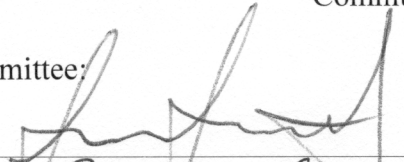


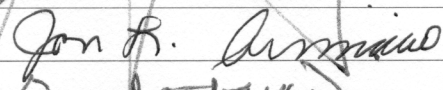
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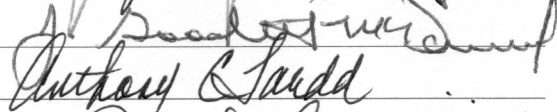
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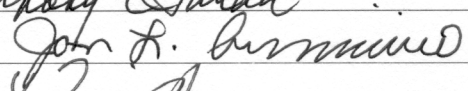
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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
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of
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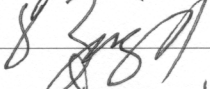
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Date:

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Fall Semester 2012
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Staying Connected: Adjunct Faculty and the Community College Online Environment

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Arts at George Mason University

by

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Northern Arizona University, 1994
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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the memory of my father, Frank M. Villagran. Born of Mexican immigrants, my father learned very early the value of perseverance, courage, integrity and strength. He only completed 8th grade, but in my eyes, my dad was the smartest man in the world. His legacy of hard work and dedication made me the person I am today. His constant words of determination are why I never gave up. And most importantly, this is for all of my seven children (aka the A-Team). May my dad's legacy be passed on for generations to come.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American Association of Community Colleges	AACC
Achieving the Dream	AtD
Cognitive Presence.....	CP
Community of Inquiry	CoI
Face to Face	f2f
Online Learning Environment	OLE
Teaching Presence	TP
Social Presence	SP
Virginia Community College System.....	VCCS

ABSTRACT

STAYING CONNECTED: ADJUNCT FACULTY AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

Frances Villagran-Glover, D.A.

George Mason University, 2012

Dissertation Director: Dr. Leslie S. Smith

Community colleges face extraordinary challenges in the 21st century. Driven by the economic downturn, shrinking state funding, and limited facilities, these forces have created a significant impact on community college enrollments as well as instructional methods. Student retention and completion success rates have climbed to the top of the national education agenda. Community colleges play a vital role in meeting this national imperative of student success.

Online instruction has become an integral component of many institutional strategic plans. Over the past five years community colleges have experienced the highest growth rates and account for more than half of all online enrollments in higher education. National student engagement survey data indicates a need for more connection and engagement between faculty and student. At the same time, many community college faculty are approaching retirement age and community colleges are turning more to

adjuncts to fill instructional demands. Adjunct faculty play an integral role in meeting the challenges of this ever-changing flexible 24/7 teaching and learning environment.

A major distinction between the online classroom and the traditional learning environment is the lack of face-to-face (f2f) contact between participants. To compensate for this lack of physical presence, interaction and connectedness take on additional importance in the online environment. Using Garrison's Community of Inquiry (COI) model as a framework to guide, interpret, and analyze the collected data, an online survey was distributed to adjunct faculty and students enrolled in a Spring 2012 online class. This mixed method study examined the perceptions of adjunct faculty, who teach online at a community college, in relation to connecting and interacting with students in an online environment. Student perceptions were also examined to compare and contrast the level of connectedness in an online class.

The results of this study can be used to help enhance the design and facilitation of interaction and connections in online classes as well as identify enhancements needed in the professional development curriculum geared towards engaging adjunct faculty and their students.

CHAPTER ONE-INTRODUCTION

"The ability to relate and connect, sometimes in odd and yet striking fashion, lies in the very heart of any creative use of the mind, no matter in what field or discipline."

--George J. Seidel

Introduction

This chapter consists of the following sections: statement of the problem, rationale, nature of the study, research questions, limitations, definition of terms, researcher's interest and the summary.

Statement of the Problem

Community colleges continue to be the choice for many higher education students. According to a 2011 report by the American Association of Community Colleges, more than 50% of all undergraduates attend community colleges in the United States. With more students attending community colleges, the demand for more faculty has also increased. Institutions are looking to adjuncts to fill instructional demands. In 2009, the U.S Department of Education reported that 69% of faculty who teach at 2 year-public colleges are part-time. Males comprised 47% of the population while females comprised 53% of the adjunct demographics. At the same time, there are several major forces driving higher education today. The economic reality of budget cuts and limited resources are forcing institutions to make the most effective use of dollars to improve

student outcomes. The exponential growth in digital technology tools and content that is further changing and potentially enhancing how instructors teach and students learn is changing at a rapid pace. Community colleges are finding ways to maximize these resources.

Labeled “the people’s college”, community colleges have developed numerous online course offerings to meet the needs of the diverse and demanding communities that they serve. Online education offerings range from single courses to degree-granting programs of study while offering the flexibility and convenience many students need in order to attain their education. Managing the growth of online education is a major challenge for many community colleges. For those institutions, online education has become a major part of their strategic plan.

The rate of growth of online classes at community colleges has made the hiring and training of online faculty a strategic necessity. This demand is even more urgent for adjunct faculty, who, as with face-to-face classes, continue to represent a large portion of the community college faculty. And as more community college full-time faculty approach retirement age, community colleges are faced with meeting instructional demands and will be faced with hiring even more adjunct faculty in order to compensate for the ever-changing, flexible 24/7 teaching and learning environment.

Teaching online differs from teaching in a traditional, face-to-face classroom in terms of pedagogical approaches and uses of technology (Zhao, 2003). A major distinction between the online classroom and the traditional learning environment is the lack of face-to-face contact between participants. To compensate for the absence of

physical presence, interaction and connections between instructor and students takes on additional meaning. Online instructors tend to maintain elements of face-to face teaching, utilizing materials and approaches that might have worked in a classroom setting but not necessarily in an online environment (Connolly, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, is the influence that teaching faculty have on student interaction and vice versa. It is important to hear from students and instructors to determine if there is a connection between what students value in their educational experience and what strategies instructors use to promote interaction. Gaining input from stakeholders is critical to the success of these programs. With these new insights, recommendations can be made to help improve the planning, design, and facilitation of distance education courses and programs (Wilkes et al., 2006).

Rationale

Community colleges are developing ways to become more efficient and effective in providing quality educational programs and services for students. Online instruction has become an integral component in higher education. Over the past five years community colleges have experienced increasing growth rates and have accounted for more than half of all online enrollments in higher education.

With the rise of new and emerging technologies, there are several opportunities to enhance connectedness and interaction in the online classroom. Technology has changed available delivery options and teaching methodologies of distance education courses (Berge, 1999). Pushed not only by improvements in technological tools, those involved in designing and teaching online classes acknowledge that high levels of interaction have

positive effects on learning outcomes (Flottemesch, 2000; Woods & Baker, 2004). Web-based classrooms provide opportunities to simulate interaction through traditional digital tools such as discussion boards, e-mail, or chat rooms (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Picciano, 2002). It is just as important to hear from instructors and students in order to determine if there is a connection between what students value in their educational experience and what strategies instructors use to promote interaction (Wilkes, Simon, & Brooks, 2006). By exploring the similarities and differences between their perspectives, it can be determined if there is a gap between the two. As Shieh, et al. (2008) noted, “Only when the discrepancy between the instructor and students is thoroughly understood, can an online course be effectively implemented” (p. 62). With these new insights, improvements in planning, design, and facilitation of distance education courses can be made (Fulford & Zhang, 1993; Shank & Doughty, 2001; Sharpe & Benfield, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

Online instruction has become a vital piece of the higher education environment. Adjunct faculty comprises the majority of faculty at most community college campuses and their numbers are only expected to rise in the future (Wallin, 2005). A major distinction between the traditional learning environment and the online classroom is the lack of face-to-face interaction between the faculty member and the student. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of connectedness between community college adjunct faculty who teach online and their students. Using the community of inquiry (CoI) model as the framework, data was collected from both adjuncts and students. The CoI framework was used to guide, interpret, and analyze the collected data. The

utilization of a CoI model provides the order and structural elements needed to begin the process of understanding the complexities of online learning and the elements of good teaching strategies. The CoI model focuses on the communication and interaction that occurs in an online educational setting. It evaluates the development of higher order thinking among students and assesses the effectiveness of online courses in the higher education environment through three major components: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence.

This study utilized a mixed methods design survey research to examine the perceptions of adjunct faculty who teach online at a community college as it relates to connecting with students in an online learning environment. Student perceptions were also examined to compare and contrast the level of connectedness in the online class. An online survey was distributed to both adjunct faculty and students enrolled in Spring 2012 online classes.

With the data collected from the surveys, recommendations can be made to help enhance the design and facilitation of connectedness and interaction in online classes. It can also identify enhancements needed in the design of professional development curriculum geared towards engaging adjunct faculty and their students.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the data and analysis for this study:

1. How are the three community of inquiry components perceived by adjuncts and students in an online course?

2. What similarities exist between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment?
3. Are there noteworthy differences between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment?
4. What components of presence do adjunct faculty and students' value in an online environment?

Delimitations

The researcher recognizes the following delimitations of this study:

1. The study was conducted at only one community college;
2. The data collected for this research is limited to one community college's online course enrollees during one semester;
3. The results of this survey were dependent on self-reported data from the participant's point of view;
4. In comparing student perceptions, there may have been confounding factors due to student and instructor types and prior learning experiences;
5. The Northern Virginia Community College's Institutional Research and Planning Department of the community college extracted the data from the survey, therefore, the accuracy is dependent upon this department.
6. The bias of the researcher as a full time faculty administrator at the community college is also a delimitation of this study.

Assumptions

The researcher recognizes the following assumptions of this study:

1. The participants read and understood the survey questions.
2. The participants completing the survey answered the questions honestly.
3. The participants completing the survey are the students enrolled in online classes.

Definition of Terms

Online education. This refers to courses in which at least 80% of the content is delivered at a distance with typically no face-to-face meetings (Allen & Seaman, 2008).

The terms online education and distance education are used interchangeably.

Community of Inquiry (CoI). This is a conceptual framework for studying and guiding the practice of online education. The framework consists of the overlapping of three core elements: cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence. Through the interaction of these elements, a quality educational experience is achieved within a community of learners (Garrison et al., 2000; Garrison & Arbaugh, 2007).

Social presence. “The ability of participants to identify with the community (e.g., course of study), communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop interpersonal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities.” (Garrison, 2009)

Cognitive presence. The extent to which learners are able to construct meaning through sustained reflection and discourse that is characteristic of higher education (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2001).

Teaching presence. The design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes to bring about relevant and meaningful learning outcomes (Garrison & Anderson, 2003).

Interaction. When two or more people communicate through some means and receive feedback regarding the actions performed as a result of the communication. The communication occurs through text, audio, video, the use of Web 2.0 tools, and other means. Interactions take place in a face-to-face situation or at a distance for online learning.

Connectedness: The researcher uses this term in the study to describe how adjunct faculty and students connect, “click” with each other in terms of communication linkages formed.

Adjunct. For this study, the definition of an adjunct will be defined based on the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) interpretation: Adjuncts are employees who teach less than a normal faculty load or teach less than a full session on a semester-by-semester or summer term basis (full-time faculty workload of 12 to 15 credit hours or 15 to 20 classroom contact hours per semester). The terms adjunct, instructor and part-time faculty are used interchangeably throughout this study.

Researcher's Interest

The researcher's interest in the subject of online teaching stems from an ongoing interest in how community colleges are providing access and quality education to students. The researcher's prior work experience as an adjunct faculty member and administrator at four various, demographically different, community colleges has been useful to her understanding of the professional development needs of the faculty as they pertain to the preparation required to teach online courses. Additionally, her credentials as an instructional technologist in K-12 education provided additional background knowledge of today's student learner. Present graduate work in the Doctorate of Arts in Community College Education (DACCE) program, with a knowledge area in educational leadership and technology, continues to stimulate an ongoing interest in community college faculty-student teaching and learning design models.

Summary

Community colleges play a vital role in online education. Adjunct faculty has an integral role to play in the success of online education. With today's technology, the creation of engaging learning environments through interaction and collaboration are now a more easily attainable goal (Beldarrain, 2006). The results of this study can be used to help enhance the design and facilitation of interaction in online classes. They can also identify enhancements needed in the professional development curriculum geared towards engaging adjunct faculty and their students. The need for more research from the perspectives of stakeholders such as instructors and the students has served as the

motivation for the current study. In addition to reporting the instructor's intentional and actual teaching perspectives, this study also examines student learning experiences in order to identify any gaps between what the instructor practices and what the student experiences.

This chapter provided the statement of the problem, rationale, nature of the study, research questions, limitations, definition of terms and the researcher's interest. Chapter 2 will present a comprehensive review of the literature on the topic of community college adjunct faculty and the online classroom. Chapter 3 will delineate the methodology used for the study. Chapter 4 will provide the results and findings, and Chapter 5 will offer discussions and implications for theory and practice, recommendations for future research, limitations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO-LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two is a review of the literature relevant to community colleges, adjunct faculty, online education and faculty and student engagement in the teaching and learning environment. This chapter brings these components together to help generate a quality mixed methods study to determine the level of connectedness utilizing the Community of Inquiry (COI) model. A review of the literature is organized as follows: (a) the “New Normal” for community colleges, (b) the growth of online education, (c) adjunct faculty (d) the Community of Inquiry (COI) Model, (e) faculty and student engagement and, (f) adjunct faculty professional development.

The “New Normal” for Community Colleges

In the “New Normal”, the spotlight is on student success. National experts on education, politics and public policy are addressing state and national goals for college degree completion, cost analyses of higher education and current educational models to include online education. In 2004, the American Association of Community Colleges CEO Dr. George Boggs indicated that community colleges were facing unprecedented challenges or other pressures through demands to increase student enrollment, state budget cuts, limited facilities, high faculty turnover rates, rising technology costs, and an

increasing number of students requiring remedial education. In the ensuing eight years these issues have become even more prevalent in today's community colleges.

Budgets and Financial Support

The economic recession of the past several years has impacted every aspect of American life. Higher education is no stranger to budgets cuts and the impact of those cuts will continue to have an impact on education. Roueche and Jones (2005b) saw declining state support and increasing student enrollments at the top of the list of challenges facing community colleges in the new millennium. Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, and Sum (2007), in a policy information report titled, "America's Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing Our Nation's Future," concluded that the nation is in the midst of a perfect storm as a result of the convergence of three forces - conflicting skill distributions among U.S. population groups, a changing economy and the demographic challenges of an increasingly diverse population.

According to the 2011 National Conference of State legislatures, states have experienced more than \$60 billion in budget shortfalls in 2011 and another \$50 billion in 2012. Federal stimulus programs that filled the gap for colleges and universities are winding down and most states are encountering sharp declines in available state tax revenues.

On the student side, recent high school students who may have chosen to attend universities under better economic conditions are instead choosing to enroll at their local community colleges to save money. Over 40 percent of the students surveyed 2008 indicated that economic circumstances changed their college choice behavior (College

Board, 2008). As a result, student enrollments have surged across community colleges, bringing national attention to these institutions (Mullin and Phillippe, 2009).

In the “New Normal”, community colleges are developing new and innovative business models to increase efficiency and sustainability in order to deliver quality education. The adage “doing more with less” is even more operative in today’s community college arena than ever before.

Accountability

For years, pressure has been building for higher education institutions to improve student outcomes and to provide greater accountability to their stakeholders.

There is a student-success movement under way. As a result of tough economic realities, shifting student demographics, or a natural consequence of what it takes to succeed in a knowledge-based economy, stakeholders such as students, parents, and state governing boards are demanding more from higher education institutions, specifically with regard to retention, learning outcomes, graduation rates and employment in the workforce. Today, the emphasis is on student achievement.

Discussions surrounding assessment practices in online learning are requiring a greater level of academic accountability from institutions of higher education (Arend, 2007). This became evident when Margaret Spellings, the Education Secretary under President George W. Bush, issued her Commission on the Future of Higher Education final report, in 2006, it painted a critical picture of American higher education as being arrogant, unconcerned with escalating costs, and unwilling to change. This critical attention given to higher education has yielded a number of new regulations and

demanded more accountability through regional accreditors. As a result, community colleges are being called upon to be more accountable for everything from efficient use of resources to improving graduation and transfer rates. In order to maintain the values of community and inquiry in higher education, assessment strategies are being implemented as a means to evaluate online learning.

Student Access

Nearly one in every two students enrolled in American higher education attends a community college (AACC, 2008a). Community colleges also continue to serve the most diverse student populations in all of higher education. In a fact sheet published by the Community college students tend to be employed (77% of full-time students; 83% of part-time students), female (59%), financial aid recipients (47%), first generation college students (39%), and members of a minority ethnic group (34%). Community colleges serve the greatest proportion of students of color, enrolling 47% of all African-American undergraduates and 55% of all Hispanic undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges , 2007). Online education offers many opportunities to enhance the learning environment for diverse student populations. No longer viewed solely as an alternative to traditional programs, online learning has become an integral aspect of all types of mainstream education and training environments, including K-12, higher education, corporate, government, military, and home schooling. The ability to access high-quality, academically rigorous anywhere/anytime programs are today's new academic focus.

K-12 Partnerships

As online course enrollments in higher education remain steady, enrollment in virtual classes at the K-12 level is on the rise. According to a National Center for Education Statistics report released in October 2012, approximately 620,000 high school students in the United States took an online course during the 2011-2012 school year. These numbers rose up 16 percent from the previous year (Evergreen Education Group, 2012). This data is noteworthy in that it demonstrates how online courses have, and will continue to, impact future online enrollment in higher education.

In an effort to help prepare students for the digital workplace, several school districts have established college and career readiness initiatives by requiring online courses as a part of the high school curriculum (US News Education, 2012). State lawmakers in Virginia and Idaho have recently enacted 2012 legislation requiring students to take at least one online course over the course of their secondary academic career in order to earn a high school diploma. As more states aim to teach students how to operate in an increasingly digital world, the requirement for completion of online courses for high school graduation will rise. College-readiness and career preparation partnerships currently in place between K-12 stakeholders and community colleges continue to demonstrate how online education plays an integral role in meeting these new paradigm models. The stakeholders in both K-12 and higher education will continue to forge deeper partnerships in the online education arena.

Growth of Online Education

The rate of online enrollment in post-secondary institutions continues to rise sharply each year despite predictions that growth would level off (Sloan Consortium, 2010). In a 2010 Sloan Consortium survey, 5.6 million students or nearly 30% of all the college and university students in 2009 were taking one or more online classes. Additionally, online enrollment increased 21% in 2009, far surpassing the 2% overall growth of higher education enrollment (Sloan Consortium, 2010). Table 1 shows the online enrollment increase from 1.6 million students in 2002 to 6.1 million students in 2010 (Allen & Seaman, 2011). The Pearson Foundation reported 60% of all community college students have taken at least one class online (2010, p. 1). Students taking courses that are completely online are more likely to be enrolled in a community college, older (age 25 or greater), and female.

Table 1. Growth of Online Education 2002-2010

Semester	Total Enrollment	Annual Growth Rate Total Enrollment	Students Taking at Least One Online Course	Annual Growth Rate Online Enrollment	Online Enrollment as a Percent of Total Enrollment
Fall 2002	16,611,710	NA	1,602,970	NA	9.6%
Fall 2003	16,911,481	1.80%	1,971,397	23.00%	11.7%
Fall 2004	17,272,043	2.10%	2,329,783	18.20%	13.5%
Fall 2005	17,487,481	1.20%	3,180,050	36.50%	18.2%
Fall 2006	17,758,872	1.60%	3,488,381	9.70%	19.6%
Fall 2007	18,248,133	2.80%	3,938,111	12.90%	21.6%
Fall 2008	19,102,811	4.70%	4,606,353	16.90%	24.1%
Fall 2009	19,524,750	2.20%	5,579,022	21.10%	28.6%
Fall 2010	19,641,140	0.60%	6,142,280	10.10%	31.3%

Despite the increasing popularity of online courses, online education has not been without its critics. Some scholars have voiced concerns that “online education lessens the opportunity for student connection with faculty and other students [and] reduces academic and social integration into the learning process” (Sherblom, 2010, p. 497).

In 1999, Thomas Russell set out to compile existing data on the impact of distance learning on student success as compared with the impact of the more traditional,

face-to-face format. His work—eventually published as a compendium titled, “The No Significant Difference Phenomenon”—helped shape discussion of the relative merits of what we know now as online education. Russell’s work provided a lens through which educators could map the course of distance learning and a framework for creating new learning environments (Rickard, 2010).

Student Success

Over five and a half million students in higher education were taking online classes in fall 2009. While this growth increase was good for institutional funding, successful completion of online courses by community college students has been an issue both at the national and local level.

The retention rates of online students versus those of face-to-face classroom students has been a concern for higher education institutions for some time (Carr, 2000; Diaz, 2002; Patterson & McFadden, 2009). In a study of community college students enrolled in online and traditional courses during the 2001-2006 time span, Conklin noted a significantly higher dropout rate for those enrolled in online courses. The lower course completion rate for the increasing population of distance learning students is an issue that is being addressed in promoting online student success. A national survey of community college distance education administrators identified low course completion rates as one of the top challenges faced by respondents, with an average student course completion rate of 65% for distance education courses and 72% for traditional courses (Instructional Technology Council (ITC), 2009). The ITC survey also found that:

- Community colleges are continuing to see growth in the use of blended/hybrid and Web-assisted/Web-enhanced/Web-facilitated classes.
- Campuses continue to deal with student-related issues of initial preparedness, such as technical skills, completing an orientation, needed maturity and ability to work independently.
- A growing consensus that the quality of online instruction has improved and now matches the quality of traditional instruction.

Another challenge facing higher education today is how to deal with the different types of “new” students (Oblinger, 2002). Today’s tech savvy students enjoy the ability to connect to family and friends 24/7. They also desire a social aspect in their learning environment (Yuen & Yang, 2010). Through course management systems, Web 2.0 tools, and faster and more reliable bandwidth connections, instructors have access to technological tools and resources that create a learning atmosphere that serves to enhance students’ learning experiences (Alden, 2010; Kim, 2004).

The 2012 Educause Center for Applied Research (ECAR) Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology highlighted several findings regarding what students regard as essential to their academic success. Among them were:

- Blended-learning environments are the norm; students say that these environments best support how they learn.
- Students want to access academic progress information and course material via their mobile devices, and institutions deliver.

- Technology training and skill development for students is more important than new, more, or "better" technology.
- Students use social networks for interacting with friends more than for academic communication.

