 4 shows the results of the correlation were significant, with $r_{pb} = -.11$.

Table 4

Correlation between Course Retention and Faculty Status

		Course Retention	Faculty Status
Course Retention	Correlation	1	−.11
	Sig.		.02
	N	451	451
Faculty Status	Correlation	−.11	1
	Sig.	.02	
	N	451	451

As faculty status changed from adjunct to permanent, course retention decreased; indicating adjunct faculty have a higher percentage of students retained in courses than permanent faculty. The negative correlation between course retention and faculty status was significant at $\alpha = .05$ (r_{pb} [449] = ¯.11, $p < .05$). This finding led the researcher to reject the first null hypothesis and determine that there was a correlation between course retention and faculty status.

Course Retention of Permanent and Adjunct Faculty

A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to evaluate whether a statistically significant difference existed between the mean course retention of permanent and adjunct faculty members. The results of the ANOVA test were significant $F(1, 449) = 5.28$, $p = .02$ ($\eta^2 = .01$), indicating there was a significant difference between the course retention of permanent faculty members ($M = .74$, $SD = .15$, $n = 268$) and adjunct faculty members ($M = .77$, $SD = .16$, $n = 183$). The eta-squared effect size was $\eta^2 = .01$, demonstrating a small magnitude of difference in the means. Figure 4 shows the difference in course retention between the permanent and adjunct faculty groups.

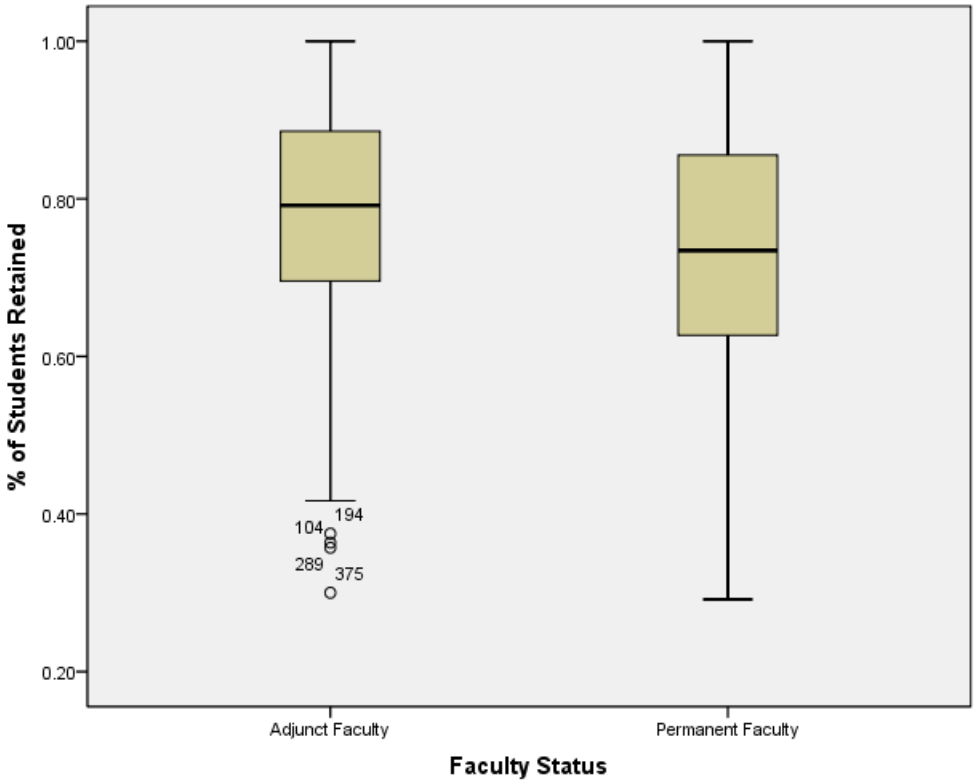

Figure 4. Boxplots of course retention for adjunct and permanent faculty.