Specific to this study, using data from the 2012 ECAR study, the VCCS October 2012 Student Success Snapshot reported that almost 80% of respondents (N=13,969) believe that technology helps them achieve their academic outcomes while 68% reported that they learn the most in courses with some online components. A slightly higher proportion of VCCS students took courses completely online (45%, compared to 31% nationally) and a lower percentage of VCCS students indicated that they skipped classes when lectures are available online (11%, compared to 16% nationally). According to the report, technology plays an important role in forming connections (Figure 1).

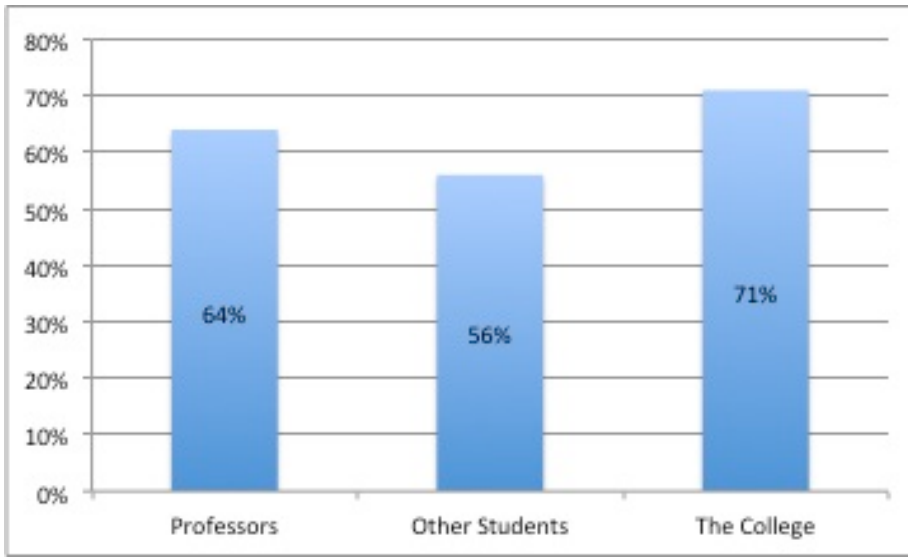


Figure 1. VCCS Student Success Snapshot #23 October 2012
Percent of Students Who Reported Technology Makes Them Feel More Connected to...

Figure 2 shows the types environments in which VCCs student survey respondents reported learning the most.

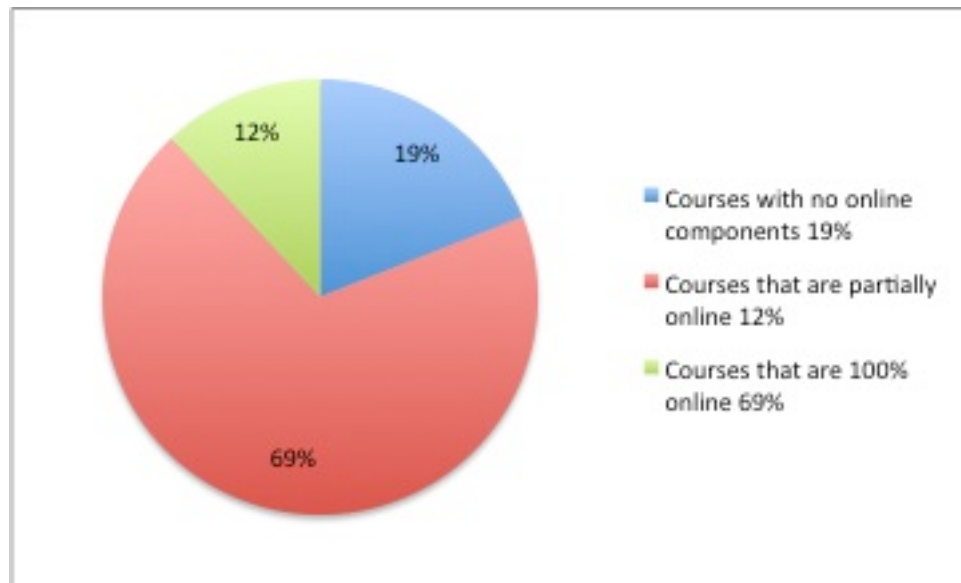


Figure 2. VCCS Student Success Snapshot #23 October 2012
 Environments in which student reported learning more from.

Also a slightly higher proportion of VCCS students took courses completely online (45%, compared to 31% nationally) and a lower percentage of VCCS students indicated that they skipped classes when lectures are available online (11%, compared to 16% nationally). The report also noted that irrespective of gender, race and age, student respondents value technology important to their academic success and felt that technology use helped them to stay more actively involved in their courses. This data will prove helpful in creating an educational technology strategic plan centered on student success.

With the release of its National Education Technology Plan, “Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology,” in November 2010, the Department of Education recognized the importance of technology in education and the

valuable role online instruction plays in preparing students for the rapidly changing needs of the 21st century economy and society. The plan notes, “As online learning becomes an increasingly important part of our education system, we need to provide online and blended learning experiences that are more participatory and personalized and that embody best practices for engaging all students”. This creates both the need and opportunity for educators who are skilled and knowledgeable about emerging technologies geared toward student success.

Menchaca and Bekele (2008) developed a conceptual framework to illustrate success factors for online students. According to Bekele’s model (2008), success in the online learning environments (OLEs) is a function of a complicated interaction of human, technologic, course, pedagogic, and leadership factors. Figure 3 outlines the model.

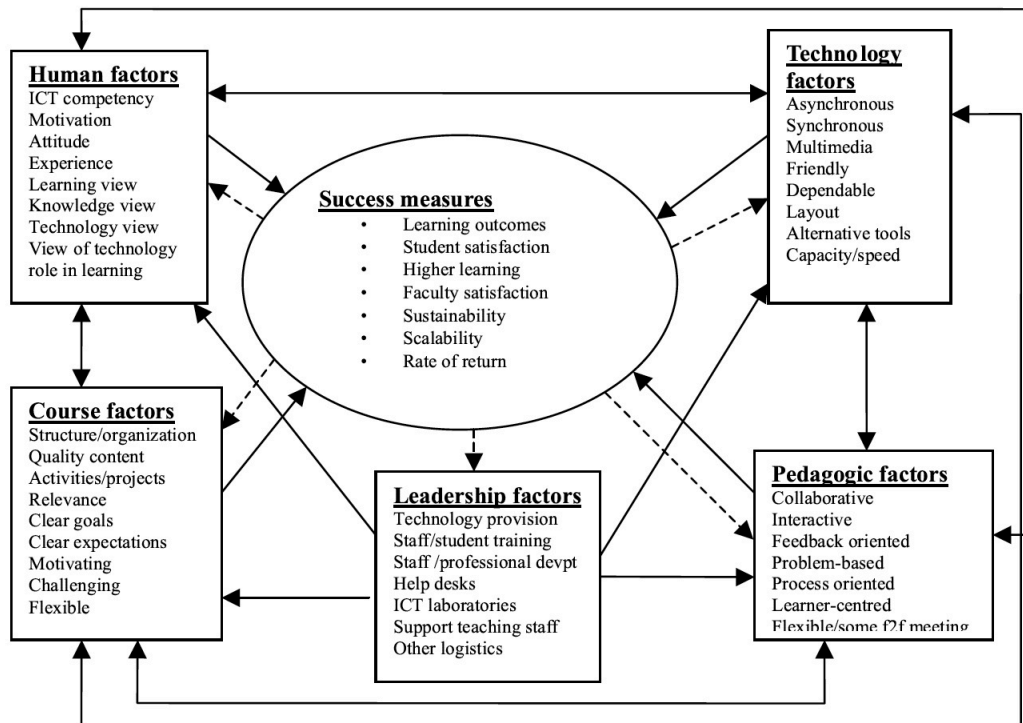


Figure 3. Framework for Student Success in OLE's

Access

The primary mission of community colleges is to provide open-access education to all learners. From grade school through graduate education, online learning makes it possible to gain access to education—regardless of a student’s geographic location or life circumstances. Access is especially important for nontraditional learners, such as working adults, for whom the four-year residential experience is neither viable nor relevant. Community colleges have long been early adopters of online-learning models, mainly because they serve the majority of the nontraditional student market. In order to accomplish this mission, 90% of community colleges or 2-year public institutions are

offering distance-education courses (Oblinger & Hawkins, 2005). Improved access has been one of the top motivators for post-secondary institutions to expand their distance education offerings (Parsad & Lewis, 2008), which in turn has helped drive the strong increase in online course enrollments over the last decade, from 10% of enrolled students in 2002 to 29% in 2009 (Allen & Seaman, 2010). The increasing expansion and availability to the Internet has eliminated many of the barriers to access and created greater opportunity for flexibility. Many students now have access to the necessary hardware and software required to access the Internet either at work or at home, making online learning more attractive. (Schott, Chernish, Dooley, & Lindner, 2003).

The 2012 ECAR study reported that the preferred communication mode students wanted more of most was face-to-face communication. More communication via learning management systems (or virtual learning environments), email and text messaging were also requested by student survey participants.

Technology Influence

Technology continues to play a significant role in the growth and expansion of online education. Course websites and newsgroups have added value to traditional classroom knowledge delivery (Brochers, 1998). Web technologies have impacted course delivery and design in many colleges and universities (Barnett et al, 2004). Moreover, in the past few years, new Web 2.0 technologies have emerged with the potential to provide additional value to the teaching and learning environment. With Web 2.0, students no longer access the web for static information; they now have access to a dynamic level of knowledge through a variety of social interactions (Maloney, 2007). Technology offers

many opportunities to improve teaching and learning. These include the ability to support active learner participation and the potential for development of a community of learners (Ferdig, 2007). To further investigate the pedagogical benefits of Web 2.0 technologies, faculty need to utilize these technologies in instruction.

Community colleges have taken the lead in adopting online technology and other distance education methodologies to provide instruction to a greater number of students. A 2003 National Center for Education Statistics report found that the largest share of distance education enrollments (48%) occurred in community colleges. Community colleges continue to aggressively pursue distance education. During the recent recession (2008-2012), distance education enrollments in community colleges increased 22%, up from 11% the previous year (Miller, 2010). Community colleges are continuously transforming their response to community and societal changes, and those who lead, teach, and provide support in the classroom will need to continually adapt and change as well (Watts & Hammons, 2002).

The student population attending today's community colleges is also getting younger. While these students remain slightly older -average age: 29 - than those who attend baccalaureate institutions, they are trending younger, with 43% of them aged 21 and under. This increasing trend is a reversal of past community college enrollment patterns (AACC, 2007). For the first time in many years, today's community colleges are striving to be more responsive to the learning styles, cultural diversity, and technological aptitudes of students coming from our high schools. This younger generation is coming to

community colleges with a higher level of technological immersion than their predecessors.

The Center for Digital Education (2007) reported that students born in the 1980s and 1990s tend to be more technologically savvy and familiar with tools such as cell phones, text messages, and instant messaging modalities of common communication methods. For the previous generation, the telephone and postal mail were the main communication methods. With a growing number of college students having been raised during the hyperlinked, multi-tasking Internet age, these types of communication methods are much different to how online faculty were raised and educated in an earlier era. Today's students are more likely to be interested in online courses as student demand accounts for 80 percent of institutional motivation for e-learning in community colleges (Center for Digital Education, 2006, p.8).

Online courses require that the instructor not only have a grasp of the subject matter, but he/she must also possess some level of expertise with the tools associated with teaching these courses. Online courses are normally taught using a learning management system such as Blackboard, WebCT, or Moodle. Online education presents opportunities to experiment with new technology resources beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom. Effective utilization of technology resources in an online environment offer opportunities for learner engagement (Roblyer & Wiencke, 2003). Technology has changed the available delivery options and teaching methods of distance education courses (Berge, 1999). This transformation has been driven not only by advances in tools but also by the recognition that high levels of interaction can have

positive impacts on learning outcomes (Flottemesch, 2000; Woods & Baker, 2004). The creative use of new technologies can increase the possibilities in exploratory and discovery-oriented learning (Burbules & Callister, 2000).

In an online class, it is important to connect with students. Enhancing teacher presence can improve student-teacher interaction and increase the connection between the student, the teacher, and the class. Several free or low-cost technology tools are available and the uses for these tools are vast. For example, creating audio recordings, videos, screen-casts, animations, screen captures, cartoons, and slide presentations that can help enhance both teacher presence and student learning in online courses.

Advancements in technology have altered the educational experience for student and faculty. The teaching and learning environment is shifting from instruction to discovery. Internet search tools are increasing, as are peer networks and other collaborative sites. These technologies provide the architecture for participation and group effort via mobile networks and devices, collaboration tools, and ePortfolios (EDUCAUSE, 2010). According to the 2008 EDUCAUSE Current Issues Committee Report, in planning thriving online programs, colleges must construct a “roadmap for turning technologies, such as wikis, blogs, and podcasts into productive tools for the next generation of e-learning environments”.

In considering the role of technology in institutions, Duderstadt (1999) states “The real question is not whether higher education will be transformed but rather how and by whom” (p. 1). Technology is customary and an expectation of today’s learners. Technology is transforming the face of education and, consequently, the role of

administrators, instructors, and students. “It could well be that faculty members of the twenty-first century college or university will find it necessary to set aside their roles as teachers and instead become designers of learning experiences, process, and environments.” (Duderstadt, 1999, p.7). It is vital that benchmarks are established to guide adjunct faculty through this role transformation. Developing clear standards for online instructor presence and participation may be the first step in enhancing the connectedness that adjunct have in community colleges.

Adjunct Faculty

Definition of Adjunct

How is an adjunct defined? In the past, adjunct faculty definitions have been based on legal associations between the college and faculty, number of credit hours and types of courses taught. Some researchers refer to adjunct faculty as individuals who are in temporary, non-tenure track positions and engaged in anything less than full-time employment (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). Others define adjunct faculty as those who teach less than a full-time load (Beckford-Yanes, 2005). For this study, the definition of an adjunct faculty will be defined based on the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) interpretation: Adjunct faculty are employees who teach less than a normal faculty load or to teach less than a full session on a semester-by-semester or summer term basis (full-time faculty workload of 12-15 credit hours or 15- 20 classroom contact hours per semester). The terms adjunct, instructor and part-time faculty are used interchangeably in this study.

Adjuncts in Community Colleges

The use of adjuncts at community colleges is not a recent practice. In the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty report, it was shown that about 67 percent of the faculty employed in public two-year institutions worked part time (Cataldi, Fahimi, Bradburn, and Zimbler, 2005). This data supports the 2005 data report from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) indicating that there were 219,331 adjunct faculty, while full-time faculty in the community colleges numbered 109,183. Adjunct faculty members play a significant role in community colleges. Adjunct faculty outnumber full-time faculty by nearly two-to-one which represents the majority of all community college faculty positions (Phillipe & Sullivan, 2005). The numbers continue to increase with the U.S Department of Education reporting that 69% of those that teach at 2-year-public colleges were part-time faculty. Males comprised 47% of the population while females comprised 53% of the adjunct demographics (2009). In the Spring 2012 semester, the community college in this study employed 409 online faculty teaching; 241 (59%) were adjuncts and 168 (41%) were full-time faculty.

Strengths

Adjunct faculty are thus an increasingly important resource in the success of community colleges. While the use of adjuncts is often seen as a less desirable for some administrators and faculty, higher education institutions continue to draw upon them at unparalleled rates, predominantly in online programs (Carnevale, 2004). Intricate in the institutional strategic plan, adjuncts can play a vital role in responding and meeting the needs of their local communities. To meet enrolment demands in a climate of tightening

budgets, adjuncts, especially those who are employed in their professions, play a significant part of a college's strategic yearly plan (Christensen, 2008; Umbach, 2007). Doing this creates a dynamic bond between the colleges and industries within the community served by these colleges. More importantly, adjuncts bring to the learning environment a wealth of expertise with practical applications that enhances the curriculum and, therefore, have the ability to bring real-world examples to the classroom making for an interesting and dynamic learning environment (Umbach; Wagoner, Matcalfe, & Olare, 2005; Green 2007). These relationships were seen as a way of strengthening the community and making a close connection between the skills students are learning in class and the real world application of those skills.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement Report (CCSSE, 2009) indicated that adjunct faculty play a large role in shaping students' experiences. The report's findings suggest that colleges must find ways to offer part-time faculty the same instructional support and professional development available to their full-time colleagues in order to close the gap shown between full-time and part-time faculty as measured through student engagement, interaction, and connections with students (Gonzalez, 2009). The rapid growth, unique profile, and perceptions of part-time faculty create a challenge for community college administrators to address the many needs and demands of adjunct faculty, particularly in the components of 1) pedagogical focus; 2) technology; 3) professionalization; and 4) assessment (King & Lawler, 2003).

In a 2012 survey report, titled "Conflicted: Faculty and Online Education", 52% of adjuncts who participated in the survey indicated that they were excited about the

growth of online education. This was a significant difference to the 39% of full-time professors were said they were excited. This may be due to some adjuncts viewing this online growth as a source of new teaching opportunities. Beyond the monetary and scheduling benefits adjunct faculty bring to the institution, they provide a host of benefits to the online learner (Berry, 1999; Lyons, 2007; and Puzzifero & Shelton, 2009). Online students (primarily non-traditional learners) report that the real-world, applied expertise of adjunct faculty, along with their evening and weekend availability, are more amenable to their expectations. Online learners value adjunct faculty who are actively working in the real-world, flexible and aligned with customer-service orientations of education (Lyon, 2007; Puzzifero & Shelton, 2009).

Adjunct faculty can become a connection between the community and the college itself and employing these individuals creates this connection, thus fulfilling a vital mission of the community college (Wallin, 2004). Since adjunct faculty mostly come from local areas of a community college they also “unofficially” work as student recruiters (Green 2007). This connection can also have the potential to enhance the reputation of the college as well as provide internships and possible job opportunities for students.

Challenges

Leslie and Gappa (2002) researched similarities between part-time and full-time faculty. Using data from the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC), the authors concluded that adjunct faculty members tend to have less than half the teaching experience of full-time faculty—five to six years versus 11 to 12 years, respectively. In addition, the majority of adjunct faculty members (51%) were also employed elsewhere

in nonteaching jobs. This number was down from previous reports of about 70 percent (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). More significantly, the authors found that adjunct faculty members appeared less committed, accomplished, and creative in their teaching than full-time faculty. Their findings support claims by other reports (Gappa, 1984; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2008) that part-time instruction can negatively impact student persistence.

Several researchers have also suggested that adjunct faculty negatively impact student learning because they are less skilled instructors than their full-time counterparts (Benjamin, 2003; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006; Levin et. al, 2007). Some studies report this is due in part to adjunct faculty spending less time preparing for the courses they teach (Middaugh, 2002, Umbach, 2008). Other studies point to different socialization processes, which is how adjunct faculty come to understand what “good” instruction consists of (Nutting, 2003). Murphy (2009) argues that issues like this highlight the importance of qualitative research to address the experiences of adjunct faculty and how their time is being spent. A study by Jaeger and Eagan (2009) examined the relationship between part-time faculty members and the associate’s degree completion of community college students. The study findings indicated that students experienced a significant yet modest negative effect from exposure to part-time faculty members on the probability of completing an associate’s degree.

On the flip side, many part-time faculty felt disconnected from the institution and feel the faculty and the administration are overlooking the vital role they play within the organization (Lyons, 2007). Ultimately, students suffer when adjunct faculty are not

given the necessary support they deserve. By examining potential solutions to issues with part-timers access to the same resources—real and tangible—as full-time faculty, changes that lead to students learning, persisting, and graduating at increased rates could be realized. Murphy (2009) used data from the 2004-2005 Higher Education Research Institution (HERI) and concluded that as job satisfaction for adjunct faculty increased, commitment to students and years of service increased. In other words, when adjunct faculty feel valued and supported by their institutions, they are more likely to be committed to student learning and success.

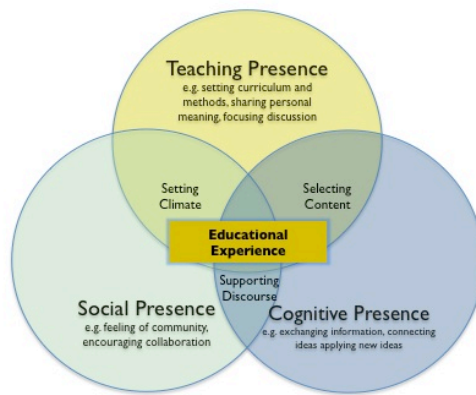
Community of Inquiry (COI) Model

A major distinction between the online classroom and the traditional learning environment is the lack of face-to-face contact between participants. To offset for this lack of physical presence, connectedness and interaction takes on added significance. Similar to traditional classroom settings, online courses must also develop and foster ways in which students and instructors learn through shared learning experiences.

John Dewey (1938), like many of the other constructivist educational theorists from the progressive school of thinking, believed that teaching and learning is inherently a social event and that communication is essential to the learning process (Dewey, 1938; Stein et al, 2007). A community of learners within an educational environment is composed of teachers and learners communicating with the intent of acquiring new knowledge and furthering learning (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). The community of inquiry model (Garrison, Anderson & Archer, 2000) provides a structure that can help

analyze and understand the communication needed in an online course if it is to promote higher order thinking skills in its participants

Developed by Garrison (2000), the community of inquiry (CoI) model focuses on the communication and interaction that occurs in an online educational setting. It also evaluates the development of higher order thinking among students. The model evaluates good or effective online courses in the higher education setting through three major components: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Although each presence has distinct characteristics, they are all interdependent and overlapping to some extent. The three components overlap with one another to illuminate particular areas of communication and pedagogical practice that contribute to the 'educational experience' in the online education setting (Garrison, Anderson, Archer, & Rourke, 2007). Figure 4 shows a visual representation of this community of inquiry model.



Adapted from Garrison & Vaughn (2008)

Figure 4. Community of Inquiry (CoI) Model

This model of community is based on a “fusion of individual and shared worlds” (Garrison & Anderson, 2003, p. 23) in which learning occurs independently and through shared experiences with peers. Garrison and Anderson (2007) emphasize that in order to establish a community of inquiry, instructors ought to “approach an educational learning experience as neither a ‘sage on the stage’ nor a ‘guide on the side’” (p. 77). In order to develop a community of inquiry, the instructor should not be the only source of information for the students as the sage on the stage model implies, nor should he go to the other extreme and offer little or no direct instruction as some suggest with the guide on the side pedagogical approach. Instead, instructors need to have a combined approach, where all participants interact with a common goal, each taking responsibility for his own

learning while also contributing to the learning of others. As the roles of instructor and students shift, the importance of group dynamics increases.

Teaching Presence

The first component of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model is teaching presence, defined as the way in which course design, facilitation, and guidance provided in a course aids in purposeful and meaningful learning (Garrison et al., 2000). Research shows that there is a strong relationship between learners' perceived and actual interaction with instructors and their perceived learning as well as strong relationships between all three elements of teaching presence, course satisfaction, and perceived learning in online courses (Arbaugh et al., 2008a). It is clear that teaching presence is an essential element in the CoI framework and contributes significantly to the quality of the educational experience. A significant body of research indicates that teaching presence in online courses is crucial to student learning and satisfaction (Garrison et al, 2000; Shea et al, 2001; Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Garrison, 2007; Shea and Bidjerano, 2009). "Students' experience of teaching presence has a direct effect on their perceptions of social presence, both of which contribute to the quality of their cognitive presence" (Shea & Bidjerano 2009, p. 201). Research conducted by Swan and Shih (2005) revealed a high relationship between students' perceived learning and interaction with the instructor. Not only does teaching presence lead to satisfaction and create the perception of learning among students, but it has also been found to influence greatly the way students approach involvement and learning in an online course.

A study conducted by Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) examined the way in which course design and teaching influences a student's deep approach to learning. Although several factors contributed to a student's embracing one learning approach over another, the most significant factor in the student's adoption of the deep learning approach in an online class was the active and meaningful engagement of the instructor that guided the learning environment and expectations. The role of the instructor and teaching presence is of significant importance in the CoI model. The instructor has the influence to develop and implement identified instructional practices that can promote social and cognitive presences and thus, deep learning.

Social Presence

Unlike the face-to-face classroom environment, online learning and social exchanges take place in a virtual space. Teaching faculty play a big role in how students experience the online learning environment. Palloff and Pratt (2007) described social presence as the student feeling that he or she is not only known as an individual, but also feels like a part of a community. As with typical online courses, when the foundation for communication is text based, establishing social presence can be especially challenging.

Of all the elements of the CoI framework, social presence has received the most attention because of its connections to creating a community in the learning environment. The concept of social presence is based on the assumption that learning is not an independent exercise, but rather a collaborative endeavor, requiring genuine interaction between individuals. For this type of interchange to occur, participants must have a

“sense of belonging and acceptance in a group with common interests” (Garrison & Anderson, 2007, p. 49).

When examining social presence, there are three essential characteristics: affective communication, open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison & Anderson, 2007). Affective communication is particularly important in the initial stages of the course as a means of building trust and establishing oneself as a ‘real person’. Due to the nature of asynchronous online learning, non-verbal cues are not available. Therefore, participants must rely on other means to communicate with regards to who they are and establish themselves as part of the group. According to Garrison and Anderson (2007) there are several indicators of affective communication. One indicator includes expression of emotions conveyed through descriptive language, text variation such as bold or capitalization, as well as emoticons such as ☺ and ☹. Humor is another indicator of affective communication. However, without tone of voice and body language, humor, especially in the form of teasing, irony, and sarcasm, could be misinterpreted.

The second characteristic of social presence is open communication, which describes the interactivity between participants. The give-and-take exchange of ideas allows members of the community to express support as well as constructive criticism for ideas shared by other participants (Shea, 2006). Indicators of open communication include referring directly to statements made by other community members or even quoting from their postings (Arbaugh, 2007) as well as asking questions for clarification.

Pointing out areas of differences and expressing agreement are both important elements of open communication that can help to stimulate interaction (Garrison & Anderson, 2007).

The final characteristic of social presence is the formation of a cohesive group. This component promotes a sustained commitment to the community. As participants become more comfortable with one another, they will refer to one another by name, creating a more personal interchange of ideas. Participants also began to use group language cues such as we, us, or our, which expresses that individuals have become unified for a common purpose. Furthermore, group members will use communication that serves a purely social function. Greetings such as “Hi everyone. Hope you had a wonderful weekend” and closing statements like “I hope you enjoy the long holiday weekend ahead” allows students to present themselves as ‘real people’ and get to know their classmates on that same level.

Although each of the components of social presence is important, balancing the quantity to which these components are used is essential. The purpose of the community is not to form friendships, but to learn together. “Too little social presence may not sustain community. On the other hand, too much social presence may inhibit disagreement and encourage surface comments and social banter” (Garrison & Anderson, 2007, p. 53). Instructors must work to help promote trust between students without allowing familiarity to suppress higher-order thinking.

Research within the CoI framework (Garrison, 2007; Garrison et al, 2001; Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Stodel, Thompson, & MacDonald, 2006; Sherblom, 2010) has identified several points of pedagogical practices to encourage social presence.

These include: creation of a productive and secure learning space through high teaching presence; frequent and timely interaction with students; implementation of small group tasks; clearly defined communicative expectations; instructor modeling of communicative behavior; providing clear participation requirements regarding content, length, frequency, tone and individual and collaborative/group assignments.

Cognitive Presence

The third component of the CoI model is cognitive presence. According to Garrison et al. (2001) “cognitive presence is the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse”. The element of cognitive presence is key to achieving critical thinking, which is the goal of higher education (Garrison et al., 2000). Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) define cognitive presence as the ability of students to construct meaning through communication.

Research within the CoI framework (Garrison, 2007; Garrison and Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Stodel, Thompson, & MacDonald, 2006; Sherblom, 2010) has identified several points of pedagogical practices to encourage cognitive presence. These include: manageable content that allows time for reflection; frequent assessments that align with learning objectives; instructor modeling of contributions; delivery of engaging questions and discussion focus that challenge ideas; encouragement of deeper engagement with the material through frequent and timely feedback; student led discussions; providing time for reflection and delivery of spaces for continued growth, such as wikis, to build course content.

Faculty & Student Engagement

Community colleges are on the forefront of an online education explosion with online enrollments rates growing far faster than classroom enrollments. Still, student retention and satisfaction in online courses continues to be a concern.

Engagement relates to using interactive design to create meaningful real-world activities that connect students to the class to promote more effective learning. The Annual (2009) Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) emphasized “part-timer status of adjunct faculty as one of the greatest challenges that community colleges face in creating strong campus connections” (Gonzalez, 2009, p.6)

Engagement and retention of students has been linked to the student’s relationship to peers and to the faculty member (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000; Richardson & Swan, 2003; Richards & Tangney, 2008; Wisker, Robinson & Shacham, 2007). In the study faculty were asked about their perceptions of student experiences. Forty-two percent of part-time faculty members indicated that they do not spend any time advising students in a typical week. The report also notes that even when part-time faculty members have the same teaching loads as their full-time counterparts, they still spend less time with students outside of the classroom. Forty percent of part-time faculty members who teach between 9 -12 hours a week never spent time advising students.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted that student-faculty interactions promote student learning. According to CCSSE the more students interact with their instructors, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Personal interaction with faculty members strengthens students’

connections to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress (CCSSE, 2008).

In 2009 CCSSE issued a report that addressed online education. The report indicated that community college students enrolled exclusively in online classes are less engaged than classmates in blended instructional settings. However, lower engagement online appears to be a result not merely of physical distance, but of institutional practices. According to the survey results, online students were less likely to experience active and collaborative pedagogies, to interact one on one with faculty or to report feeling supported socially, academically or financially by their colleges. According to the author, Dr. Kay McClenney, “What we have established through our research is that intensive student engagement is key to student success and needs to happen early and often in community college students.” “This is true in the online environment, and it just has to be done in different ways.”

In 2010, the Lumina Foundation and Public Agenda issued a guidebook titled “Engaging Adjunct and Full-Time Faculty in Student Success Innovation”. The authors stressed the importance of including adjunct faculty in strategic discussion of student engagement and success in particular, programs geared to address academic gaps for underserved at-risk populations.

The social presence and teaching presence elements of the CoI influence social and pedagogical factors (Akyol & Garrison, 2008; Swan & Shih, 2005). Aspects of engagement and retention have also been described as social presence, faculty immediacy, and teaching presence (Mandernach, Gonzales, & Garrett, 2006). The

elements of social presence and teaching presence also facilitate development of cognitive presence (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes; Schrire, 2005). Figure 5 shows a conceptual model of six student success factors, which illustrates extrinsic factors, intrinsic factors, and the influence of the CoI elements of social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence (Morris 2009).

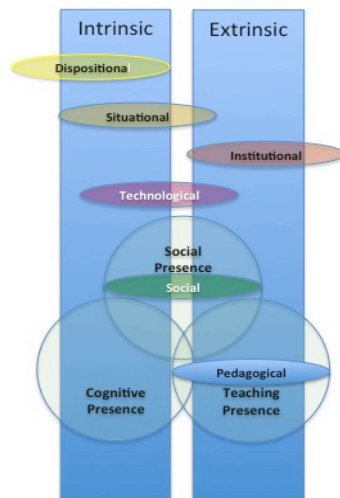


Figure 5. Student Success Factor and the Community of Inquiry

Faculty Professional Development

Professional development remains an important element of a higher education institution's technology plan. Quality professional development programs train instructors to develop and implement comprehensive online classes with up-to-date technologies. Professional development training supports instructors with the integration of technology and course content that enhances the online learning environment by motivating and engaging the multiple learning styles of students (Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009).

With the rapid increase in online courses, the demand for more faculties has led to the reliance on adjunct faculty. (Allen & Seaman, 2005; Carnevale, 2004). The increase of online course offerings not only requires more faculties but faculty with distinctive skills to teach in the online environment (Rice, 2004). Therefore, the information and framework of faculty development offerings must be focused not only on the skills and knowledge needed to teach online, but also on the unique needs of adjunct faculty who are likely to be disconnected from traditional campus faculty development offerings (Schnitzer & Crosby, 2003).

Some researcher have found that the needs of adjunct faculty in preparation for online teaching are few (Rice, 2004; Snyder, 2005). However, literature on online teaching supports the need for strong faculty development programs prior to teaching an online course (Palloff & Pratt, 1999; Pankowski, 2003). A study by (Gerlich, 2005) indicated that faculty viewed teaching online as more difficult than teaching traditional courses and showed that online delivery was more labor intensive because of the amount

of time required to grade papers and respond to questions (Lao, & Gonzales, 2005; Wegmann, & McCauley, 2008; Sellani & Harrington, 2002). In other studies, faculty were concerned about the quality of their online courses and believed that additional instructional and technical support was needed (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Keengwe, Kidd, & Kyei-Blankson, 2009).

Literature and data indicate that adjunct faculties are a permanent and growing sector of the faculty composition in community colleges. Their growth and retention are important factors to institutional strength. Faculty development programs are important in fostering community, and meeting the needs of diverse students learning styles and goals (Murray and Outcalt, 2002). Although adjunct faculty outnumber full-time faculty two to one, from 1993-1998 only 10% of adjunct faculty participated in VCCS professional development activities (Phillipe & Sullivan, 2005). Participation barriers need to be addressed so that the majority of faculty teaching the majority of students can receive the necessary professional development. Messina (2011) looked at adjunct faculty perceptions regarding the value of professional development and of the effectiveness of a professional development program model designed for community college adjunct faculty members. The study presented findings that warrant further research and development both for further design and development for adjuncts that specifically consider themselves peripheral to college life, marginalized, isolated, and seldom provided professional development opportunities available to full-time faculty.

Research conducted by the National Research Council (2000) stressed that the quality of learning opportunities, especially for expert learners (teacher-learners),

strongly depends on the degree to which there is a balance of learner centered, knowledge centered, assessment centered, and community centered characteristics (p. 134). Research suggests that many learning opportunities for instructors fall short of integrating the community of inquiry components in their teaching environment. Teaching instructors how to utilize the various presence tools and behaviors is found to be important factors in helping students develop critical thinking skills (Bransford, 2000).

CHAPTER THREE-METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 2 provided a review of the literature that serves as the foundation for this research study. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology utilized to conduct the research. This study examined adjunct faculty and student perceptions of connectedness in an online course environment. The author surveyed community college adjunct faculty who taught an online class during the Spring 2012 semester and students enrolled in an online class during the same timeframe. Respondents voluntarily participated in an anonymous online survey based on questions developed from existing research using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model.

This chapter is presented in three parts. Part One addresses the research framework. Part Two cover the methodology overview and Part Three presents the research design. Other components of the chapter include research questions, site selection, procedures, delimitations, demographics, survey design, layout and structure.

Part One: Purpose & Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was twofold: to determine how communication was facilitated in an online course and to determine the value that instructors and students place on interaction and connectedness in an online course. The researcher selected the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model as a framework to guide, interpret, and analyze the

collected data. The CoI model developed by Garrison et al. (2000) is a tool for conceptualizing the online learning process in the higher education environment and will provide the theoretical framework for this study.

A similar model, intended for higher institutional stakeholders, the Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education developed by Chickering and Gamson has been used as guideline for teaching and learning (1991). Several researchers have used Chickering's model in examining teaching and learning in the online environment. For example, Puzziferro identified some best practices for supporting "virtual online faculty" organized around the Seven Principles of Good Practice to include mentoring, faculty development programs, and strategies for faculty engagement and involvement (1995).

The researcher chose to use the CoI model as practical way for looking at the various forms of interaction and connectedness. For example, how do the necessary three communication presence components help the learner and instructor form linkages? How do these form or impact relationships in the online environment? The rationale for using this type of model will help provide insights about faculty and student perceptions related to communication and interaction, isolation and preferred course activities. Many of the previous studies involving the COI model have focused on one specific presence in isolation and only a handful have examined the presence of all three aspects. For example, Morris (2011) conducted a qualitative study to investigate community college student perceptions of online learning using all three components in Community of Inquiry (CoI) model. The findings of the study provided insights regarding student

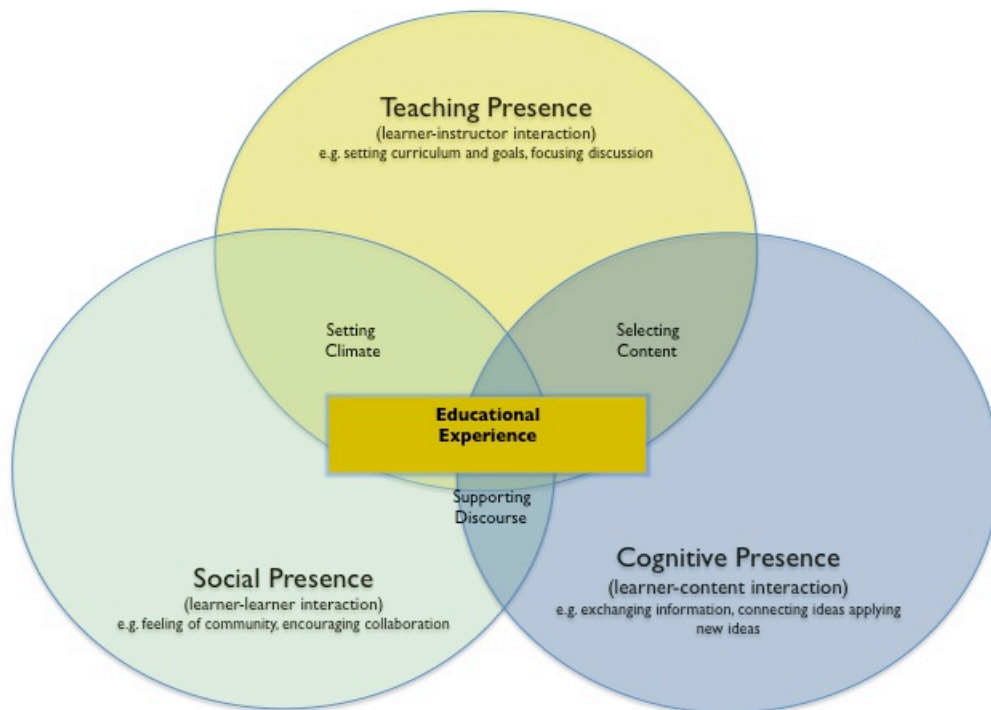
perceptions related to communication and interaction, isolation, preferred course activities, and the positive impact of prompt and helpful instructor feedback. For example, the findings demonstrated that communication and interaction with others through discussion board participation was a major source of engagement for students. The instructor actions, which were also highlighted. Feedback, quick response via e-mail or discussion board to a question, and review of assignment drafts were of benefit many online students. The findings demonstrated that the course activities, which were regarded to be the most beneficial by students, included discussion board participation, formative assessment, instructor-created notes, and lab activities. Akyol and Garrison (2008) studied transcript analysis of online discussion postings. The CoI survey was applied in order to understand the progression and integration of each presence of the CoI. Their study found that all three presences showed a significant relationship with students' satisfaction. However, only two presences (teaching and cognitive presence) showed a significant relationship with perceived learning. They determined that students believe that they learn more when they perceive sufficient levels of teaching and cognitive presence. Additionally, the survey results indicated significant relationships among teaching presence, cognitive presence and social presence, students' perceived learning and satisfaction in the course. The findings have important implications theoretically in terms of endorsing the framework and identifying the dynamics of each of the presences and their association with perceived learning and satisfaction. Ke (2010) used a mixed-method case study to examine the nature and interactions of teaching, cognitive, and social presence created by online instructors and adult students in diverse

course contexts. The study results outlined online instructional design and teaching elements that are crucial prerequisites for a successful online higher educational experience for adult students. For example, the study suggests that course design elements that include discussions serve multiple purposes such as content evaluation, comprehension, and teamwork, are associated with an increase in the amount of social interactions in an online environment.

Like the researchers noted above, the researcher choose to examine all three components of the COI model in order to gain a comprehensive overview of an online educational experience. Interactions between learner-instructor, learner-learner and learner-content were examined.

This study used the CoI model in two ways - first as a conceptual diagram and second as a coding template. Swan (2003) linked the CoI model to interactivity, saying, “No matter what learning theories we hold – behaviorist, constructivist, cognitivist, or social – reciprocal events and mutual response in some form must be integral to our notions of how we learn” (p.16). Swan adapted the model to include methods of interactivity; combining social presence with interaction with peers, cognitive presence with interaction with content, and teaching presence with interaction with instructors. According to Garrison et al. (2000), learning occurs through the integration of three core elements: teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence within a community of inquiry of teachers and students in the online classroom. The diagram identified in Figure 6 depicts the three elements of presence and their interrelatedness that provide the

background for understanding interaction in the online educational environment and the areas of data collection for this study.



Adapted from Garrison & Vaughn (2008)

Figure 6. Community of Inquiry and the various interactions.

The first component, teaching presence as proposed by Anderson, Garrison, and Archer (2001) has three categories: design and organization, facilitating discourse and direct instruction. In online courses, teaching presence plays an integral role in facilitating social and cognitive processes; without it there is no environment to help students progress. In online courses the purpose of teaching presence is to create well-

designed, organized courses where dialogue is well defined and encouraged and provides students the security of knowing the instructor is nearby. Teaching presence has been shown to directly correlate with students' perceived learning and sense of community (Arbaugh & Rau, 2007).

When examining the second component, social presence, there are three essential characteristics: affective communication, open communication, and group cohesion (Garrison & Anderson, 2007). The concept of social presence is based on the assumption that learning is not an independent exercise, but rather a collaborative endeavor, requiring genuine interaction between individuals. For this type of interchange to occur, participants must have a "sense of belonging and acceptance in a group with common interests" (Garrison & Anderson, 2007, p. 49).

The third component of the CoI model, cognitive presence, is defined as, "the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89). The element of cognitive presence is key to achieving critical thinking, which is the goal of higher education (Garrison et al., 2000).

The data results, using the CoI model as a research framework, can assist online faculty and students improve online engagement and add value to learning within a community. The CoI model used in this study will serve as an important tool for analyzing the many interactions between the stakeholders - faculty and students - in the online learning environment.

Part Two: Methodology Overview

The purpose of educational research is to provide descriptive, predictive, or explanatory information with the goal of improving learning (Olsen, 1999). Descriptive research plays an important role in educational research because it greatly increases our knowledge about what happens in the classroom. Descriptive studies are aimed at finding out "what is," so survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data (Borg & Gall, 1989). The data collection used in this study employed a descriptive mixed methods design: quantitative and qualitative data in the form of an online survey that included short answer responses.

The major characteristic of a mixed methods research study is the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) define truly mixed approach methodology as a process that incorporates multiple approaches in all stages of research - from problem identification to research questions, data collection, data analysis, and final inference - and includes a transformation of the data and their analyses through the other approach (i.e. quantification and qualification of data).

Creswell and Clark (2007) defined mixed methods research as, "a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry" (p. 5). They characterized four basic design typologies: triangulation, embedded, explanatory, and exploratory. Of the four outlined, concurrent triangulation is characterized by running quantitative and qualitative phases simultaneously and mixing the results to create inferences.

The researcher chose to use a triangulation mixed methods design for this study. Triangulation is the most well known of the mixed methods research designs because it is utilized when researchers want to compare and contrast quantitative results with qualitative findings, or when researchers wish to support or expand upon quantitative results with qualitative findings. Triangulation occurs in a single phase with both methods weighted equally. The strengths of triangulation lie in its perceptiveness, which makes it easier for beginning researchers to comprehend. The researcher selected this mixed methods triangulation design study to understand how the adjunct faculty and students in an online distance education course perceived the three CoI components utilized in an online classroom environment. The researcher merged quantitative data and open-ended survey questions of adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of the components of CoI in an online environment. The rationale for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to merge the results of two different perspectives that could not have been found using only one method. This helped the researcher capture the perceptions of each targeted population regarding connectedness in an online course environment.

This multilevel model of the concurrent triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) used different methods to address different levels in the systematic approach with the results gathered from each level merged to form an overarching interpretation. The visual model, shown in Figure 7, illustrates the concurrent triangulation approach used in this study (QUAL + QUAN).