Finding a significant difference between the two means in the ANOVA test led the researcher to reject the second null hypothesis and determine that there was a meaningful difference between the course retention of permanent and adjunct faculty members.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to confirm the decision to reject the null hypothesis. The Kruskal-Wallis test, which was corrected for tied ranks, was significant $\chi^2(1, 451) = 7.80$, $p = .01$. This confirmed the decision to reject the null hypothesis, and revealed that meaningful differences in course retention between the permanent and adjunct faculty groups did exist.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Summary

The relationship between course retention and faculty employment status was examined in this research study. Course retention was measured as the percentage of students who successfully completed (i.e. with a grade of C or above) general education courses offered during the fall 2011 semester. The employment status of faculty members was defined as permanent or adjunct. Two research questions were posed in this study. First, is there a correlation between course retention and faculty status? Second, is there a difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members?

The first question was analyzed using point-biserial correlation, which showed a significant correlation between course retention and faculty status at $p = .02$. This statistically significant finding led the researcher to reject the null hypothesis and conclude there was a correlation between course retention and faculty status. The second question was analyzed using one-way ANOVA, which showed a significant difference ($p = .02$) in the mean course retention between the adjunct and permanent faculty groups. The effect size was small, but significant. In addition, a Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted and confirmed the ANOVA results, revealing that meaningful differences in course retention between the permanent and adjunct faculty groups did exist. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and concluded there was a meaningful difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty members.

This study included assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance. The assumption of normality was evaluated using graphs (Q-Q plots, histograms) and a Kolmogorow-Smirnov test. The normality assumption was met for the permanent faculty group but not for the adjunct faculty group; however, the number of outliers was limited. Due to the

difference in normality found in the faculty groups, results from the ANOVA test were supplemented by conducting the Kruskal-Wallis test which does not include the assumption of normality. The homogeneity of variance assumption was assessed using Levene's Test for Equality of Variances. Results indicated that the assumption of equal variance was not violated and the ANOVA test was appropriate.

Discussion

Faculty members play a "critical role…in retaining students" (Tinto, 2012, p. viii). Tinto (2012) specifically identified students' interactions with faculty during their first two years of college as a significant factor in retention. Focusing on the general education curriculum taken during a student's first two years in community college, this study revealed a correlation between course retention (i.e. students earning a grade of C or above) and faculty employment status (i.e. permanent, adjunct). There was also a small but significant difference in course retention found between permanent and adjunct faculty, with adjunct faculty members having slightly higher levels of course retention than permanent faculty members.

Finding a correlation between course retention and faculty status was expected based on previous research associating faculty employment status with job performance (Schultz, 2002), student performance (Kezim et al., 2005), faculty/student interaction (Jaeger, 2008), and faculty morale (Hagedorn, 2010). However, the difference in course retention between the faculty groups was surprising. Based on a review of the literature, higher levels of retention in courses taught by permanent faculty members were expected. Previous researchers had reported that permanent faculty have higher morale (Sutherland, 2001), more institutional support (Wickrun & Stanley, 2000), and they are more available to students and entrenched in the campus community than their adjunct faculty colleagues (Hagedorn, 2010; Schuetz, 2002). However, findings in this

study revealed the opposite. Results indicated that adjunct faculty members had higher course retention than permanent faculty members.

At Florida Community College, permanent faculty members, unlike adjunct faculty, were on campus full-time (e.g. teaching full course load, holding office hours), had dedicated office space, and were contractually obligated to participate in campus life (e.g. committees, student organizations, department meetings, extracurricular activities). During the fall 2011 semester, adjunct faculty members were only compensated for teaching their assigned course(s); activities outside of the classroom were neither required nor rewarded. Adjunct faculty members were not required to hold office hours or participate in campus activities, meetings, or events. This contributed to adjunct faculty members having less time required on campus to interact with students than their permanent faculty counterparts, who were required to both hold office hours and take part in campus life.