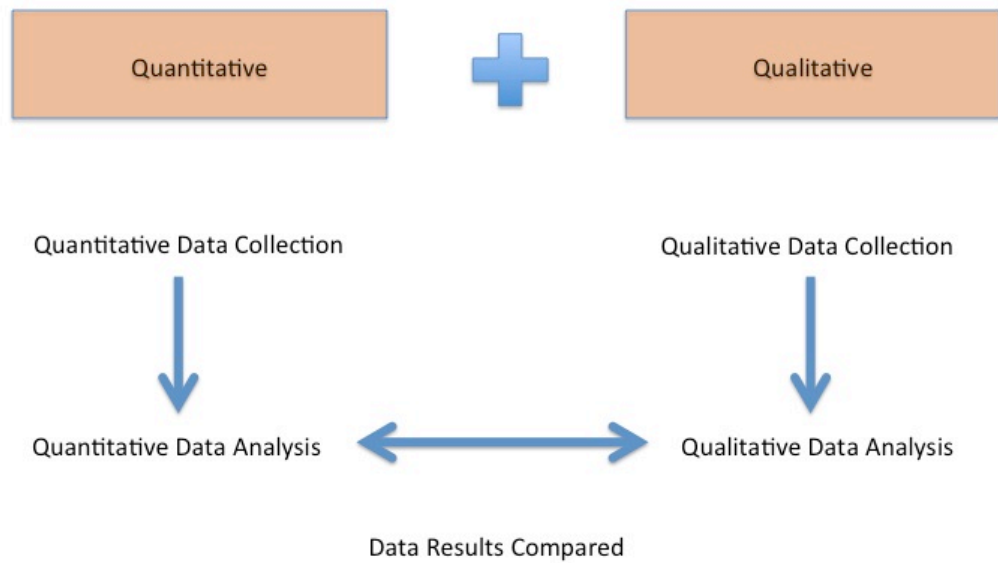


Figure 7. Mixed Method Concurrent Triangulation Approach

The researcher developed a self-administered, web-based survey instrument to collect quantitative and qualitative data for this study. The quantitative strands and the qualitative strands were collected concurrently with each receiving equal priority. The quantitative data was collected from adjunct faculty and students participating in online courses. The vehicles for data collection were online surveys using Likert scales (1-5) for the quantitative information and responses to open-ended questions for the qualitative data collection.

Site Selection

The researcher was specifically interested in investigating adjunct faculty connectedness in an online classroom environment. Student input was also collected to compare and contrast data. In an effort to capture a snapshot from a single institutional perspective, one community college was chosen for the study.

The mixed method study targeted adjunct faculty who taught online in Spring 2012. To gain another perspective, the study also targeted students who were enrolled in an online class during the same timeframe. The researcher contacted the adjunct faculty and students through an email invitation via the Internet-based survey instrument Survey Monkey. These emails contained details of the study and provided a link to access the survey.

Procedures

Permission to conduct the research was requested from the university committee for using humans to conduct research at George Mason University. Appendix A contains a copy of the forms and approval for the research to be conducted. A written statement for all survey participants stating they were guaranteed anonymity was provided at the beginning of each survey and at the outset of each interview. Participants were also told how the data collected would be used and that they could be provided with a copy of the results of the study if they so desired. (Appendix B: Adjunct Faculty Informed Consent Form) (Appendix C: Student Informed Consent Form)

Population Contact Approaches

The faculty and student surveys were conducted online. Participants received a solicitation participation e-mail message informing them of the purpose of the study.

(Appendix D: Faculty E-mail Solicitation Letter) (Appendix E: Student E-mail Solicitation Letter)

The e-mail message contained the web address of the site hosting the survey. Once the participants completed the survey and selected the “submit” option, the results were transmitted directly to the researcher’s survey account for retrieval and analysis. No participant was identified by name, and each survey was coded with a participant number.

Delimitations

The researcher recognized the following delimitations of the study:

1. The study was conducted at only one community college;
2. The results of this survey were dependent on self-reported data from the participant’s point of view;
3. The data collected for this research is delimited to one community college’s online course enrollees during one semester;
4. In comparing student perceptions, there may have been confounding factors due to student and instructor types and prior learning experiences;

5. The Institutional Research and Planning Department of the community college extracted the data from the survey; therefore, the accuracy is dependent upon this department.
6. The bias of the researcher as a full time faculty administrator at the community college is also a delimitation of this study.

Research Questions

Through this study the researcher intended to answer several important questions:

1. How are the three Community of Inquiry components perceived by adjuncts and students in an online course?
2. What similarities exist between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment?
3. Are there significant differences between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment?
4. What components of presence do adjunct faculty and student value in an online environment?

Part Three: Survey Design

The study was designed to explore two particular facets regarding the level of connectedness in an online course environment: faculty perceptions and the perceptions of the students enrolled in online courses. The study specifically targeted adjunct faculty who taught an online class in Spring 2012 semester. It also included self-selected

participants who held the following criteria: students who were enrolled in an online class in Spring 2012 semester.

Using the term “connectedness” as the foundation, the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model was used as the framework for the study. The researcher refers connectedness in terms of faculty and students uniting and “clicking” in the online course via communication and interaction using the three components of presence as outlined in the CoI model. The researcher conducted extensive research in the area of online distance learning, adjunct faculty, and instructional and learning presence. The researcher conducted research in the area of faculty and student perceptions as it relates to the three major components of the CoI model: teaching, social and cognitive presence. The researcher reviewed several studies that focused on one of the CoI components, however the researcher found few studies that included all three CoI components in analyzing perceptions of faculty or students in the online classroom environment.

The researcher designed the survey to include all three CoI components in order to achieve a general interpretation of faculty and student connectedness in an online classroom environment. Using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) questionnaire (Arbaugh, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, & Swan, 2008), the researcher selected 2-3 questions from each presence area to eliminate the possibility of a low response rate. Each survey instrument contributed to producing an overall representation of the nature and value of online interaction from the perspectives of the various stakeholders in an online educational experience. Each survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions.

A five point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) was used to collect quantitative data and short open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data.

Survey Design Assumptions

In the survey design it was assumed that respondents (a) had an informed understanding of using a 5-point Likert scale in interpreting their perceptions, (b) were willing to participate, (c) would complete the survey as an individual, and not discuss it with other participants, and, (d) and were part of the targeted population and were specifically invited to participate.

Limitations of the Survey

The researcher anticipated a low response rate from adjunct faculty and students since the college did not mandate survey participation. Also, because the survey was distributed and responses were captured online, participation was limited to the respondents who would access, comprehend, and accurately submit the survey (Kulp and Hunter, 2001). The researcher also anticipated a significantly low student response rate given the fact that no incentive was offered to the student population (Sax, Gilmartin and Bryant, 2003). Self-selection bias was another limitation to the online survey since some respondents were more likely than others to complete an online survey (Thompson et al., 2003).

Potential Bias

To keep personal bias to a minimum, the researcher withheld assumptions and preconceptions regarding instructional technology strategies or tools for course

development and engagement in the online classroom environment (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Survey Layout

The survey was web-based, and was designed by sections for ease of completion. The survey included progression buttons like "next" in order to access the next page, "back" to change previous selections, or "exit survey" to quit the survey. The "submit" button was on the last page of the survey to allow the participant to exit the survey and submit the results to the database. With the exception of demographic questions, participants were not required to select a response for each item on the page in order to proceed to the next page. A completion bar was provided to show the participants where they were in the process. The survey was divided into sections with a short description of each section at the top of each page introducing the category. (Appendix F: Adjunct Faculty Online Survey) (Appendix G: Student Online Survey)

Research Reviews

To develop the methodology and survey instrument, the researcher selected survey questions based on the works of Arbaugh, Cleveland-Innes, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, Swan (2008) in order to collect data from the targeted participants.

Survey Structure

The faculty survey instrument was divided into six sections: 1) informed consent (required), 2) demographics (required), 3) general information regarding online teaching experience (required), 4) course design and structure, 5) course instruction, students'

sense of community, and, 6) training and professional development. Sections 4-6 contained a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree). The survey also included a column for respondents who chose not to respond to a question. Table 3 outlines the categories of presence that the researcher investigated in the faculty survey. The survey questions were adapted from the Community of Inquiry (CoI) questionnaire (Arbaugh, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, & Swan, 2008).

Table 2. Adjunct Faculty Survey CoI Questions

ADJUNCT SURVEY		
Presence	Category	Question
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important course goals to the students
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important course topics to the students.
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities that helped students keep pace with this course.
TP	Facilitation	I helped students take advantage of the online environment to assist their learning.
TP	Facilitation	I acknowledged student participation in the course.
TP	Facilitation	I helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialog.
TP	Direct Instruction	I provided explanatory feedback that assisted students to learn.
TP	Direct Instruction	I provided useful information from a variety of sources that assisted students to learn.
SP	Open Communication	The students received timely feedback from each other in this course.
SP	Open Communication	The students seemed to be connected in this course.
SP	Group Cohesion	The students believed that they could rely on others in this course.

TP=teaching presence

SP=social presence

CP=cognitive presence

After each quantitative question, the adjunct faculty member answered open-ended questions of what worked, what didn't work and what would they change for each CoI presence component. Coding was used for this process. Coding is the process of examining the raw qualitative data which will in the form of words, phrases, sentences or

paragraphs) and assigning CODES or labels. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified two types of coding: open coding and axial Coding Using the text analysis tool feature in surveymonkey.com, the researcher read through the data highlighted sections of the text and selected codes (open coding). Ultimately, the researcher found it necessary to sort the codes into groups (axial coding).

Including a qualitative question allowed the researcher to dig more deeply into the adjunct members' experience and perception of connectedness. The researcher also sought to collect quantitative and qualitative data on how adjunct faculty utilized professional development. The interpretation of this data was triangulated with the qualitative data collected regarding what faculty thought worked and did not work in creating a certain CoI presence.

The student survey instrument was divided into five areas: 1) informed consent (required), 2) demographics (required), 3) general information regarding online course experience (required), 4) online class perceptions and 5) short-answer question sections. Section four contained a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree). Table 4 outlines the categories of presence that the researcher investigated in the student survey. Four open-ended questions were also included at the end of the survey. Coding was also used in analyzing the qualitative data. The qualitative data was used to interpret student experience and perceptions of each CoI presence component.

Table 3. Student Survey CoI Questions

STUDENT SURVEY		
Presence	Category	Question
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (i.e discussion boards).
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped keep the course participants on task in a way that helped me to learn.
TP	Facilitation	Instructor actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion.
SP	Affective Communication	Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.
SP	Open Communication	I felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.
SP	Open Communication	I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.
SP	Group Cohesion	I felt that other students acknowledged my point of view.
SP	Group Cohesion	Online discussions help me to develop a sense of collaboration.
CP	Exploration	I utilized a variety of information sources to explore problems posed in this course.
CP	Exploration	Online discussions were valuable in helping me appreciate different perspectives.

The researcher designed both surveys to allow for a logical transition between categories and questions. Including the various elements in each presence category of the CoI model allowed for the researcher to pull out data in analyzing connectedness in the online course.

Demographics

Faculty demographic information selected for this study included (a) gender, (b) age, (c) employment status outside teaching, (d) community college teaching experience (e) discipline area, (f) length of time teaching online, and, (g) length of time teaching face-to-face (if applicable). Student demographic information included (a) gender and (b) age.

Validity of the Instrument

The researcher presented the student survey instrument to a panel of three experts to determine the validity of the instrument. The panel of experts checked the survey for face validity and content validity. Face validity ensures an appropriate reading level for the intended participants, and face validity avoided sensitivity of subgroups. Content validity checks for omissions, redundancy, and poor wording in the questions contained in the survey. The panel of experts completed a Validity Questionnaire to guide them through their analysis of the questions on the survey (Appendix H). After the panel of experts examined the survey instrument, the researcher incorporated suggested revisions and additions to the survey as recommended by the panel of experts.

Summary

This chapter presented the specific methodology and design used in this study to explore adjunct faculty member and student perceptions link to connectedness in the online classroom environment. Specific survey and open-ended questions were included to allow the researcher to gather data utilizing the three components in the Community of

Inquiry model. The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methods. The justifications for selecting these techniques were presented in the methodology overview and research questions section. Chapter Four describes the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS & DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Chapter 3 focused on the methodology utilized to conduct the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research, examining the perceptions of adjunct faculty and students in an online environment. This study was comprised of two main sources of data collection: a survey of adjunct faculty who taught an online course and a survey of students enrolled in an online course of instruction during the same timeframe. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) model provided a practical way for viewing the various forms of interaction. The framework consisted of the overlapping elements of cognitive presence, social presence, and teaching presence.

The purpose of this mixed methods triangulation design study was to understand how teaching presence, as established by adjunct faculty at community college teaching in an online distance education course, was related to students' perceived learning and sense of community. This was addressed by merging quantitative data related to students' and adjunct faculty members' perceptions of teaching presence, perceived learning, and sense of community with qualitative data.

The quantitative data was collected using an adapted version of the CoI questionnaire (Arbaugh, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, & Swan, 2008). An online survey was administered to adjunct faculty and students registered in an online class in

Spring 2012. The rationale for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to merge the results of two perspectives to more fully describe CoI presence strategies that either method alone may have missed.

The first part of the chapter presents the demographics of the adjunct faculty and students, quantitative analyses of the survey data from both samples, qualitative analyses of the open-ended responses from the adjuncts faculty member and student surveys which all led to a mixed methods analysis of the data. Tables and figures are incorporated throughout the text and participants' responses to open-ended questions were included where appropriate.

Descriptive Statistics Overview

There were two sets of participant populations for this study: adjunct faculty and students. Basic descriptive statistics define the sample populations. This included calculating measures, frequencies, and percentages. Data was extracted from the online repository at Survey Monkey into Microsoft Excel format. This study's findings were analyzed and presented in a format that addresses each research question. The researcher distributed an electronic invitation (e-mail) to participate in the study to two groups: adjunct faculty who taught online and students who took an online course during the same time frame. Two hundred sixty-nine adjuncts were invited to participate in the study. Fifty-one responded to the survey, resulting in a 19% completion rate for the survey. Of the 3,226 students who were invited to participate in the study, one hundred forty responded to the survey, resulting in a 4% completion rate for the survey.

Table 5 lists the demographic information collected for each population.

Table 4. Demographic information collected

Adjunct	Student
Gender	Gender
Age	Age
Employment Status	First online course
Length of time teaching	Plans on enrolling in another online course
Subject areas	
Length of time teaching online	
Face to Face teaching experience	
Current face to face teaching status	

Adjunct Faculty Survey Population

Table 6 shows the demographic data for the adjunct faculty respondents.

Table 5. Adjunct Faculty Demographic Data Results

Category	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	22	43.1%
Female	29	56.9%
Age		
25-30	2	3.9%
31-40	7	13.7%
41-50	16	31.4%
51-60	9	17.6%
61+	17	33.3%
Employment Status (outside teaching)		
Full-Time	8	15.7%
Part-Time	6	11.8%
Adjunct only	37	72.5%
Community College teaching experience		
1 to 3 years	10	19.6%
4 to 6 years	13	25.5%
7 to 9 years	6	11.8%
10 to 12 years	6	11.8%
13 to 15 years	3	5.9%
16 or more	13	25.5%
Courses Taught		
Business	6	11.8%
Communication	5	9.8%
Economics	2	3.9%

English	7	13.7%
Humanities	20	39.2%
Information Technology	2	3.9%
Math	4	7.8%
Science	8	15.7%
Length of Time Teaching Online (semesters)		
1 to 2	5	9.8%
3 to 4	6	11.8%
5 to 6	7	13.7%
7 to 8	4	7.8%
9 to 10	8	15.7%
11 or more	21	41.2%
Face-to-face (f2f) teaching experience		
1 to 2 years	8	15.7%
3 to 4 years	5	9.8%
5 to 6 years	7	13.7%
7 to 8 years	4	7.8%
9 to 10 years	1	2.0%
10+ years	25	49.0%
I have not taught face to face	1	2.0%
Currently Teaching f2f		
yes	30	58.8%
no	20	39.2%
not applicable	1	2.0%

Gender. Females had the largest response rate 56.9% (29), while 43.1% (22) were male (Figure 8).

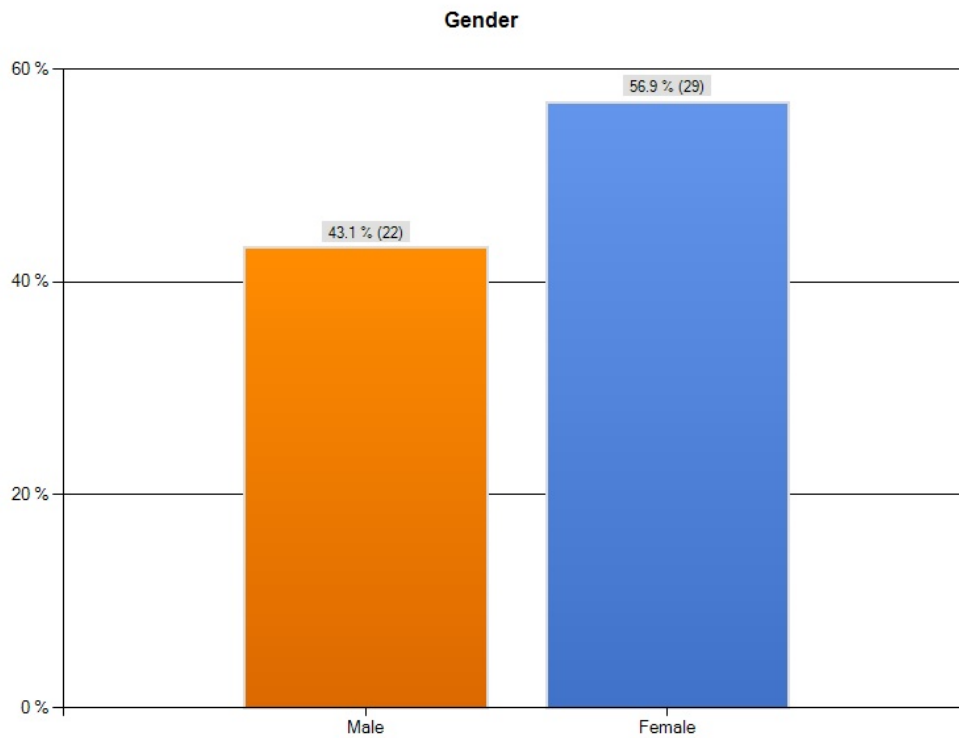


Figure 8. Adjunct Faculty Gender

Age. The majority of survey respondents were 61 and over; 33.3 %, (17), while 31.4% (16) were between the ages of 41-50. Nine participants were 51-60 (17.6%), 7 were between 31-40 years old (13.7%) and two were between 25-30 years old (3.9%) (Figure 8).

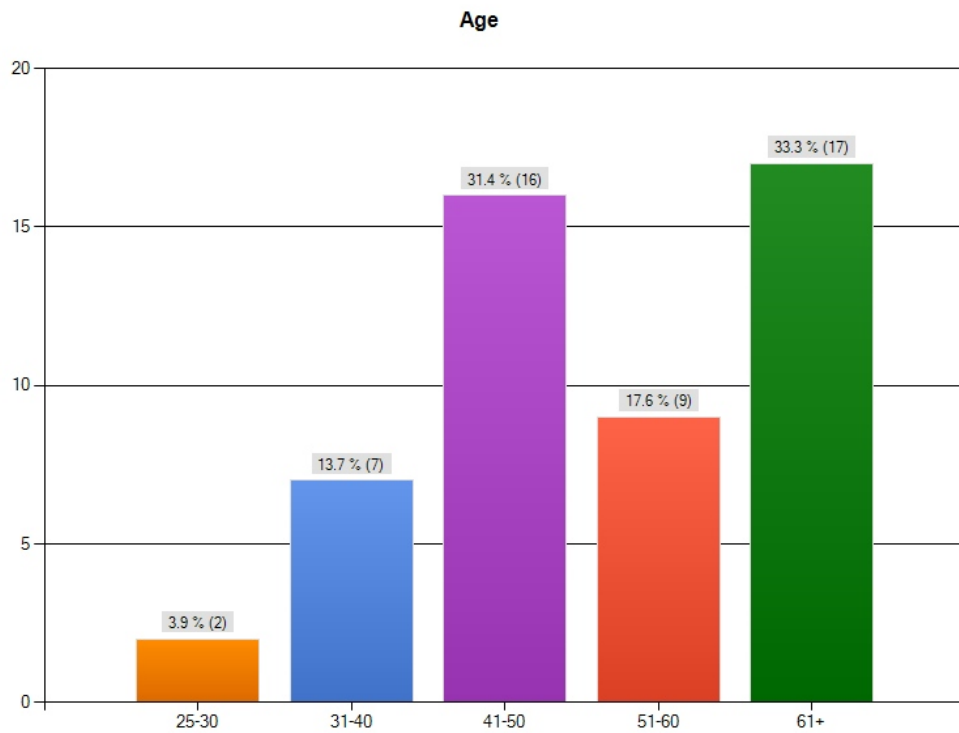


Figure 9. Adjunct Faculty Age Distribution

Employment Status (outside teaching). The majority of participants' 72.5 %, (37), were employed as adjunct faculty only, while 15.7% (8) were employed full-time and 11.8% (6) employed part-time (Figure 9).

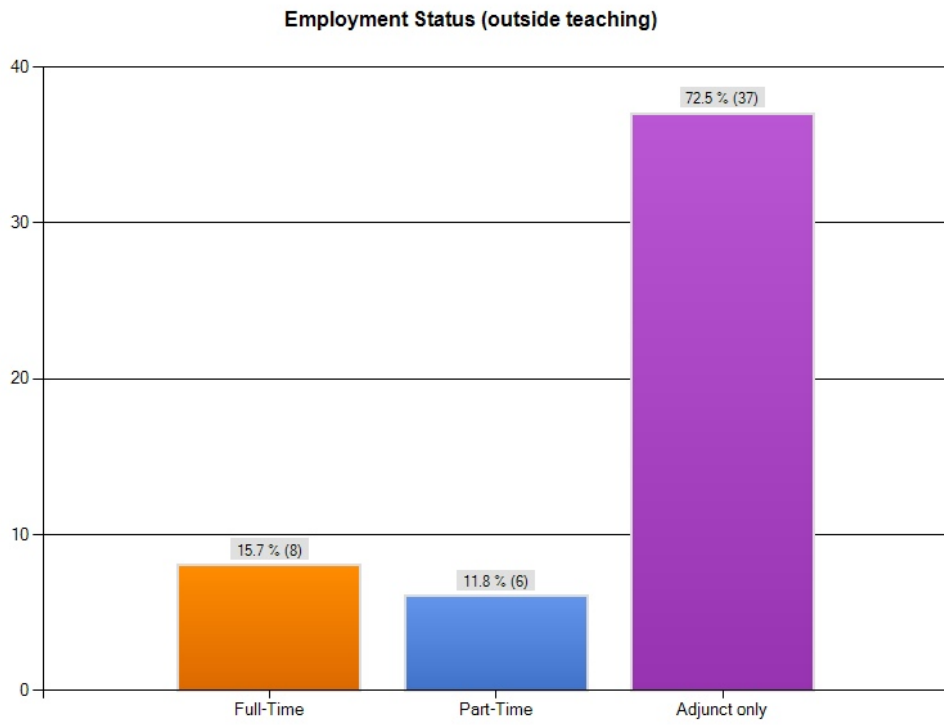


Figure 10. Adjunct Faculty Employment Status

Community college teaching experience. 25.5% (13) of the participants in both the 4-6 year and 16 plus years group had community college teaching experience. 11.8% (6) of the participants in the 7-9 years group and 10-12 years group had community college teaching experience. 19.6% (10) had 1-3 years experience and 5.9%(3) had 13-15 years teaching experience (Figure 10).

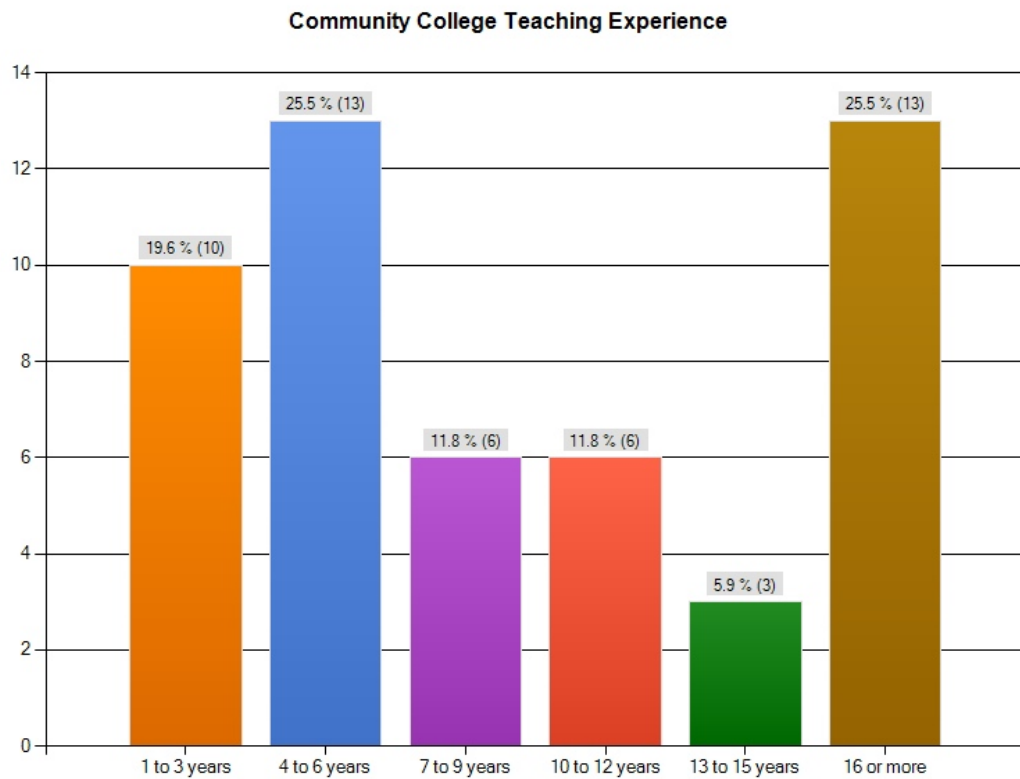


Figure 11. Community College Teaching Experience

Courses taught. The largest disciplinary group was Humanities 39.2 % (20), with science the second largest 15.7% (8). The remaining disciplines were English 13.7% (7), Business 11.8% (6), Communication 9.8% (5), Mathematics 7.8% (4), Economics 3.9% (2) and Information Technology 3.9% (2) (Figure 11).

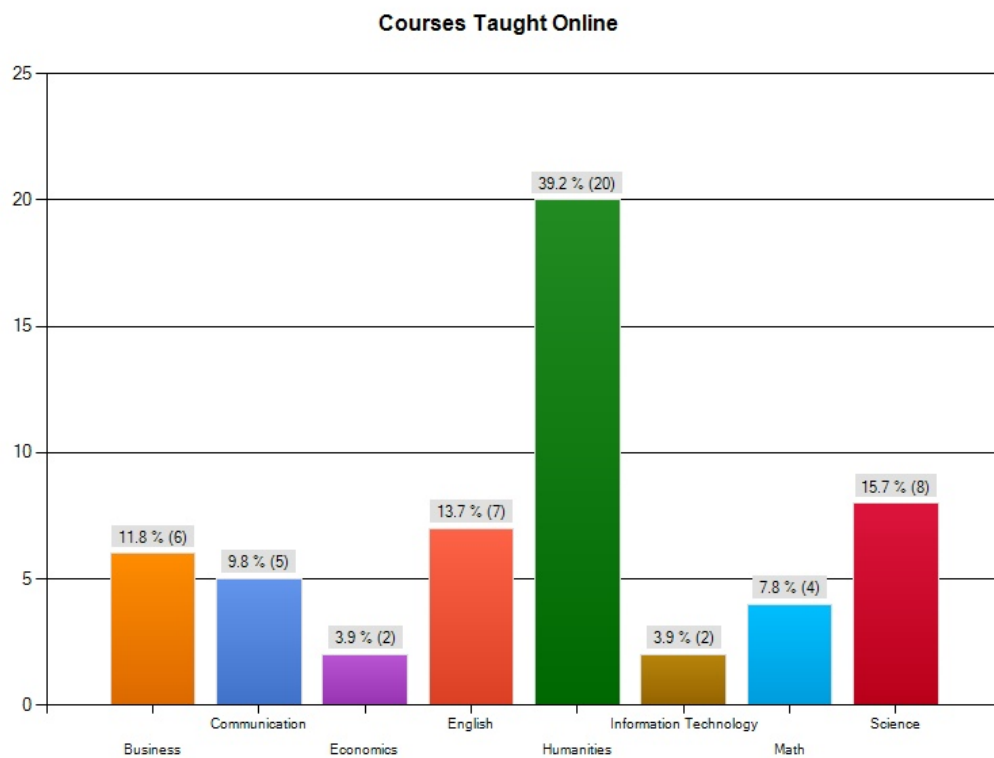


Figure 12. Courses Taught by Adjunct Faculty

Length of time teaching online (semesters). The majority of the respondents 41.2% (21) had taught online for 11 or more semesters. 15.7% (8) had taught 9-10 semesters, 13.7% (7) had taught 5-6 semesters, 11.8% (6) had taught 3-4 semesters, 9.8% (5) has taught 1-2 semesters and 7.8% (4) had taught 7-8 semesters (Figure 12).

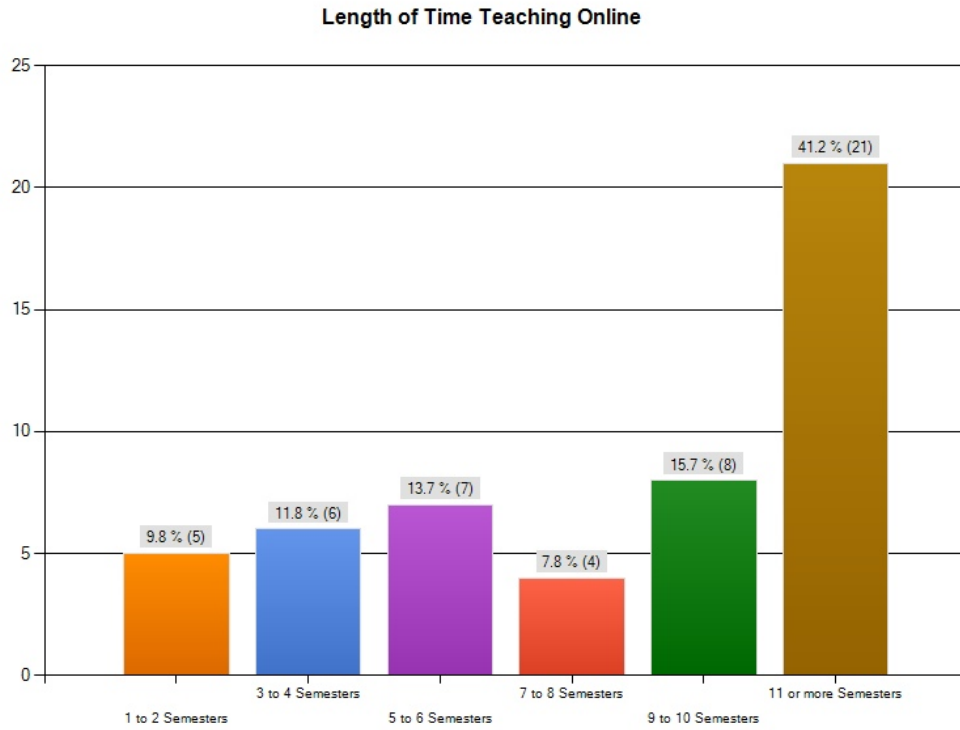


Figure 13. Length of Time Teaching Online

Face-to-face (f2f) teaching experience. Nearly one-half (49%) of the adjunct faculty respondents had face-to-face teaching experience in excess of 10+ years. The next largest group possessed only 15.7%, or one-to-two years of f2f teaching experience (Figure 13).

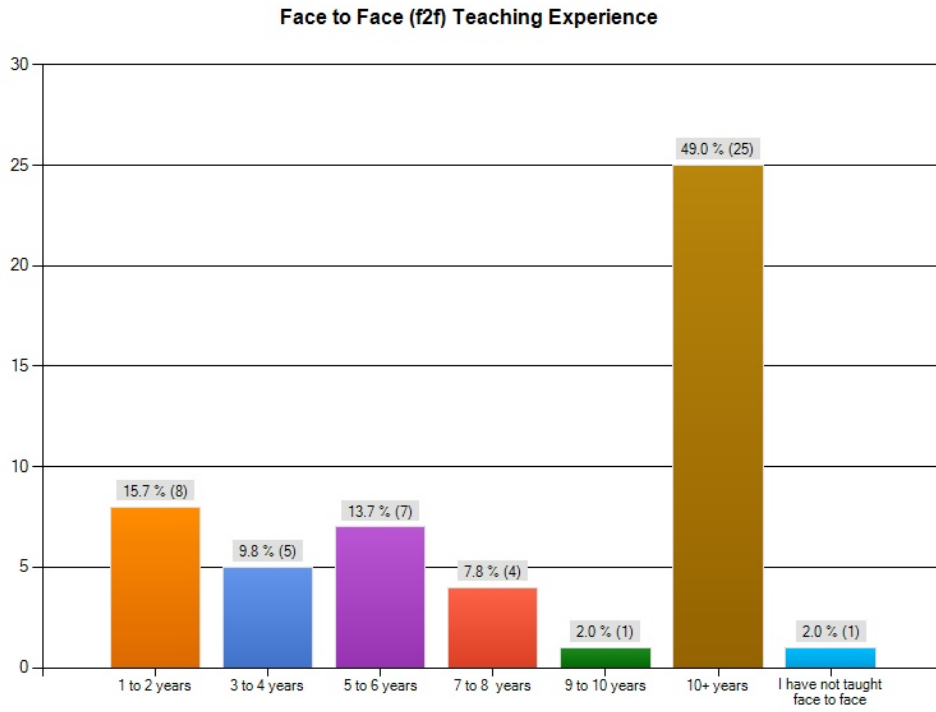


Figure 14. Face to Face Teaching Experience

Currently teaching f2f. Of the adjunct respondent group, 58.8% (30) currently teach in a face-to-face environment in addition to teaching online. The remainder of the subject group, 39.2% (20) do not currently teach in a f2f environment (Figure 14).

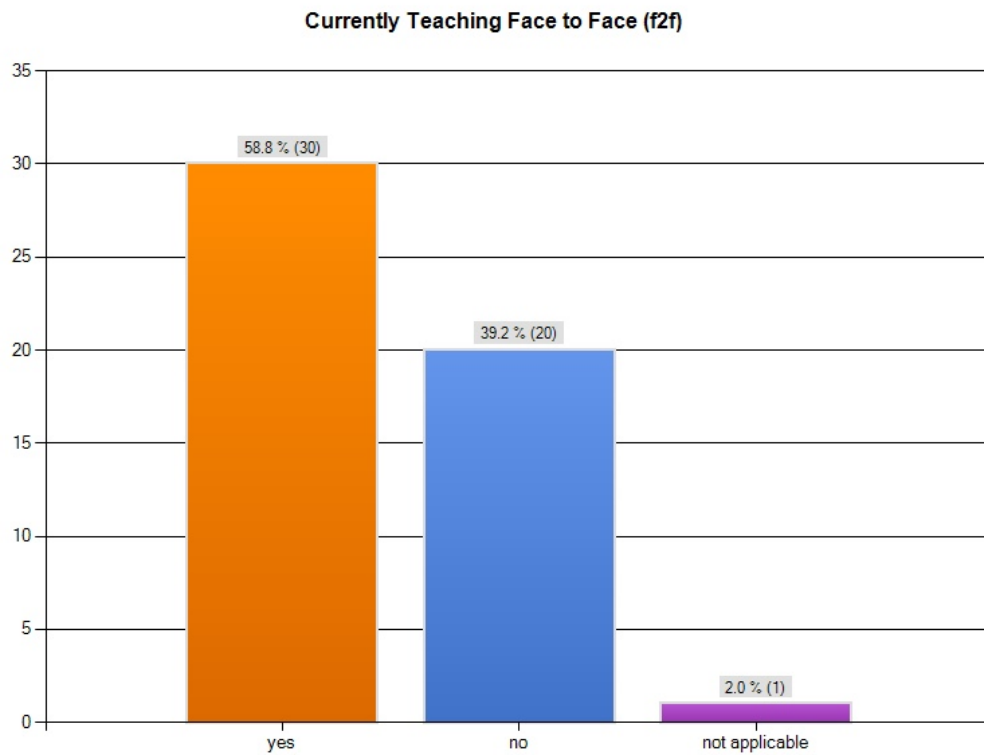


Figure 15. Adjunct Faculty Currently Teaching Face to Face

Student Survey Population

Table 6 provides demographic data for the student respondents.

Table 6. Student Survey Demographic Data

Category	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	31	22.6%
Female	106	77.4%
Age		
18-24	32	23.4%
25-30	35	25.5%
31-40	44	32.1%
41-50	16	11.7%
51-60	8	5.8%
61+	2	1.5%
Was the class you were enrolled in Spring 2012 your first online course?		
yes	29	21.2%
no	108	78.8%
Have you or do you plan to enroll in another online course?		
yes	105	76.6%
no	8	5.8%
not sure	24	17.5%

Gender. Female students responded overwhelmingly with a response rate of 77.4% (106), compared to 22.6% (31) male respondents (Figure xx). From 2006-2011, female students consistently comprised the majority of the population enrolled in the community college's online courses, ranging between 65 and 68 percent. (College Fact Book, 2010-2011)

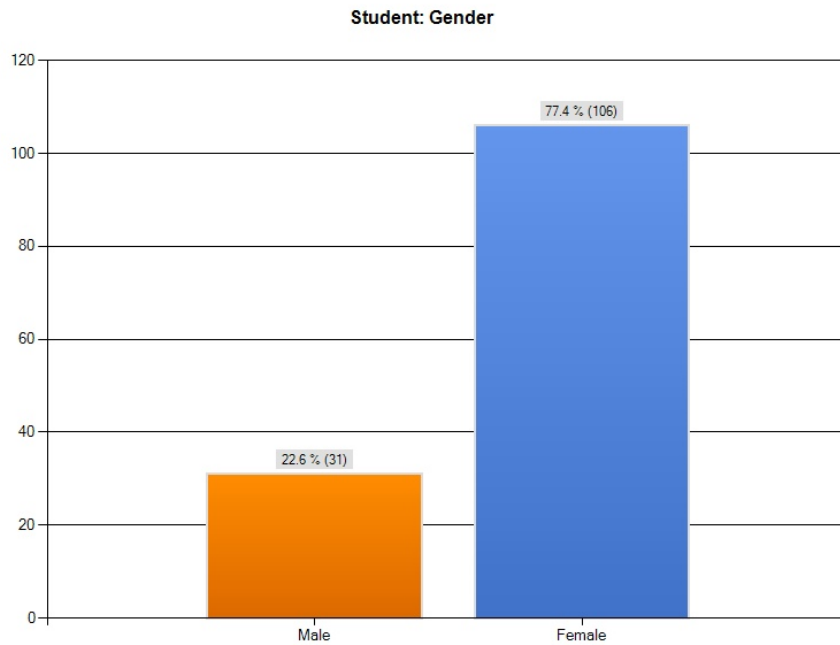


Figure 16. Student Gender

Age. Demographic age played a large role in the makeup of the student respondent group. As noted in Figure 16, the 31-40 yr age group produced the largest population, with 32.1% (44) respondents. The next largest response group was the 25-30 year old respondents who comprised 25.5% (35) of the total respondents.

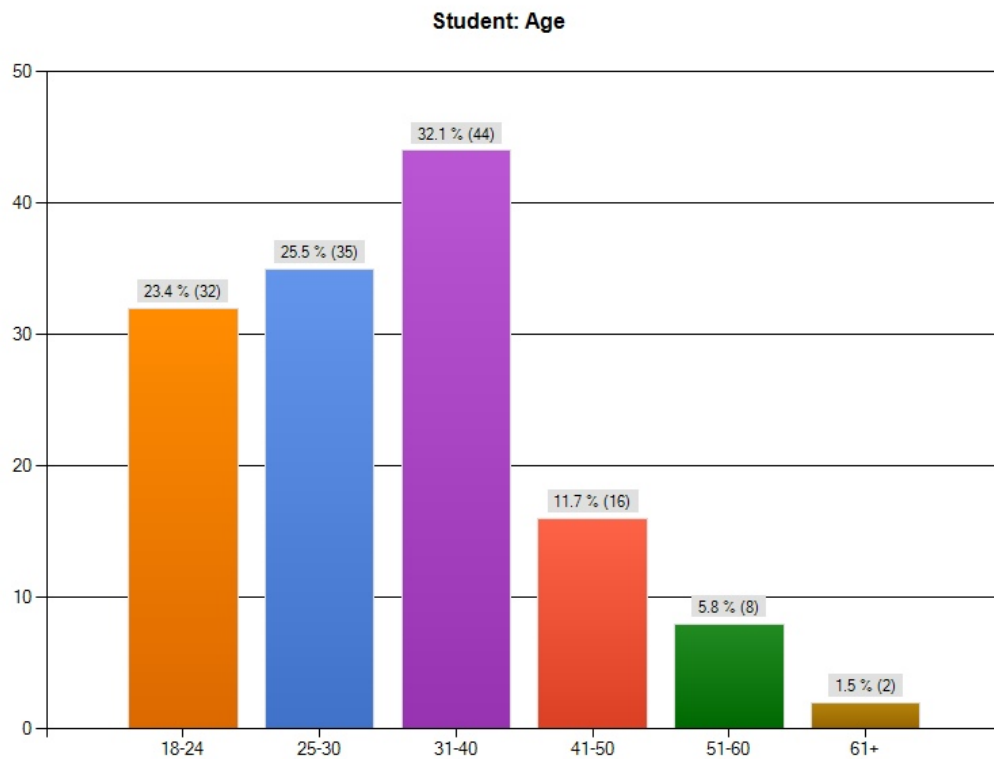


Figure 17. Student Age

First online class. The majority of student respondents, 78.8% (108) indicated that they has taken an online course prior to Spring 2012, while 21.2% (29) of the student sample population were new to online learning (Figure 17).

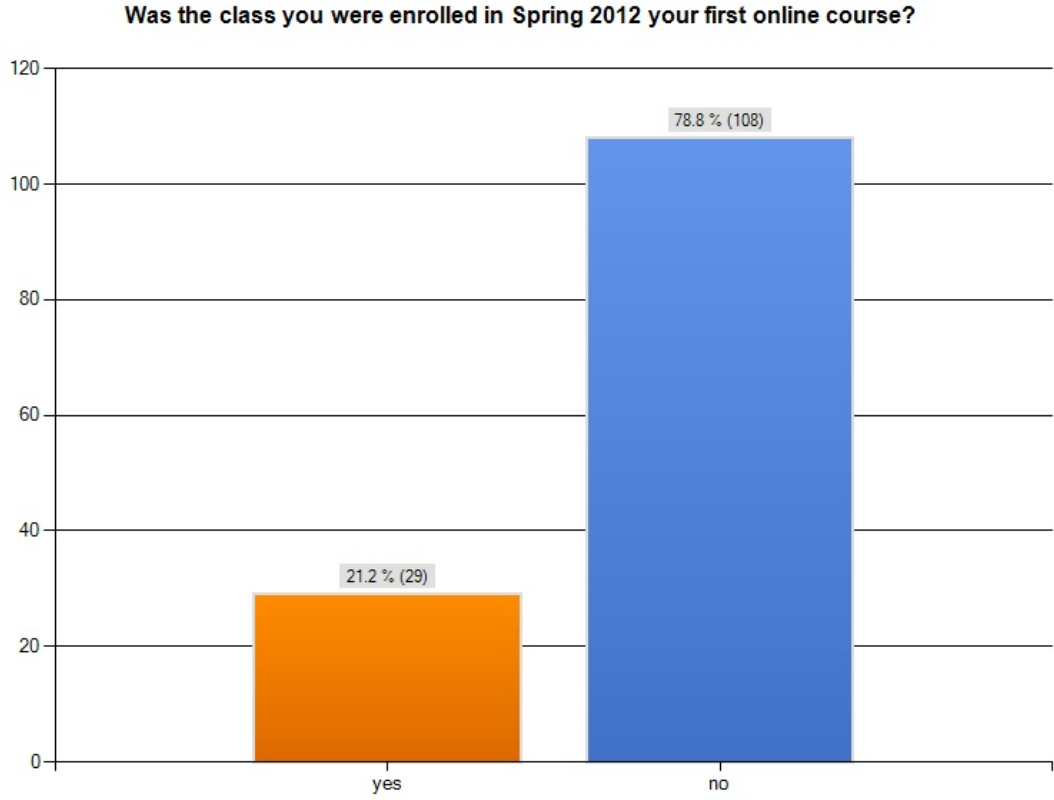


Figure 18. Students Online Experience

Plans to enroll in future online classes. The majority of the student respondents, 76.6% (105) indicated that they would be enrolling in more online courses in the future with another 17.5% (24) unsure if they would enroll in an online course in the future. 5.8% (8) indicated that they had no plans to enroll in another online class (Figure 18).