Interaction between faculty members and students has been identified as a significant factor in student retention (Tinto, 2012). Kezar and Maxey (2012) reported that the success of students suffers when they do not have out-of-classroom access to faculty members. Therefore, finding higher course retention for adjunct faculty – the faculty group with more limited student interaction outside of the classroom – was surprising. While the required out-of-classroom student interaction differed between the permanent and adjunct faculty groups in this study, both faculty groups were required to interact with students inside of the classroom. Given the attention on faculty/student interaction in retention (Tinto, 2012), the findings in this study show that where this interaction occurs is an important consideration and inside the classroom seems to be where the influence of faculty/student interaction on retention is most critical.

Kuh et al. (2004) found that faculty/student interaction inside the classroom varied based on faculty status. Previous studies have shown that permanent and adjunct faculty members tended to differ in their teaching methods, with permanent faculty members more likely than their adjunct counterparts to assign academically challenging work, update their syllabi frequently, and use collaborative learning activities (Kuh et al., 2004; Schuetz, 2002). Permanent faculty members were also found to be less likely to inflate student grades, whereas adjunct faculty tended to inflate grades in an effort to obtain positive student reviews – thereby keeping their jobs (Kezim et al., 2005). These variations in classroom conduct between permanent and adjunct faculty members may explain the difference this researcher found in course retention. Taken together, these studies contribute to the understanding that courses taught by permanent faculty members are more challenging in terms of content, presentation and grading than those of adjunct faculty members.

Assuming courses taught by adjunct faculty members are less challenging and graded more leniently than those of permanent faculty members, assertions that have been supported by previous research (Kezim et al., 2005; Pannapacker, 2000; Schuetz, 2002), the higher level of retention in adjunct faculty courses makes sense when considered from a student's perspective. Students prefer to take a course, particularly in the general education curriculum, which requires the least amount of time and effort to earn a good grade. Discovering adjunct faculty members have higher course retention than permanent faculty members may indicate that course retention is influenced by the academic rigor and difficulty of the course determined, in part, by the employment status of the faculty member.

Another explanation for finding lower course retention levels in courses taught by permanent faculty members may be the types of courses taught by permanent and adjunct

faculty. For example, Jaeger (2008) found that nearly half of introductory level freshman courses were taught by adjunct faculty members. Information on course type was not included in the data set for this study, so exploration of this explanation is beyond the scope of this research. However, if permanent faculty members are primarily responsible for teaching the more challenging courses that traditionally have low levels of retention (e.g. advanced math, advanced science) the lower course retention of permanent faculty members may be due to the subject of the course, not the employment status of the faculty member. For instance, a permanent faculty member teaching advanced calculus may have lower course retention than an adjunct faculty member teaching college algebra simply due to the difficulty of the advanced-level course.

Exposure to adjunct faculty early in a student's community college career has been found to decrease the likelihood of student persistence, transfer to a four-year institution, and degree completion (Jaeger, 2008). The current study did not follow specific students over time to determine persistence, transfer, and graduation outcomes. Although, looking at course retention over the span of a single semester, results showed that exposure to adjunct faculty did not negatively impact the retention of students in courses. In fact, the exposure to adjunct faculty instruction positively impacted course retention, at least in the short-term. Additional research is necessary to determine the impact of adjunct faculty on long-term course retention, as well as student persistence, transfer, and graduation rates.

Limitations

This study was limited in location and scope; therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all public community colleges. This research was conducted at a single campus of a mid-sized community college located in north Florida. There was a lack of diversity at the institution, with the majority of students being White (73%) and female (61%). The sample was not randomized;

instead, all general education courses, students, and faculty members were included. While the sample size was sufficient for analysis, a more comprehensive study including multiple campuses with more diverse student populations would contribute to the generalizability of the findings and the strength of the study.

As a correlational study, the purpose was to determine whether a relationship existed between course retention and faculty status. The scope of data were narrowly focused – including only information on course enrollment, retention, and faculty status – which prevented further analysis that would have contributed to understanding the nature of the relationship that was found between course retention and faculty status. In addition, the limited data set did not account for individual differences in faculty members, students, or courses that may impact the validity of the study (e.g. faculty experience, faculty course load, student aptitude, course type). Including additional faculty, student, and course information would have provided insight into specific factors that may influence course retention.