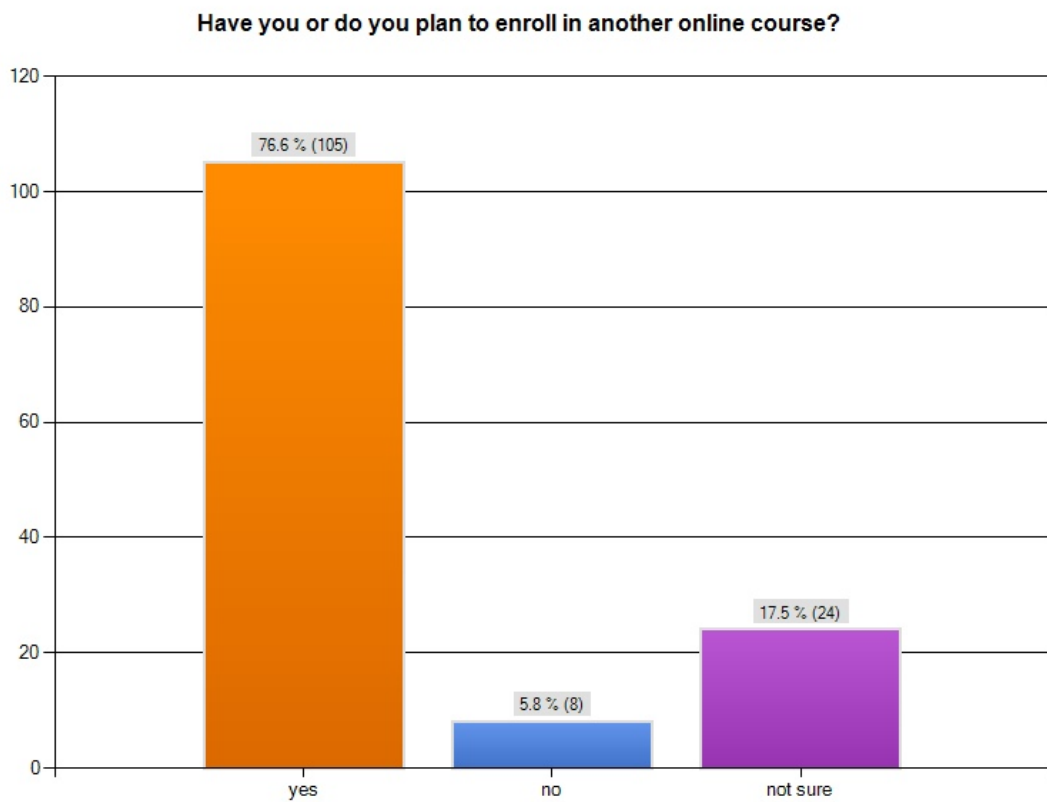


Figure 19. Students Online Plans

Interpretation of Quantitative Results

This study sought to answer four research questions. 1) How are the three community of inquiry components perceived by adjuncts and students in an online course? 2) What similarities exist between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment? 3) Are there significant differences between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment?

The methodology that best fit these questions was a mixed methods approach involving both quantitative and qualitative methods. This section will address the results of the quantitative analysis as they relate research questions posed. The extent to which adjunct faculty and student perceived the level of connectedness in an online class environment was explored by calculating frequency and percentages of the five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). In order to obtain meaningful statistics for each CoI presence component, a mean score of the questions related to each component was calculated for both adjunct faculty and students. Results of that data analysis are presented below in Table 7 and 8 respectively.

Table 7. Summary of Adjunct Faculty Quantitative Survey Findings

Summary of Findings Regarding Adjunct Faculty Perceptions of CONNECTEDNESS in an online class.									
Presence	Category	Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Count	Mean
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important course goals to the students	64.4% (29)	28.9% (13)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1)	N=47 n= 4	4.49
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important course topics to the students.	71.1% (32)	24.4% (11)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	N=47 n= 4	4.55
TP	Design & Organization	I clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities that helped students keep pace with this course.	77.8% (35)	17.8% (17)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1)	N=47 n= 4	4.64
TP	Facilitation	I helped students take advantage of the online environment to assist their learning.	51.1% (23)	37.8% (17)	6.7% (3)	0.0% (0)	2.2% (1)	N=47 n= 4	4.26
TP	Facilitation	I acknowledged student participation in the course.	64.4% (29)	28.9% (13)	2.2% (1)	2.2% (1)	0.0% (0)	N=47 n= 4	4.49
TP	Facilitation	I helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialog.	40.9% (18)	47.7% (21)	9.1% (4)	2.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	N=45 n=6	4.27
TP	Direct Instruction	I provided explanatory feedback that assisted students to learn.	48.8% (18)	39.5% (17)	11.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	N=45 n=6	4.38
TP	Direct Instruction	I provided useful information	53.5% (23)	25.6% (11)	14.0% (6)	7.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	N=45 n=6	4.27

		from a variety of sources that assisted students to learn.							
SP	Open Communication	The students received timely feedback from each other in this course.	24.4% (10)	43.9% (18)	22.0% (9)	9.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	N=43 n=8	3.84
SP	Open Communication	The students seemed to be connected in this course.	11.9% (5)	59.5% (25)	21.4% (9)	7.1% (3)	0.0% (0)	N=44 n=7	3.77
SP	Group Cohesion	The students believed that they could rely on others in this course.	9.5% (9)	42.9% (18)	33.3% (14)	14.3% (6)	0.0% (0)	N=44 n=7	3.5

TP=teaching presence
 SP=social presence
 CP=cognitive presence

SA= strongly agree D= disagree
 A= agree SD= strongly disagree
 N= neutral

Note: N= # of respondents n= # did not respond

Table 8. Summary of Student Quantitative Survey Findings

Summary of Findings Regarding Student Perceptions of CONNECTEDNESS in an Online Class									
Presence	Category	Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Count	Mean
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.	42.7% (53)	45.2% (56)	7.3% (9)	4.8% (6)	0.0% (0)	N = 127 n = 13	4.26
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities.	43.9% (54)	48.0% (59)	4.9% (6)	2.4% (3)	.8% (1)	N = 126 n = 14	4.32
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	20.3% (25)	28.5% (35)	25.2% (31)	18.7% (23)	7.3% (9)	N = 126 n = 14	3.36
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped keep the course participants on task in a way that helped me to learn.	19.5% (24)	30.9% (38)	24.4% (30)	20.3% (25)	4.9% (6)	N = 126 n = 14	3.40
TP	Facilitation	Instructor actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.	8.9% (11)	27.6% (34)	28.5% (35)	25.2% (31)	9.8% (12)	N = 126 n = 14	3.02
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.	18.7% (23)	32.5% (40)	26.8% (33)	19.5% (24)	2.4% (3)	N = 126 n = 14	3.44
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and	26.6% (33)	27.4% (34)	15.3% (19)	19.4% (24)	11.3% (14)	N = 127 n = 13	3.39

		weaknesses.							
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion.	30.0% (36)	28.3% (34)	18.3% (22)	14.2% (17)	9.2% (11)	N = 123 n = 17	3.57
SP	Affective Communication	Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.	8.9% (11)	19.4% (24)	38.7% (48)	19.4% (24)	13.7% (17)	N = 127 n = 13	2.91
SP	Open Communication	I felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.	40.5% (49)	43.0% (52)	11.6% (14)	4.1% (5)	.8% (1)	N = 124 n = 16	4.15
SP	Open Communication	I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.	39.7% (48)	39.7% (48)	17.6% (21)	3% (4)	0.0% (0)	N = 124 n = 16	4.15
SP	Group Cohesion	I felt that other students acknowledged my point of view.	21.3% (26)	41.0% (50)	31.1% (38)	5.7% (7)	.8% (1)	N = 125 n = 15	3.76
SP	Group Cohesion	Online discussions help me to develop a sense of collaboration.	18.0% (22)	25.4% (31)	30.3% (37)	18.9% (23)	7.4% (9)	N = 124 n = 16	3.29
CP	Exploration	I utilized a variety of information sources to explore problems posed in this course.	37.7% (46)	42.6% (52)	8.2% (10)	9.0% (11)	2.5% (3)	N = 125 n = 15	4.04
CP	Exploration	Online discussions were valuable in helping me appreciate different perspectives.	17.7% (22)	45.2% (56)	20.2% (25)	10.5% (13)	6.5% (8)	N = 127 n = 13	3.56

TP=teaching presence
SP=social presence
CP=cognitive presence

SA= strongly agree
A= agree
N= neutral
D= disagree
SD= strongly disagree

Note: N= # of respondents n= # did not respond

Quantitative Research Question One

The first quantitative research question asked about how the three community of inquiry components were perceived by adjuncts and students in an online course. Two survey populations divide the following quantitative data sections: adjunct faculty and students.

Adjunct Faculty

The adjunct faculty survey consisted of eleven 5-point Likert scale questions. Overall, adjunct faculty responses indicated that they perceived a strong connectedness in the online course. The rating average for most questions on the 5-point Likert-type scale fell in the mid- to high ranges (3.50 to 4.64) with an overall average rating of 4.22. For the teaching presence (TP) component (learner-instructor interaction), adjunct faculty were asked how they perceived their interactions with students in the category of design and organization, facilitation and direct instruction. Three questions were directed at design and organization. This TP category addresses the communication of course goals, topics, dues dates and activities to students. Overall, adjunct faculty perceived a higher rating with an average of 4.56.

Three questions were directed at facilitation. This category deals with setting the climate for learning such as encouraging, acknowledging and reinforcing student contributions. Prompting discussion and interactions as well as identifying areas of agreement and disagreement are such examples of TP facilitation. Overall, adjunct faculty indicated as above a higher rating of 4.34. Two questions were directed at direct

instruction. This TP category dealt with practices such summarizing discussions, confirming understanding and presenting content and questions to students. Overall, adjunct faculty indicated a high rating with an average rating of 4.33.

Adjunct faculty were also asked how they perceived social presence (SP), (learner-learner interaction) in the online course. Three questions were directed at open communication in the online course. For example, did the students receive timely feedback from each other, could they rely on each other and/or did they seem connected in the online course? Adjunct faculty perceived a lower level of SP and gave an overall rating of 3.70 in this area.

Students

The student survey consisted of fifteen 5-point Likert scale questions. Overall, student responses indicated that they perceived a connectedness in the online course. The rating average for most questions on the 5-point Likert-type scale fell in the low mid- to high ranges (2.91 to 4.26) with an overall average rating of 3.64. For the teaching presence (TP) component (learner-instructor interaction), students were asked how they perceived their interactions with their instructor in the category of design and organization, facilitation and direct instruction. Two questions were directed at design and organization. This TP category addresses the instruction communication of course goals, topics, dues dates and activities to students. Overall, students indicated a high rating with an average rating of 4.29. Three questions were directed at facilitation. This category addresses the instructor's setting of the climate for learning such as encouraging, acknowledging and reinforcing student contributions. Prompting discussion

and interactions as well as identifying areas of agreement and disagreement are such examples of TP facilitation. Overall, students perceived an average rating of 3.26. Three questions were directed at direct instruction. This TP category dealt with instructional practices such summarizing discussions, confirming understanding and presenting content and questions to students. Overall, students perceived an average rating of 3.47.

Students were also asked how they perceived social presence (SP) (learner-learner interaction) in the online course. One question addressed affective communication. For example did the instructor or students address each other by name, did the instructor or students personalize emails? Student indicated a low average rating of 2.91 in this area. Two questions were directed at open communication in the online course. For example, did the students feel comfortable and/or did they seem connected in the online course? Students gave an overall average rating 4.15 in the SP-open communication area. Two questions in the SP area addressed group cohesion. This category addressed true group collaboration in which students acknowledged each other's point of view through online discussions. An average rating of 3.5 was given in the SP-group cohesion area. The last two questions addressed cognitive presence (CP) in the category of exploration. For example, did the students see value in the various student perspectives and/or did they utilize a variety of resources in seeking information in the online class? Students in the area of CP-exploration gave an average rating of 3.80.

Quantitative Research Question Two

The second quantitative research question asked about the similarities that existed between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment.

Table 9 outlines the CoI questions that were asked to both adjunct faculty and students.

Table 9. CoI Questions Asked To Adjunct Faculty and Students

CoI			Student	Adjunct
Presence	Category	Question	Mean	Mean
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.	4.26	4.49
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (i.e discussion boards).	4.32	4.64
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	3.36	4.27
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.	3.34	4.27
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.	3.39	4.38

TP=teaching presence

Overall, both adjunct faculty and students indicated a high rating in terms on TP- Design and Organization category. Both populations perceived that the instructor clearly

communicated importance course goals and provided clear instructions. For example, students appreciated the fact that the instructor provided a syllabus and discussion board was utilized as part of the online class. Adjunct mean = 4.56, Student mean = 4.29.

Quantitative Research Question Three

The third quantitative research question asked about any significant differences between adjunct faculty and students' perceptions of presence in an online environment. There were two presence areas that adjunct faculty and students differed. Adjuncts perceived a higher degree of connectedness in the area of TP- facilitation and direction instruction than students did. Specifically, adjuncts rated themselves more highly when it came to helping to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue (Mean: adjunct = 4.27 students = 3.36). Adjunct faculty also rated themselves higher in terms of providing feedback that helped students understand strengths and weaknesses (Mean: adjunct = 4.38 students = 3.39). With reference to the instructor helping students to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped them to learn, adjunct faculty again rated themselves more highly (Mean: adjunct = 4.26 students = 3.34).

Interpretation of Qualitative Results

The fourth research question sought to gain a deeper and more detailed perspective in the elements that adjunct faculty and students value in an online environment. The researcher used qualitative data received from both adjunct faculty and students. The quantitative data was coded using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) presence indicators (Arbaugh, Diaz, Garrison, Ice, Richardson, & Swan, 2008). The

researcher pulled out common themes using the selected presence indicators. The coding and collection of the themes were prepared using the text analysis survey feature in surveymonkey.com. The researcher identified themes from each category and was able to tabulate the number of response frequencies and percentages.

Adjunct Faculty

After each quantitative section, adjunct faculty were asked to answer four open-end questions related to a CoI presence category. The three categories consisted of TP- Design and Organization, TP- Facilitation and Discourse and SP-sense of community. Along with the central question the following three questions were also asked: 1) what worked 2) what didn't work, and 3) what would they change. Utilizing the text analysis feature in surveymonkey.com, the researcher identified common themes using the designated presence indicators.

Central questions:

1. (TP) Design and Organization: In what ways did you structure the course activities and assignments so that you felt your students' were learning? The researcher used the following tools and behavior examples in identifying common themes in the adjunct responses:

Tools and Behaviors by Faculty

- Sets clear expectations for students; is specific about how learners are to be 'present'
- Communicates course goals communicates course topics
- Communicates timeframe
- Establishes netiquette
- Helps students utilize medium effectively and provided instructions on how to participate

2. (TP) Facilitation and Discourse: How did you facilitate interaction with your students? The researcher used the following tools and behavior examples in identifying common themes in the adjunct responses:

Tools and Behaviors by Faculty

- Identifying areas of agreement/disagreement
- Seeking to reach consensus/understanding
- Feedback-Encouraging, acknowledging, or reinforcing student contributions
- Setting climate for learning
- Drawing in participants, prompting discussion
- Assessing the efficacy of the process

3. (SP) Sense of Community: In what ways did you create an environment where your students felt a sense of community? The researcher used the following tools and behavior examples in identifying common themes in the adjunct responses:

Tools and Behaviors by Faculty

- Introductions in the first week
- A special discussion thread or forum for informal exchanges
- Sharing personal stories
- Showing respect and care for others

Table 10 outlines the themes that emerged from the adjunct responses.

Table 10. Adjunct Faculty Qualitative Themes

CoI	Themes	What worked	What didn't work	What would you change
TP D&O	Clear syllabi Course topics	Robust syllabus	Group project design	Add discussion elements Simplify directions Eliminate group projects
TP F&D	Discussion boards Group projects Feedback	Feedback (54%) Discussion boards 22%	Group projects Discussion boards 36%	Shorter assignments Online chat features
SP	Student introductions Humor	Student introductions 26%	Discussion boards	More student interaction Add video chat

Adjunct Faculty Comments (TP) -Design & Organization

Table 11. Adjunct Faculty Comments (TP) Learner-Instructor

	Exact Adjunct Faculty Comments: Teaching Presence-Design & Organization {Learner –instructor interaction}
1.	A robust syllabus with a lot of online (and real-time) resources from the main campus.
2.	Clearly defined goals and grading strategies.
3.	Detailed welcome letter, clear and concise syllabus, assignments listed with due

	dates and point values, calendar with clearly defined dates, regular emails, announcements and reminders.
4.	Having several places with the due dates, the info was clear and easily accessible

The quantitative results of students’ perceptions of TP in the area of design and organization rated this component high. Overall, 90% of the students perceived that the adjunct faculty member had a strong teaching presence in this area. Similarly, the quantitative results of adjunct perceptions were just as high with a mean rating of 95%. Comments from adjunct faculty gave examples such as providing a welcome letter, clearly defined goals, a robust syllabus and a calendar with specific deadlines was useful in connecting with their students. Some adjuncts commented on areas that they would change. Such examples were providing simplifying directions. This perhaps is an area needing further discussion and research in terms of faculty-student expectations in the course as well as student preparedness for online coursework. This also confirms the need for a detailed syllabus with course topics, expectation and due dates. Morris’ study (2009) indicated that the instructional design aspect of teaching presence sets the stage for student engagement with content by structuring activities and discussions.

Adjunct Faculty Comments (TP)- Facilitation and Discourse

Table 12. Exact Adjunct Faculty Comments (TP) Facilitation and Discourse

	Exact Adjunct Faculty Comments: Teaching Presence-Facilitation and Discourse {Learner –instructor interaction}
1.	Reminding students of upcoming assignments and posting questions about current ones at the same time every week and sending out an email at the same time. It makes them feel like it is more a part of the weekly rhythm of the semester. Immediate feedback is important and clear emails are essential. Don't assume they

	know what you mean, literally or with regard to your tone!
2.	Discussion works best, but it depends on the class too. Instructor involvement is essential--students want to know you're there and it makes it feel much more like brick-and-mortar. I've heard from many students that many instructors in their experience are virtual no-shows: if instructors aren't participating, my question is how are they teaching? They aren't.
3.	We use the point - counter-point - feedback method in our Discussion Forums. So, for every Discussion the students are posting several threads and responding to each other. We also complete an Audience Analysis Questionnaire in Blackboard. We do have a class textbook, but supplement that reading with many outside readings and videos. During our eMeetings I make it a point to have each student talk during the eMeeting; if it's a presentation date I will have students provide feedback to the presenter after each presentation.
4.	The course starts with an excellent get-to-know-you activity that includes posting a photo. Students usually post more times than required in that first activity. It makes them feel like a community because they discover similarities. I also respond to each student so that they feel welcomed by me. The students also participate in discussion forums. They usually have a first post and then required replies. Finally, they are in a small group for peer review.
5.	Some students do not feel heard by email. Use the phone or office hours! Require discussions and provide a place for students to ask each other for help.
6.	Feedback is everything. From what students have told me--consistently now for several years--feedback is rare. I can't believe this. I have had a number of students thank me at the end of term for a) noticing them and b) giving them the help they needed. While everyone likes praise, it sickens me that I am often the first to have provided them any constructive criticism, kudos, etc. Building a community feeling has worked well too--I have them introduce themselves the first week and I respond, meaningfully, to each introduction. I also set the tone for appropriate interaction. On a few occasions I've been able to keep students fearful of failure going--one returning student was ready to quit, but I told her that she could do this, that I would help. She worked hard, I did all I could to assist, and she ended up not only acing the class, but taking a lot more of them. Seeing her confidence grow was one of the finest things I've experienced as a professor.

Adjunct faculty comments in the area of TP-facilitation and discourse indicated that instructor involvement was a very important component in connecting with students. Feedback was a prevailing theme in this area. As one adjunct pointed out: "Feedback is

everything”. Facilitating discourse during the course is critical to maintaining interest, motivation and engagement of students in active learning” (Anderson, et al, 2001). Some adjunct faculty utilized ice-breakers, first-week student introductions, and interactive course management tools to get students more involved in the online class. Keeping up the momentum in the online environment is an essential piece to effective facilitation and dialogue. While adjunct faculty considered facilitation and discourse an important element in connectedness, many reflected in their comments that this was a challenge for them specifically when using discussion boards and group activities. This may reflect a need for more professional development training for adjuncts.

Adjunct Faculty Comments (SP)-Open Communication

Table 13. Sampling of Adjunct Faculty Comments Concerning Social Presence

	Exact Adjunct Faculty Comments: Social Presence {Learner –learner interaction}
1.	Have students introduce themselves to each other at the beginning. Require every student participate in a group assignment.
2.	We engage in humorous but relevant discussion we try ice-breakers in the beginning of class, small group projects, study/ note buddies.
3.	One must foster a friendly sense of community straight away, first day, first week. The bulk of our first week (in any of my classes) is spent getting to know one another. I do my best to set a friendly, even humorous tone (where appropriate), but it is vital to respond to each and every student's introduction. Next, I make it clear we're all in this together, that they are not alone, and that they can contact me about any class matter. So many students have absent professors online. I also follow up with them collectively after each assignment.

In terms of creating a sense of community in an online environment, adjunct faculty comments indicated that participation from both students and faculty worked

well. The importance of an instructor's engagement in an online course cannot be overlooked here. Vella (1994) suggests that learning is an "active process" which suggests engagement of the instructor and student. Research on student barriers to online learning suggest that "social interaction is strongly related to online learning, enjoyment, effectiveness of learning online, and likelihood of taking another online class" (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005, p.45). Students will not be engaged if the online class is conducted merely as a correspondence course; learners want what they would normally have in the face-to-face classroom, interaction between students and instructors. Providing ice-breakers, using humor and small group projects were such examples provided in terms of creating a sense of community in the online environment. With regard to what adjunct faculty would change in creating a sense of community, several adjuncts commented that they would like to utilize video chat and other Web 2.0 tools in enhancing connectedness. This can include audio or video welcome statements, video webcams for use during live chat sessions, and as an instructor-learner video communication tool. Wood and Ebersole (2003) stressed that utilizing audio/video into online learning can help to enhance communication and involve cues normally found in the face-to-face environment. Video and audio files have been frequently demonstrated to be beneficial in terms of reaching students in a way that text cannot (Brown, Brown, Fine, Luterbach, Sugar, & Vinciguerra, 2009).

Students

After each quantitative section, students were asked to answer four open-ended questions with regard to the CoI presence category via a short-answer format.

- 1) With regard to your interaction with your instructor, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?
- 2) With regard to your interaction with your peers, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?
- 3) With regard to instructional activities, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?
- 4) Comments

The researcher pulled out common themes using the selected presence indicators. The coding and tabulation of the themes were prepared using the text analysis feature in surveymonkey.com. The researcher identified themes from each category and was able to calculate the number of response frequencies and percentages.

Student Responses – Teaching Presence

Question one addressed teaching presence (TP): With regard to your interaction with your instructor, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?

A total of 102 students responded to question one. There were four TP themes that surfaced from the qualitative data; feedback, organized and clear expectations, instructor passion, no feedback and no value. Table 14 summarizes the qualitative data for teaching presence (TP). Almost half of the student respondents indicated that they received instructor feedback (direct instruction) and that this was valuable to their overall learning experience. Twenty-five percent of the student respondents indicated that they received no feedback or interaction from their instructor.

Table 14. Coding Tabulation of Qualitative Student Responses Teaching Presence

Qualitative Student Responses: Teaching Presence {Learner-instructor interaction}			
Category	Indicators	%	N
TP Direct instruction	(+) Feedback	49	50
	(+) Organized & Clear Expectations	8	9
	(+) Instructor Passion	4	5
	(-) No Feedback	25	26
	(-) No Overall Value	6	7
	(-) Unrelated Responses	12	13

(+) = positive (-) = negative

Table 15 displays a list of a sampling of the positive comments by students related to teaching presence (direct instruction)-feedback.

Table 15. Sampling of Student Comments Regarding Teaching Presence

Exact Student Comments: Teaching Presence-Direct Instruction	
1.	I appreciated the feedback and timely responses from my instructor when I had questions.
2.	The instructor provided great material and timely feedback on assignments. I personally do not like to wait a week for grades and I received my grades in less than a week.
3.	I found it valuable when my instructor provided personalized feedback on each project rather than a generic "great" or "poor."
4.	I find that quickly grading assignments helps me know how I'm doing. It's discouraging when I don't get any feedback for weeks. It makes me not want to do the assignments.
5.	Feedback is very important. Emails reminding us about an important upcoming assignment or exam are also great. Instructors should always give a course pacing, even if it is not mandatory, only suggestive - it helps a lot!
6.	My professor gave wonderful feedback and tried to give more than one point of view regarding certain topics, and not just the popular or common point of view.
7.	The instructor made herself readily available via phone, e-mail and text. She responded to messages very quickly; office hours were available by phone (she lived

in a different time zone).

Similar to adjunct faculty quantitative and qualitative data, student respondents perceived feedback an important element in terms of faculty interaction and connectedness. Student comments reflected the value of timely and personalized feedback. According to Schwartz and White (2000) students expect feedback in an online environment to be:

- Prompt, timely, and thorough
- Ongoing formative (online discussions) and summative (grades)
- Constructive, supportive, and substantive
- Specific, objective, and individual
- Consistent.

These results were largely compatible with literature on online learning that indicates that a high degree of clarity and communication is essential for student satisfaction (Durrington, et al., 2006).

Student Responses – Social Presence

Question two addressed social presence (SP): With regard to your interaction with your peers, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't? A total of 102 students responded to question two. Three positive SP themes surfaced from the qualitative data; group discussion board, group e-mails and peer feedback. Three negative SP themes surfaced from the qualitative data; group discussion, group project and not interaction with peers. Table 16 summarizes the qualitative data for social presence (SP). Twenty-four percent of the student respondents indicated that group discussion boards (open communication) were valuable to their overall learning

experience. 18% of the student respondents indicated that discussion boards had a positive value in helping them appreciate different perspectives. This will be noted in the cognitive presence section*. However, 17% indicated a negative experience with group discussion boards. Twenty-one of the student respondents indicated that they had no interaction with their peers.

Table 16. Coding Tabulation of Qualitative Student Responses Social Presence

Qualitative Student Responses: Social Presence {Learner-learner interaction}			
Category	Indicators	%	N
SP Open communication	(+) Group Discussion Board	24	25
	(+) Group Emails	1	2
	(+) Peer Feedback	9	10
	(-) Group Discussion	17	18
	(-) Group Project	10	11
	(-) No Interaction w/Peers	21	22
	Unrelated Responses	11	12
*CP	(+) Different Perspectives	18	19

(+) = Positive (-) = Negative

Table 17 displays a list of a sampling of the positive comments made by students related to social presence (open communication)-group discussion board.

Table 17. Sampling of Students' Positive Comments Regarding Social Presence

Exact Student Comments: Social Presence- Open Communication	
1.	It was great meeting new people and learning about them through their introductions and discussion board posts throughout the course.

2.	Online discussion was conducted with peers. Discussion of others answers was very valuable and contributed greatly to the overall learning experience.
3.	It's great to learn others opinions. I like that there is still a sense of discussion with the online classes.
4.	As a middle aged, highly motivated learner, I wasn't seeking, nor did my learning style necessitate a lot of peer interaction. That being said, I did enjoy the student introductions. My classmates were an interesting and eclectic group. The discussion posts were also interesting and insightful. They did enhance my learning experience.
5.	It was relative easy to communicate with other students in the class to get a sense of class interaction in an online environment.
6.	We engaged in online discussions regarding opinions and there was back-and-forth dialog that was informative and let us get to know each other.
7.	I liked the discussion boards and how I was able to interact with the other students in the class. The whole email option on Blackboard was nice so that we could email them as well if we needed to.
8.	I do appreciate and like to learn about my peers at the start of the course. It gives me understanding who I'm communicating and to make connections of lifestyle and future career endeavors. Again, this depends a lot on the professor to push the interaction with our peers. There are still a few professors out there that don't really require interaction through discussion forum in Blackboard.

Given today's tech environment, students overall felt comfortable conversing in an online environment. There were mixed comments in terms of the use of the discussion board. Some student comments reflected a sense of community and connectedness in terms of participating in discussion boards with their peers and promoting dialogue. Some students did not find value in interacting with their peers. Student age, online experience and expectations for the class may be a factor in the level of open communication desired for some students. Another finding of noteworthiness is the importance of the instructor in establishing and maintaining a sense of community among the students. The importance of enforcing community was mentioned in the open-ended items. Previous research has established a connection between students' perceptions of

teaching presence and their sense of learning community (Shea et al., 2006). This confirms the importance of instructor presence integration in social presence.

Student Responses- Cognitive Presence

Question three addressed cognitive presence (CP): With regard to instructional activities, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What was not?

A total of 95 students responded to question three. One distinct CP theme surfaced from the qualitative data. Student respondents indicated an appreciation of group discussions in helping them appreciate different perspectives (exploration). Table 18 summarizes the qualitative data for cognitive presence (CP).

Table 18. Coding Tabulation of Qualitative Student Responses Cognitive Presence

Qualitative Student Responses: Cognitive Presence: Instructional Activities {Learner-content interaction}			
Category	Indicators	%	N
CP	(+) Individual Assignments	6	6
	(+) Self-Paced Activity	4	4
	(+) Lecture on Demand	5	5
	(+) Practice Tests	7	7
	(+) PowerPoint	4	4
	(+) Online Tutorials	1	1
	(+) Video	8	8
	(+) Textbooks	6	6
	SP & TP	(-) Group Discussion Board	9
TP	(+) Course Expectations	14	14
TP & SP	(-) Group Assignments	3	3
	(-) Other Unrelated Responses	41	39
*CP Exploration	(+) Different Perspectives	18	19

<i>from Question 2</i>			
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(+) = Positive (-) = Negative

Table 19 displays a list of a sampling of the positive comments made by students related to cognitive presence (exploration)-difference perspectives.

Table 19. Sampling of Students' Positive Comments Concerning Cognitive Presence

	Exact Student Comments: Cognitive Presence- Exploration
1.	Reading other students submission to see different perspectives and learn ways to improve my own assignments.
2.	I enjoyed learning what my peers had to say about various topics, especially when they had more experience in certain areas.
3.	Open discussions, which allowed me to see different perspectives.
4.	It's great to learn others opinions. I like that there is still a sense of discussion with the online classes.
5.	Gaining insight on other people's goals and seeing the challenges they have and if need be, to ask help from.
6.	Loved hearing others perspective especially on current event items.
7.	I value the discussion boards. I always find it fascinating to hear other viewpoints.
8.	I found that reading my fellow peers opinions and viewpoints very enriching and thorough. It helped me understand others ways of thinking.
9.	It was valuable to see how people's life experiences colored their opinions and their responses to the discussion questions.

Student comments reflected the importance of peer interaction in the online class with regard to which instructional activities added to their overall learning experience. Some students indicated that they learned more through independent study than from the instructor or from other students. This may be due to the level of facilitation and

discourse that the adjunct faculty had in the online class as well as the expectations set for the class. Again, stating the need for clear expectation as the beginning of the course and the need for more professional development training for adjunct faculty. These findings supports structured collaborative activities for deeper and meaningful learning as suggested previously (Garrison & Cleveland-Innes, 2005; Schrire, 2006). The study of Benbunan-Fich and Arbaugh (2006) also confirmed the presence of collaborative constructivist approaches. The authors found evidence to suggest that group collaboration can potentially improve students’ perceived learning and final grades.

Student Responses- Other Comments

Question four addressed any other comments students had regarding their online course experience. Fifty-one students provided comments. Sixty-percent indicated a negative comment. Fifty percent noted a positive comment on their online course experience. Table 20 summarizes the qualitative coding numbers.

Table 20. Coding Tabulation of Qualitative Student Responses

Student Comments		
Category	%	N
Positive Responses	50	26
Negative Responses	58	30
Uncategorized	11	6

Table 21 displays a list of a sampling of comments made by students.

Table 21. Sampling of Students Comments

	Exact Student Comments
1.	I'm a huge fan of online classes. However, I think that trying to replicate the classroom experience online is a bit silly and misdirected. I actually see no point at all in collaborative or group assignments, as they do not related directly to the learning objectives of most classes.
2.	This wasn't your typical class as it was a certificate program set nationwide for HIT. However, the teachers do make a difference as the first instructor in the FA of 2011 was not helpful and could not express her reasoning for certain test question answers that allowed students to really learn the material. This teacher was very much more of an instructor.
3.	I even keep up on a monthly basis with one of the local students that I met through an online course! I wish the instructors did participate more in the online discussions or at least provide feedback to individual students!
5.	This class was a little different from most other online courses I have taken. I am a full time professional, so distance learning is preferred. I have taken courses where the discussion board was an intricate portion of the class. Also, I have had teachers that made us work in groups to encourage a community feeling. On the more negative side, I have had professors that I'd call "pay check collectors". These professors did the very minimum required and were very stern about reading their policies, assignments, etc and were snippy when it came to questions. They were not very involved or friendly. I found these instructors, had the "here's the book go teach yourself" mentality. With the cost of tuition, and the fact that an institution pays them, to in fact instruct I was astonished with this sort of mentality. I chalk it up as pure laziness and easy supplemental income. All in all distance learning has been a great thing, and it really allows educational opportunity to those who otherwise would not have the chance to get into campus and take a course in person. I've finished three-fourths of my associates online and plan to transfer to a four-year university. I could not have done it without online courses.
6.	Overall my online course was satisfactory, though there were some aspects of the course (particularly the required group project) that I believe were unnecessary or at least unnecessarily difficult to fully understand professor expectations.

There were mixed levels of comments provided by the student respondents. Since this was a non-specific open-ended question, students had the opportunity to provide various viewpoints. Overall, the student respondents confirmed the integral role that teacher presence has on connectedness and student satisfaction in an online course.

The instructor plays a central role in any formal learning environment. Anderson (2006) noted that effective online faculty members take on the role as a facilitator of learning rather than an instructor who conveys information through directed instruction. They become more of a “guide-on-the-side” rather than the “sage-on-the-stage.” However, there is a fine line between being a guide on the side and being absent. The data from this section serves as a source for improving professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty who teach online.

Adjunct Faculty and Students Perceptions Connected: Mixing of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Research question four focused on the components of presence that adjunct faculty and students value in an online environment. Using the quantitative data from Table 22, the researcher used six questions that were asked by both adjunct faculty and students. Two themes emerged from the qualitative data collected from both adjuncts and students. Instructor facilitation and the use of discussion boards as well as overall feedback in the course had a direct impact on the “connectedness” in the online environment.

Table 22. CoI Quantitative Summative Data

CoI			Student	Adjunct	
Presence	Category	Question	Mean	Mean	Difference
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.	4.26	4.49	.13
TP	Design & Organization	The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (i.e discussion boards).	4.32	4.64	.32
TP	Facilitation	The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	3.36	4.27	.91
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.	3.34	4.27	.92
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.	3.39	4.38	.99
TP	Direct Instruction	The instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion.	3.57	3.84	.27

TP=teaching presence

There were two areas of importance in examining the perceptions of adjunct faculty and students combined. The differing levels of perception by the two populations are worth further investigation. Instructor expectations for the course and well as student expectation are an area for enhanced professional development for adjunct faculty as well as student preparedness and orientation to online education. This also confirms the integral role that teaching presence has on connectedness in an online environment.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings of the two sets of data collected using an online survey. The various levels of interaction were examined through the context of the community of inquiry model. The various methods of data collection also yielded data on the value that students and instructors placed on these types of interactions. The results indicated that there were specific areas and features of the online classroom that worked particularly well and other areas that needed improvement. These findings and their implications within the framework of the community of inquiry model's three elements of presence are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE-DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Introduction

Chapter 4 outlined the major findings of this study organized according to the four research questions. Based on those findings, Chapter 5 provides a discussion and interpretation of the results, implications for theory and practice, recommendations for future research, limitations of the study, and conclusions. The discussion begins by restating the purpose of this study and the statement of the problem.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of connectedness between community college adjunct faculty who teach online and their students. Using the Community of Inquiry (CoI) model as the framework, data was collected from both adjuncts and students. The CoI framework was used to guide, interpret, and analyze the collected data. The utilization of a CoI model provides the order and structural elements needed to begin the process of understanding the complexities of online learning and the elements of good teaching strategies. The CoI model focuses on the communication and interaction that occurs in an online educational setting. It evaluates the development of higher order thinking among students and assesses the effectiveness online courses in the higher education environment through three major components: social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. The researcher examined the similarities and

differences between the perspectives of instructors and students. With these insights, recommendations can be made to help enhance the design and facilitation of interaction (connectedness) in online classes. Table 23 shows the three presence elements, categories and sample indicators.

Table 23. CoI elements, categories and sample indicators

ELEMENTS	CATEGORIES	INDICATORS (examples only)
Teaching Presence	Design & Organization	Setting curriculum & methods
	Facilitation & Discourse	
Social Presence	Open Communication	Risk-free expression
	Group Cohesion	Encourage collaboration
	Affective Expression	Emoticons
Cognitive Presence	Triggering Event	Sense of puzzlement
	Exploration	Information exchange
	Integration	Connecting ideas
	Resolution	Apply new ideas

Community of Inquiry elements, categories and sample indicators

Restatement of the Problem

Community colleges continue to be the choice for many higher education students. According to a 2011 report by the American Association of Community Colleges, more than 50% of all undergraduates attend community colleges in the United States. With more students attending community colleges, the demand for more faculty has also increased. The U.S Department of Education stated that 66% of faculty who teach at community colleges are adjuncts. The numbers indicate that approximately 0.5 million adjuncts and part-time faculty teach at community colleges in the United States (Green, 2007). At the same time, there are several major forces driving higher education today. The economic reality of budget cuts and limited resources are forcing institutions to make the most effective use of dollars to improve student outcomes. The exponential growth in digital technology tools and content that provide the foundation and improve how instructors teach and students learn is changing at a rapid pace.

Labeled “the people’s college,” community colleges have developed numerous online course offerings to meet the needs of the diverse and demanding communities that they serve. Online education offerings range from single courses to degree-granting programs of study while offering the flexibility and convenience many students need in order to attain their education. Managing the growth of online education is a major challenge for many community colleges. For many community colleges, online education has become a major part of the institutions’ strategic plan.

The rate of growth of online classes at community colleges has made the hiring and training of online faculty a strategic necessity. This demand is even more urgent for

adjunct faculty, who, as with face-to-face classes, continue to represent a large portion of the community college faculty. And as more community college full-time faculty approach retirement age, community colleges are faced with meeting instructional demands and will be face with hiring even more adjunct faculty in order to compensate for the ever-changing, flexible 24/7 teaching and learning environment.

Teaching online is different from teaching in a traditional, face-to-face classroom in terms of pedagogical approaches and uses of technology (Zhao, 2003). A major distinction between the online classroom and the traditional learning environment is the lack of face-to-face contact between participants. To compensate for this lack of physical presence, interaction takes on additional significance. However, online instructors tend to maintain elements of face-to face teaching, utilizing materials and approaches that might have worked in a classroom setting but not necessarily in an online environment (Connolly, Jones, & Jones, 2007). Additionally, and perhaps most significantly, is the connection that teaching faculty have on student interaction and vice versa. It is important to hear from students and instructors to determine if there is a connection between what students value in their educational experience and what strategies instructors use to promote interaction. Gaining input from stakeholders is critical to the success of these programs. With these new insights, recommendations can be made to help improve the planning, design, and facilitation of distance education courses and programs (Wilkes et al., 2006).

This study utilized a mixed methods design survey research to obtain multiple sources of data. The researcher examined the perceptions of adjunct faculty who teach

online at a community college as it relates to connecting with students in an online learning environment. Student perceptions were also examined to compare and contrast the level of connectedness in the online class. An online survey was distributed to both adjunct faculty and students enrolled in Spring 2012 online classes. Four research questions guided this study and each addressed within the three areas of presence included in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework.

Discussion of the Study's Findings

Research shows that online courses in higher education continue to grow throughout the nation and competition for students in these programs is on the rise (Allen & Seaman, 2011). At the same time, accreditation agencies now require concrete data that documents the effectiveness of educational programs ("Accreditation in the United States," 2008) and assurance that "instructional policies, methods and delivery systems are compatible with the institution's mission" ("Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities," 2009).

As adjunct faculty members become even more crucial players in the instructional arena, it is imperative to include them in the institution's strategic plan as well as part of the instructional process. Therefore, it is important to find a framework that guides the design, organization, implementation, and assessment of online courses in a way that supports both academic rigor and technology integration. The designs of the following research questions addressed were based on obtaining responses relevant to the researcher's study. According to the measured results, the researcher offers the following conclusions and discussions for each research question presented in this study.

Demographic Data

Of the 51 adjunct faculty survey responses, over half were female 56.9% (n=29) with males representing 43.1% (n=22) of the survey population. The majority of adjuncts respondents (82%) fell in the 41+ years age bracket. Almost half 49% (n=25) of the respondents had 10+ years of f2f teaching experience with 58.8% (n=30) still teaching f2f. 41.2% (n=21) had 5+ years of online teaching experience. 72.5% (n=37) of the respondents indicated adjunct teaching was their sole source of employment. For the Spring 2012 semester, the community college studied had a total of 409 faculty teaching online. 241 (59%) were adjuncts and 168 (41%) were full-time faculty. This data is comparable to the overall percentage (66%) of adjunct teaching in community colleges nationally (AACC, 2006).

Of the 140 students survey responses, approximately three-fourths (77.4%) were female (106 out of 150). On that same level, 76.6% (n =105) were of nontraditional age (more than 24-years old). This population sampling is comparable to the 2010 Pearson Foundation report of the types of student who enroll in online classes.

Quantitative & Qualitative Discussion

The Community of Inquiry (CoI) outline is based on indicators and categories identifying the three elements of presence. The researcher used basic quantitative descriptive calculations and a qualitative coding system to present the findings of the study. The quantitative and qualitative data collected from the adjunct faculty and student surveys provided examples of indicators as demonstrations of evidence. In examining the quantitative and qualitative of adjunct faculty and student survey responses, the

researcher found emerging presence themes of noteworthy value. It is important to note here that while adjunct and student responses are interpreted, direct relationships between the two survey groups could not be aligned due to unclear relationships between the two groups. In other words, it was not discernable as to whether or not any one or more students were enrolled in an online class with any one specific adjunct member. In order to draw such a relationship, the researcher determined that a more extensive survey would need to be administered in which additional data would need to be collected in future or follow-on studies.

Teaching presence (learner-instructor interaction)

Student-faculty contact does not just happen; instead it is the result of active participation and interaction by the students and the instructor. According to Frederickson et al (2000), students with the highest levels of interaction with the instructor also have the highest levels of learning. The perceived teaching presence in online classes is therefore critical. The components of teaching presence (instructional design and organization, facilitated discourse, and direct instruction) apparently were tied to the students' perceived connectedness in this study. Approximately half (49%) of the students who responded to the qualitative questions regarded instructor feedback (timely, regular and explanatory) as importance to their overall learning experience. 25% of the students indicated receiving no instructor feedback or had interaction with their instructor. In both the quantitative and qualitative survey sections, feedback was an overarching theme for both adjunct and students.

Mupinga, Nora and Yaw (2006) noted that frequent communication with the instructor puts the online students at ease to know they are not missing anything or that they are not alone in cyberspace. As one student commented, “I find that quickly grading assignments helps me know how I'm doing. It's discouraging when I don't get any feedback for weeks. It makes me not want to do the assignments”. Interaction with online instructors has been correlated with increased learning and connectedness. A comment from an adjunct confirms this relationship; “Reminding students of upcoming assignments and posting questions about current ones at the same time every week and sending out an email at the same time. It makes them feel like it is more a part of the weekly rhythm of the semester. Immediate feedback is important and clear emails are essential. Don't assume they know what you mean, literally or with regard to your tone!”

Social presence (learner-learner interaction)

In examining the quantitative data, the majority of the student respondents (83.5%) strongly agreed or agreed feeling comfortable conversing through the course discussions (open communication), 43.4% strongly agreed or agreed that online discussions helped them develop a sense of collaboration (group cohesion). Over half (52.4%) of the adjunct respondents in the quantitative section felt that students could rely on other in the course. As one student respondent commented: “Online discussion boards are only as useful as the people who use them. If there isn't a requirement to actually discuss something, then most times people will just post their opinions and be done with it”.

In examining the data regarding teaching presence and social presence (sense of community), students perceived a greater connection in online courses when an instructor used facilitated discourse in addition to an active presence to create a social presence. That allowed students to interact with each other and to 'sense' an instructor's presence. As students became accustomed to the online learning environment they expected such interactions to occur.