Implications

The current study has contributed to gaining a better understanding of student retention indicators (i.e. course retention) in a community college setting. This study addressed the lack of focus on course retention as a measure of student retention and the insufficient understanding of how course retention is related to faculty employment status. A significant correlation between course retention and faculty employment status was found, indicating that the retention of students in a course is related to the employment status (i.e. permanent, adjunct) of the faculty member teaching the course. Finding a correlation between course retention and faculty status serves as a reminder of the important role all faculty members play, regardless of employment status, in retaining students.

A meaningful difference between the course retention of permanent and adjunct faculty members was also discovered in this study. Results showed that permanent faculty members retained a lower percentage of students in their courses than adjunct faculty members. This difference in course retention between permanent and adjunct faculty highlights the influence of faculty employment status on student outcomes and focuses attention on the differences that exist between faculty groups, both inside and outside of the classroom. A discussion of the implications of these findings for institutions, classrooms, and students follows.

Institutions. In Florida, there has been an emphasis on retaining students and increasing the graduation rates from higher education certificate and degree programs (FDOE, 2011). Student retention has traditionally been addressed and measured on an institutional level, evident in institutional policies, programs, and data reporting (Adelman, 1996; Hoyt, 1999; Tinto, 2012). However, broad institutional measures of student retention do not take into account students' experiences that influence their decision to remain in college. According to Tinto (2012), "improved rates of retention and graduation depend on the investment of institutional resources in those areas of institutional functioning that most directly impact students…in particular those pertaining to instructional and academic support" (p. 83).

Community colleges have been increasingly depending on adjunct faculty to meet instructional demands (NCES, 2012) yet institutional resources – such as office space and sufficient compensation – are not provided for adjunct faculty members (Salas, 2006; Schuetz, 2002; Wickrun & Stanley, 2000). In this study, despite the lack of institutional resources provided to them, adjunct faculty members retained more students in courses than their permanent faculty colleagues.

Finding higher course retention among adjunct faculty is fortunate for institutions – since 70% of community college faculty members are adjunct instructors (NCES, 2012) – as long as it translates into higher levels of student retention and graduation. Given that adjunct faculty members in this study retained a higher percentage of students in courses than permanent faculty members, having a large number of adjunct faculty members should positively influence overall student retention and, ultimately, graduation. Course retention is not included as a measure in institutional retention reporting requirements (FDOE, 2012; IES, 2010; Wild & Ebbers, 2002), so the influence of higher course retention must be reflected in increased levels of student retention and graduation in order to benefit institutions. The overall student retention of Florida Community College was not included in this study, so a conclusion cannot be drawn that the higher course retention among adjunct faculty contributes to higher levels of overall student retention or graduation at the college. Future studies seeking confirmation of the finding that adjunct faculty retain a larger percentage of students in courses than permanent faculty, as well as additional research regarding the impact of adjunct faculty course retention on overall student retention and graduation is warranted.

Despite the increasing community college student population (Fry, 2009) and the various institutional programs dedicated to keeping students in college (Wild & Ebbers, 2002), student retention remains a challenge (NCES, 2011). When considering retention, most institutional efforts have been "situated at the margins of students' educational life. They have neglected the classroom, the one place on campus, perhaps the only place, where the great majority of students meet the faculty and one another…" (Tinto, 2012, p. 5). Understanding how faculty members can positively influence retention in the classroom is an aspect of course retention that has yet to be explored. Additional research would prompt the development of new classroom-focused

approaches to retain students. Colleges that couple institutionally-based retention efforts with classroom-based retention strategies may not only increase course retention, but also increase overall student retention.