Although not all students desire a sense of community (Brown, 2001; Cameron, Morgan, Williams, & Kostelecky, 2009), researchers have clearly identified sense of community and interaction as important elements for students to succeed in online classes (Rovai, 2002; Caliskan, 2009).

Personal characteristics of the student participants may have been a contributing factor to the degree perceived connectedness (Chen & Chiu, 2008; Overbaugh & Lin, 2006). Life circumstances, the experiences students have had with online courses may also have been a factor contributing to the degree to how each presence was perceived. 78.8% of student respondents had some prior experience with online courses. Characteristics such as the age, gender, and life circumstances of each student could have influenced both personal perceptions and the extent to which the student participants were able to connect with the instructor and one another and thus impacting the level of social presence. For example, students in this study ranged in age from 18 to 61+. This age difference may have also represented the existence of different values, different commitments, and different life experiences. Similarly, other characteristics like personality type (Daughenbaugh, Ensminger, Frederick, & Surry, 2002) and learning

styles (Fearing & Riley, 2005) that were not used in this study, may affect students' level of connectedness.

Collaborative learning is pushing educators to develop new forms of interaction (The New Media Consortium and the Educause Learning Initiative, 2008). For example, the discussion forum serves as a foundation for learning in which students share ideas and learn from one another through a frequent exchange of information. Some instructors utilized Elluminate conferencing on establishing social connections through the use of synchronous text chatting, content posting, lecturing, real-time talking, and opportunities for questions and answers. Additionally, some instructors found success with the peer review process that enabled students to develop one-on-one relationships and provide feedback and support for their classmates.

Cognitive presence (learner-content interaction)

Cognitive presence is an essential piece of the educational experience. Learner-content interaction is more difficult to conceptualize because it cannot easily be viewed as a two-way message (Garrison, & Cleveland-Innes, 2005). But how the learner interacts with the content is of critical importance to the instructor.

Qualitative data from the study shed light on particular teaching methods and instructional behaviors by adjuncts that relate to cognitive presence and are valued by students. Essentially, findings from this study indicate that teaching presence (facilitated discourse) is critical to the development of cognitive presence within a course and that the interaction between teaching presence and cognitive presence are strongly relevant to student connectedness in an online course. For example, regarding the use of discussion

boards (TP: direct instruction), students responded favorable to hearing other perspectives and points of views. Student comment: “I found that reading my fellow peers opinions and viewpoints very enriching and thorough. It helped me understand others ways of thinking”.

The results reported from the study and those of Shea and Bidjerano (2009) confirms the central role that teaching presence plays in an online environment and provides important insights into how best to integrating the community of inquiry elements. Clearly, the importance of teaching presence in creating and sustaining social and cognitive presence in online learning environments is critical in the achieving overall connectedness in the course.

Limitations

This study utilized the benefits of qualitative and quantitative methods. However, there were a number of limitations that should be noted. The survey was completed under the conditions of anonymity, which meant that the researcher could not identify adjunct faculty or students who participated in the survey. The researcher could not make a direct relationship to the collected data sets.

The researcher modified the CoI instrument by including a portion of the survey questions. In order to ensure survey reliability and validity, the researcher should have developed a pilot survey to field test to adjuncts and students. Survey respondent rates represented a limitation to this study. Of the 269 adjunct faculty surveys distributed, 51 adjunct faculty responded. Of the 3,226 student surveys distributed, 137 students completed the survey. These numbers represent a small segment of the online teaching

and learner population at this particular community college. The researcher considered the number of respondents a sampling of the online student population.

In examining the open-end questions in the adjunct faculty survey section, the researcher could not accurately code the designated presence indicators. This may have been due to the instructor's lack of knowledge of the CoI presence categories. The researcher could have provided examples of tools and instructional practices to help the respondents answer the questions accurately.

Implications and Recommendations

According to the 2012 study by the Instructional Technology Council, online enrollment at community colleges continued to rise in 2011, but at a slower pace than in years past. For years, various stakeholders have highlighted many of the same concerns about student and faculty preparation for online learning. While growth slows, online professionals can use this this time to reevaluate, reengineer and look for solutions to longstanding challenges in distance education. Results from this study denote how institutional leaders will need to examine how adjuncts are incorporated into the overall planning and engagement of student success strategic goals. Realizing the potential of online learning to improve learning and enhance the educational experience requires proper planning and investment on the part of educational institutions. In addition, including adjunct faculty as part of the institution's strategic plan can enhance the "connectedness" between adjunct faculty and the college as a whole. A much needed link and challenge for many community colleges.

With the release of the 2012 National Education Technology Plan, “Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology,” the Department of Education recognizes the importance of technology in education and the valuable role online instruction will play in preparing students for the rapidly changing needs of the 21st century economy and society. According to the plan, as online learning becomes an increasingly important part of education, institutions need to provide online and blended learning experiences that are more participatory and personalized and that embody best practices for engaging all students. Doing this creates both the need and opportunity for all faculty to be skilled in instructional design and knowledgeable about emerging technologies.

Online education will also continue to play a critical role in increasing access to higher education. Community colleges must seek to find the right balance between using online resources to trim operational budgets and increase efficiencies while at the same time preserving the connection that adjunct faculty and students seek in a quality education. Successfully connectedness with students in online classes ensures students receive the same quality of education in their online classes as in face-to-face classes. Adjunct faculty must be prepared and knowledgeable regarding the use of online “connectivity” tools in creating a rich, dynamic online learning environment.

With the Annual (2009) Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) report highlighting that "part-timer status of adjunct faculty as one of the greatest challenges that community colleges face in creating strong campus connections" and given the fact that the widespread use of adjunct faculty is unlikely to change,

teaching presence will play a pivotal role for learners to ‘connect’ to a course. This study has demonstrated that adjuncts bring real value and commitment to the classroom environment. To close the connection gap, colleges will need to find innovative ways to offer part-time faculty the same kinds of instructional support and development opportunities that are available to their full-time colleagues.

This mixed methods concurrent triangulation design study was supported using a model that advocates a connection between teaching presence and perceived learning: the Community of Inquiry Model of Online Learning developed by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000). The objective was to learn how teaching presence impacted students’ perceptions of learning and sense of community in online distance education courses taught by adjunct faculty at a community college. The outcome of the research emphasized the adjunct faculty's critical role in enhancing the student learning experience, as was validated by other research studies examined. Therefore, general recommendations include offering adjunct faculty education and training initiatives as they relate to teaching, social and cognitive presences, with the focus on improving instructional practices. Specifically, the results indicate the need for adjunct faculty to develop strategies and best practices aimed at improving teaching presence and, ultimately, student satisfaction. These interventions need to move beyond the mechanics of simply using a particular course management system or feature, and include opportunities for faculty to share ideas, concerns, frustrations and best practices in a community online environment. New technologies such as new course management systems can provide adjunct faculty the means to communicate and “connect” with

students in online classes in order to enrich their educational experiences. Effective communication strengthens the students' relationships with their instructors and peers and enhances the connectedness in an online environment.

Recommendations for institutional practice include the following: (1) provide additional professional development training for adjunct instructors on the effective uses of communication tools in online classes; (2) implement an adjunct mentoring program that pairs beginning or struggling online instructors with exemplary and experienced online instructors; and (3) implement virtual office hours that allow online adjunct instructors to schedule office hours for their online students outside of classroom time. Virtual office hours allow students and instructors more opportunities for communication and connectedness. It is, therefore, recommended that community colleges adopt the COI framework for initial online training and continuous professional development for adjunct faculty. All instructors need to be familiar with the model to ensure that they can recognize teaching, social and cognitive presence within the course. Experienced online instructors can provide suggestions of best practices on how to engage students. It is through working from a common framework that faculty will be able to have open dialogue about their courses and allow for professional development within the community of faculty.

As community college stakeholders continue to deal with the driving forces impacting student success (Figure 20), online education will become an integral part of the institution's strategic plan. Implementing the CoI model as part of a community college's strategic plan will provide a means for assessing online courses and can provide efficient

data that can serve as evidence of effective instruction and assessment that can be shared with accreditation agencies as well as help direct professional development training needs. The researcher recommends that a CoI survey instrument be used as part of the course evaluation to obtain student perceptions of community of inquiry.



Figure 20. Driving Forces in Community Colleges

Recommendations for Future Study

The CoI Model created by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) was designed to include overlap in three presence components. Now in its 12th year, researchers continue to look at various aspects of the CoI model and how to improve it for use with

online courses. This study was predominantly focused on the adjunct faculty and student perceptions to the online learning environment. While this study emphasized their reactions to that setting, the study also opens the door to further research opportunities associated with online learning, professional development, and adjunct and student perspectives on connectedness. Further research could also help faculty understand those overlaps and how best to leverage them to create strategies that will be most effective in creating sense of community and a learning environment.

Given increased institutional demands for online teaching, coupled with, increasing student enrollments, limited financial resources, adjunct faculty time commitments, faculty and higher education administrators face the challenge of addressing issues that effect the success of both teaching faculty and students. The results of this study suggest that the perceived connectedness in an online environment vary between instructors and students. More research is needed to determine the critical intrinsic and extrinsic barriers and institutional inhibitors to successful online teaching and learning from all faculty by using a larger number of participants from a diverse sample of institutions. Future research could explore the perceived benefits and barriers as perceived by students as well as formally linking student learning outcomes with online teaching skills of faculty. Also, further research into differences and comparison of adjunct faculty gender, teaching experience (f2f and online), and pedagogical training needs to be investigated.

As technology continues to change, and given the fact that students are very familiar with social networking tools, studies should also be conducted which examine the use of

such tools such as Elluminate®, Google Hangout and Skype™ in enhancing teaching and social presence. These tools are another way in which participants can access one another in real time without being physically present in the same room. For example, would “video presence” allow individuals to actually see the faces and hear the voice of their classmates make a difference in connectedness?

Adjunct participants in the study had extensive f2f teaching experience and the data indicated that 58.8% of the respondents were still teaching f2f. Future studies in examining “ripple effects” of instructional practices in f2f and online teaching could prove valuable in understanding the value of the CoI model.

Results from this study underscore the importance of the CoI model for providing a prerequisite foundation to advance research in teaching effectiveness. Specifically, the study found that student satisfaction can be enhanced by improving teaching presence. Improving the quality of education through online learning requires effort, innovation, and resourcefulness on part of the instructor. Implications of this finding are that students may exhibit significant gains in their learning experiences when relevant teaching presence techniques are effectively applied. Future research should include continued implementation of the CoI survey each semester to gain a larger data set, and continued data analysis.

Summary

Discussed in Chapter 5 was the summary of the results as well as recommendations for educational institutions, future research and implications of the study findings. The widespread use of adjunct faculty is unlikely to change, given the

economic and instructional realities of community colleges. At the same time, adjunct faculty are one of the greatest challenges that community colleges face in creating strong campus connections. Teaching presence has been considered as being pivotal for learners to ‘connect’ to a course. The study findings indicated that all of the values of adjunct faculty (instructor) presence were related to the online students’ perceived learning provided through feedback on assignments, emails, and discussion posts. Teaching presence is concluded to be highly effective to support online student learning. Effective social and cognitive presence is highly dependent on the level of teaching presence. Recommendations for future research include expanding the study to a greater population, studying effective online training incorporating teaching presence as well as how instructor behaviors can increase online student learning and independence.

Recommendations for higher education institutions would be to incorporate the CoI model as an invaluable online course facilitation tool and part of orientation and professional development training for online instructors. Implications from the study provide insight on how instructors can also effectively incorporate the three CoI presence tools and behaviors to lessen the “distance” between the instructor and student thereby increasing online student engagement and academic success. At the end of the day, it’s all about the students.

APPENDICES


APPENDIX A: HSRB APPROVAL LETTER



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall
4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-4121; Fax: 703-993-9590

TO: Lesley Smith, New Century College

FROM: Aurali Dade
Assistant Vice President, Research Compliance 

PROTOCOL NO.: 7141 Research Category: Doctoral Dissertation

PROPOSAL NO.: N/A

TITLE: Staying Connected: Adjunct Faculty and the Community College Online Environment:
An Evaluative Study of Professional Development Opportunities for Adjuncts Who
Teach Online

DATE: October 11, 2012

Cc: Frances Villagran-Glover

Thank you for submitting the amendment to the above-cited protocol. Based on the changes being made to the research, the status of the protocol has changed and the project is now exempt from IRB review, since it falls under DHHS Exempt Category 2, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

Stamped copies of the approved consent forms and recruitment materials will be included with this approval letter.

You may proceed with data collection. **Please note that any further modifications to your protocol must be submitted to the Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA) for review and approval prior to implementation.** Any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects including problems with confidentiality of data identifying the participants must be reported to the GMU Office of Research Integrity & Assurance.

GMU is bound by the ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research contained in The Belmont Report. Even though your data collection procedures are exempt from review by the GMU IRB, GMU expects you to conduct your research according to the professional standards in your discipline and the ethical guidelines mandated by federal regulations.

Thank you for cooperating with the University by submitting this protocol for review. Please call me at 703-993-5381 if you have any questions.

APPENDIX B: ADJUNCT FACULTY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to seek the perceptions of adjunct faculty who teach online at a community college (xxxx) regarding instructor presence and their connectedness in an online environment. Your help with this survey will help us better understand the impact of teaching presence [the design, organization, facilitation, and instruction] in online courses, like the one you taught during the past Spring Term. It will also help with the development of professional development programs geared toward adjunct faculty.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Participants will also be invited to play a part in a face-to-face/telephone interview. The duration of the interview will be 45 minutes and will be schedule based on the participant's availability and schedule.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant. However, the results of the study may provide information that will help with understanding the needs of adjuncts and professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty who teach online courses.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. The survey data will be collected using an online instrument called www.surveymonkey.com. No names and other specific identifiers will not be placed on the survey or other research data. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Frances Villagran-Glover, a doctoral student at George Mason University. She may be reached at 571.571.xxxx for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Lesley Smith. She can be reached at 703.993.xxxx. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-xxxx if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research. This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

The George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board has waived the requirement for a signature on this consent form. However, if you wish to sign a consent, please contact Dr. Lesley Smith 703.993.xxxx or via email lsmithg@gmu.edu.

- I accept
- I do not accept

APPENDIX C: STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to seek the perceptions of students who were enrolled in an online course at a community college. The focus of the study will examine the connectedness in an online environment. Your help with this survey will help us better understand the level and impact of interaction with instructors and peers in an online course such as the one you were enrolled during the past Spring Term. The information you provide may also help with the development of other future online courses.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete an online survey, which should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant. However, the results of the study may provide information that will help with understanding the needs of students and may also help with the development of other future online courses.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. The survey data will be collected using an online instrument called www.surveymonkey.com. No names and other specific identifiers will not be placed on the survey or other research data. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Frances Villagran-Glover, a doctoral student at George Mason University. She may be reached at 571.571.xxxx for questions or to report a research-related problem. The faculty advisor for this study is Dr. Lesley Smith. She can be reached at 703.993.xxxx. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

The George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board has waived the requirement for a signature on this consent form. However, if you wish to sign a consent, please contact Dr. Lesley Smith 703.993.4586 or via email lsmithg@gmu.edu.

- I accept
- I do not accept.

APPENDIX D: ADJUNCT FACULTY E-MAIL SOLICITATION LETTER

Dear XXXX XXX Adjunct Faculty Member:

My name is Frances Villagran-Glover and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at George Mason University. I am currently conducting a study of adjunct faculty who currently teach online courses. I am particularly interested the perspective of adjuncts as it relates to connectedness in an online environment. Adjuncts are an integral fabric of the teaching community and your perspective is needed. I am inviting you to participate in this research as you have taught an online class in Spring 2012.

The study is entitled, *Staying Connected: Adjunct Faculty and the Community College Online Environment*. This study can prove to be useful in two ways. First, it will suggest ways in which online courses can better meet the needs adjuncts and students. Second, and more importantly it may help educators and instructional designers enhance professional development for adjunct faculty. Naturally, a copy of the results of this study will be available to you upon request.

If you agree to participate in this study, I am including in this email a link to an online survey (surveymonkey.com). This survey is designed to keep your responses confidential and should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. I will also be conducting interview sessions in mid-October. If you would like to participate in a focus group session (should last no more than 1 hour), please email me at fvillagr@gmu.edu or contact me via cell at 541.xxx.xxxx.

Participation is both voluntary and anonymous and all information will be kept confidential. Your input can prove valuable to the development of future online courses and student success. I thank you in advance for any insight you can provide.

Sincerely,
Frances Villagran-Glover
Doctoral Student
George Mason University

APPENDIX E: STUDENT E-MAIL SOLICITATION LETTER

{date}

Dear XXXX Student:

My name is Frances Villagran-Glover and I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education program at George Mason University. I am currently conducting a study of online courses. I am particularly interested the perspective of students as it relates to connectedness in an online environment. Students are an integral fabric of the learning community and your perspective is needed. I am inviting you to participate in this research as you were enrolled in an online class in Spring 2012.

If you agree to participate in this study, I am including in this email a link to an online survey (surveymonkey.com). This survey is designed to keep your responses confidential and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Participation is both voluntary and anonymous. Your input can prove valuable to the development of future online courses and student success.

I thank you in advance for any insight you can provide.

Sincerely,
Frances Villagran-Glover
Doctoral Student
George Mason University
Higher Education Program

APPENDIX F: ADJUNCT FACULTY ONLINE SURVEY

(online survey using www.surveymonkey.com)

Demographic questions

- Gender (M/F)
- Age
- Employment Status (outside teaching) Full-time vs Part-time
- How long have you taught at the community college level?
- The subject area(s) you have taught online.
- How long have you been teaching online courses?
- Have you taught in a traditional classroom setting (face to face)? Y/N
- Are you still teaching face to face? Y/N

There are two parts to the questions below. For the questions marked (a-b-c-d), a likert scale is provided. Please click on the radio button under the choice that best describes the sense of your course and instruction.

- Strongly disagree -5
- Disagree-4
- Neutral -3
- Agree- 2
- strongly agree- 1
- I choose not to answer this question- 0

The second part consists of short answer questions.

I. Questions about your course design and structure. (4 items)

- a) Overall, I clearly communicated important course goals to the students (for example, provided documentation on course learning objectives).
- b) Overall, I clearly communicated important course topics to the students (for example, provided a clear and accurate course overview).
- c) Overall, I clearly communicated important due dates/time frames for learning activities that helped students keep pace with this course (for example, provided a clear and accurate course schedule, due dates, etc.).
- d) Overall, I helped students take advantage of the online environment to assist their

learning (for example, provided clear information on how to participate in online discussion forums).

In reference to 1c), in what ways did you structure the course activities and assignments so that you felt your students were learning? What worked? What didn't work? What would you change?

2. Questions about your course and instruction (4 items)

- a) Overall, I acknowledged student participation in the course (for example, replied in a positive, encouraging manner to student submission).
- b) Overall, I helped to keep students engaged and participating in productive dialog.
- c) Overall, I provided explanatory feedback that assisted students to learn (for example, responded helpfully to discussion comments or course assignments).
- d) Overall, I provided useful information from a variety of sources that assisted students to learn (for example, references to articles, textbooks, personal experiences or links to relevant external websites)

In reference to 2b), how did you facilitate interaction with your students? What worked? What didn't work? What would you change?

3. Questions about your students' sense of community. (Sense of community means how connected, engaged, and supported the students believed they were in the Spring Term class you taught). (3 items)

- a) The students received timely feedback from each other in this course.
- b) The students seemed to be connected in this course.
- c) The students believed that they could rely on others in this course.

In reference to 3b), in what ways did you create an environment where your students felt a sense of community? What worked? What didn't work? What would you change?

4. Questions about your training and professional development in teaching online. (3 items)

- a) I take advantage of professional development training sessions offered by the college.
- b) I seek assistance from the instructional designers at the college.
- c) I look for various technology tools that will help my online class.

What professional development topics/areas would help increase interaction (content, discussion, sense of community) in your online class?

APPENDIX G: ONLINE STUDENT SURVEY VALIDITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to serve on this panel of experts to review the attached Online Student Survey. This survey is designed to obtain information and data regarding how community college students perceive “connectedness” in their Spring 2012 online class. Your contribution is an important part of my dissertation. Your time in reviewing the survey and answering this questionnaire is greatly appreciated.

Is the language in the Student Survey easily understood by community college students?

Does the survey address specific concerns in the statements related to acquiring data regarding how community college students perceive “connectedness” in their online class?

Do you perceive any of the statements or questions on the survey to be offensive or obtrusive?

Are there any statements or questions you would recommend to exclude from the survey?

Are there any statements or questions that you would recommend to add to the survey?

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding the survey? If so, please list your comments:

(If you need additional space to record answers, attach additional pages as needed.)

APPENDIX H: STUDENT ONLINE SURVEY

(online survey using www.surveymonkey.com)

Demographic questions

- Gender M/F
- Age
- Was the class you were enrolled in Spring2012 your first online course? Y/N
- Have you or do you plan to enroll in another online course? Y/N
- Was your instructor a full time faculty or an adjunct faculty member?

There are two parts to the questions below. For the questions marked (a-b-c-d), a likert scale is provided. Please click on the radio button under the choice that best describes the sense of your course and instruction.

The second part consists of short answer questions.

5-point Likert-type scale 1 = strongly disagree (SD) 2 = disagree (D) 3 = neutral (N) 4 = agree (A) 5 = strongly agree (SA)					
	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. The instructor clearly communicated important course goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The instructor provided clear instructions on how to participate in course learning activities (i.e discussion boards).	1	2	3	4	5
3. The instructor helped to keep course participants engaged and participating in productive dialogue.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The instructor helped keep the course participants on task in a	1	2	3	4	5

way that helped me to learn.					
5. Instructor actions reinforced the development of a sense of community among course participants.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The instructor helped to focus discussion on relevant issues in a way that helped me to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The instructor provided feedback that helped me understand my strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The instructor provided feedback in a timely fashion.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Getting to know other course participants gave me a sense of belonging in the course.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I felt comfortable conversing through the online medium.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I felt comfortable participating in the course discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I felt that other students acknowledged my point of view.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Online discussions help me to develop a sense of collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I utilized a variety of information sources to explore problems posed in this course.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Online discussions were valuable in helping me appreciate different perspectives.	1	2	3	4	5

Short Answer Questions:

With regard to your interaction with your instructor, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?
With regard to your interaction with your peers, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?
With regard to instructional activities, what did you find valuable to your overall learning experience? What wasn't?

Comments:

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