Classrooms. Classroom experiences are vital to student retention and success (Tinto, 2012) and they "serve as gateways for further involvement in the intellectual life of the campus" (Tinto, 1993, p. 57). The importance of classroom experiences in retention reinforces the vital role of faculty members in retaining students (Tinto, 2012). Student experiences with faculty members in the classroom have been shown to influence academic performance (Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005; Pannapacker, 2000), student learning (Schuetz, 2002), and degree completion (Glenn, 2008; Kenzar & Maxey, 2012). In fact, students' interactions with faculty members during the first two years of college have been found to play a significant role in overall student retention (Tinto, 1993; Tinto, 2012).

Central to a student's college experience is time spent in the classroom interacting with faculty members. According to Tinto (1993), students who have frequent contact with faculty members who are receptive and responsive to their needs increase their sense of integration in the institution; making these receptive and responsive faculty members an important element in student retention. In the current study, adjunct faculty members were not required to have any out-of-classroom contact with students (e.g. office hours) whereas permanent faculty members were required to have out-of-classroom student contact. Despite these differing requirements, and the importance of faculty/student interaction outside of the classroom (Pannapacker, 2000), adjunct faculty members in this study retained a larger percentage of students in their classes than permanent faculty members. Therefore, inside the classroom is where faculty status influenced course retention. Inside the classroom is also where the behavior of faculty members

"not only influences academic performance and the perception of academic quality, it also sets the tone for further interactions outside the classroom" (Tinto, 1993, p. 57).

The classroom is the place where faculty members have the most impact on course retention. In this study, adjunct faculty members were not institutionally obligated to interact with students outside of the classroom. Office space was not provided to adjunct faculty and office hours were not required. However, unlike adjunct faculty, permanent faculty members at the college were provided office space, required to hold office hours, and required to participate in campus activities. With varying amounts of faculty/student interaction occurring outside of the classroom (i.e. adjuncts faculty less, permanent faculty more), it focuses attention on the importance of faculty/student interactions inside of the classroom as influential in course retention. Additional exploration of the nature of faculty/student classroom interactions and their influence on course retention is needed.

Students. Researchers have found institutions that heavily rely on adjunct faculty members to fill instructional needs are doing so at their students' detriment (Pannapacker, 2000). Issues for students taking courses taught by adjunct faculty included faculty inaccessibility, incoherent curricula, inadequate advising, and grade inflation (Pannapacker, 2000). In addition, courses that are taught by adjunct faculty are often added to the schedule at the last minute, leaving limited time for instructional preparation which negatively impacts teacher effectiveness (Pannapacker, 2000; Street, Maisto, Merves, Rhoades, 2012).

Findings in the current study do not show that students taking courses taught by adjunct faculty members are adversely affected. Instead, this study revealed that a higher percentage of students were retained in courses taught by adjunct faculty members than in courses taught by permanent faculty members. Further exploration of the differences between faculty groups and

how they relate to student outcomes is important in understanding the impact of faculty status on student outcomes. Instructional differences between faculty groups have been identified in previous studies, with permanent faculty members being more likely to use active learning strategies and student collaboration (e.g. group projects, teamwork activities) than adjunct faculty members (Schuetz, 2002). Instructional differences such as these can lead to less effective learning in the courses taught by adjunct faculty (Schuetz, 2002).

Adjunct faculty members often teach introductory level courses and when students do not learn the fundamental concepts that their future courses are built upon (Schuetz, 2002), retention is negatively impacted (Tinto, 1993). The current study relied on aggregate student grades to represent the amount of student learning, as well as the course retention, in each course. However, final course grades may not accurately reflect the true amount of learning each student gained in a course (Allen, 2005). Therefore, there is a need for further research to examine whether students experience a delay in the impact of adjunct faculty instruction. For instance, students may not be adequately mastering the foundational content of introductory courses taught by adjunct faculty. As a result, despite earning a passing grade in an introductory course, students may be more likely to repeat or withdraw from an advanced class taught by permanent faculty. The delayed impact of adjunct faculty instruction needs to be examined over time in order to determine the long term consequences that reliance on adjunct faculty has on retention.

Students in this study were considered retained in a course when they earned a final grade of C or above. Researchers have demonstrated that grade inflation is an issue with adjunct faculty members (Kezim, Pariseau, & Quinn, 2005). While the current study seems to support the finding of adjunct grade inflation, with adjunct faculty having higher course retention than permanent faculty, the distribution of grades for each course was not obtained by the researcher.

Examining the grade distribution of each course may reveal that more students in courses taught by permanent faculty members earned higher grades than those in adjunct faculty courses. For example, an introductory sociology course taught by a permanent faculty member may have a high grade distribution (i.e. 10 A's, 7 B's, and 2 C's); whereas an adjunct faculty member teaching the same course could have a low grade distribution (i.e. 1 A, 8 B's, and 15 C's). The adjunct faculty member retained more students in her course than the permanent faculty member, 24 compared to 19, yet the students' grades were higher in the permanent faculty member's course.

Finding a relationship between course retention and faculty status, with adjunct faculty members retaining more students than permanent faculty members, leads to additional questions such as, why is the course retention of adjunct faculty higher than the course retention of permanent faculty? What types of faculty/student interactions inside the classroom contribute to course retention? How do the classroom-based faculty/student interactions differ between permanent and adjunct faculty? These questions must be answered in order to more fully understand the influence of faculty status on course retention, and effectively increase course retention while providing students with a quality college education.

Recommendations

Further exploration of the relationship between course retention and faculty status is warranted. Expanding the data set to account for individual differences in faculty members (e.g. years of experience, course load, teaching style), students (e.g. major, GPA), or courses (e.g. subject, credit hours) would provide insight into specific factors that may influence course retention. Including more than one college campus would also strengthen the study. An examination of possible explanations for the higher retention of adjuncts' students (e.g. teaching

techniques, course assignments, grading patterns) would contribute to understanding the nature of the difference that was found between the course retention of permanent and adjunct faculty. A longitudinal analysis of course retention during the first two years of college would provide a clearer picture of how early course performance ultimately impacts successful program completion.

Student retention is one measure used in evaluating institutional effectiveness (Wild & Ebbers, 2002) and it has been associated with funding higher education (Chen & John, 2011). In addition, colleges are required to report student retention data to governing bodies as well as accreditation entities (FDOE, 2012; IES, 2010). This focus on the role of student retention in evaluating institutional effectiveness is likely to continue, so college administrators must examine retention at their institution in a comprehensive manner in order to effectively address retention issues.

One way administrators can expand their understanding of retention is to evaluate short-term indicators of student retention, such as course retention (Noel-Levitz, 2011). Course retention draws attention to students' classroom experiences and interactions with faculty, which are fundamental to student retention and success (Tinto, 2012). The current study supports the view that any approach to retaining students must be broadened to encompass the classroom – including both instructional methodologies and faculty employment status. Only when a comprehensive understanding of student retention is gained can effective strategies be developed to increase retention while maintaining academic integrity.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 9, 2013

Pamela Hutto
IRB Exemption 1480.080913: A Correlational Analysis of Course Retention and Faculty Status in a Community College Setting

Dear Pamela,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and that no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101 (b)(4), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:

> (4) Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and that any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption, or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Appendix B

Table B1

Sample Data Set

Enrollment Total	Total A - C Grades	Course Retention	Faculty Status
35	35	1.00	PERMANENT
35	29	0.83	ADJUNCT
35	24	0.69	ADJUNCT
36	27	0.75	ADJUNCT
27	24	0.89	ADJUNCT
35	35	1.00	ADJUNCT
41	32	0.78	ADJUNCT
35	22	0.63	PERMANENT
41	30	0.73	ADJUNCT
30	28	0.93	ADJUNCT
24	14	0.58	PERMANENT
23	16	0.70	ADJUNCT
24	24	1.00	PERMANENT
24	7	0.29	PERMANENT
24	21	0.88	PERMANENT
17	12	0.71	ADJUNCT
23	19	0.83	PERMANENT
24	22	0.92	PERMANENT
24	23	0.96	PERMANENT
27	23	0.85	ADJUNCT