A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF RESPONSES TO STATE-MANDATED PERFORMANCE FUNDING IN THREE OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By

PAT R. REAVES

Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, *summa cum laude*
Oklahoma Baptist University
Shawnee, Oklahoma
1976

Master of Science in Psychological Services
East Central University
Ada, Oklahoma
1980

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
July, 2015

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Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Stephen Wanger

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Kerri Kearney

Dr. Jesse P. Mendez

Dr. Pamela Fry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am mindful of the many people who have made it possible for me to complete this dissertation. Thank you to all of my friends, family, and colleagues who encouraged me along the way. I especially owe Margaret Cox and Nina Rowland a huge debt of gratitude. They faithfully read and re-read drafts of this dissertation offering helpful advice and encouragement.

To the members of the OKC 2010 cohort, thank you for all the ways you have challenged me and supported me throughout this program. I remain certain that I would not have completed the course work or this dissertation without you. I look forward to continuing to cheer you on.

I am grateful for the support and assistance of my advisor Dr. Stephen Wanger and my committee members, Dr. Pamela Fry, Dr. Kerri Kearney, and Dr. Jesse Mendez in the preparation of this dissertation and throughout my graduate program.

To Jean Kelsey who listened and kept me sane when I was discouraged and when I was enthusiastic, there are not enough words to express my gratitude for all of the love and support you have given throughout this process.

And finally, thank you to each of the community college educators who agreed to participate in my study. I am more convinced than ever of the passion of these individuals and their colleagues in Oklahoma's community colleges for their students and communities. I have tried to be true to your voices.

Name: Pat R. Reaves

Date of Degree: July, 2015

Title of Study: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF RESPONSES TO STATE-MANDATED PERFORMANCE FUNDING IN THREE OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Major Field: Higher Education

Abstract: In April 2012 the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education revised the funding formula for public higher education institutions to include a performance funding component. Although performance funding is widely implemented by states as a mechanism for promoting increased production of degrees by public colleges and universities, the research literature suggests that performance funding is largely ineffective as a mechanism for increasing the number of degrees granted. In states with performance funding policies, higher education institutions made intermediate institutional changes in response to performance funding but those changes did not result in significant increases in the number of degrees awarded. Studies also raised concerns about unintended effects of performance funding that restrict admissions or reduce academic quality. This dissertation explored the responses of Oklahoma public community colleges to the implementation of formula-based performance funding, as perceived by community college mid-level administrators. This qualitative study utilized interviews with mid-level administrators and review of public documents and applies a complexity theory lens to explore responses to formula-based performance funding in three public community colleges. The study found that participants associated formula-based performance funding with demands for increased graduation numbers and Oklahoma public community colleges are responding to formula-based performance funding with efforts intended to increase retention and graduation of students. Subsequent to the implementation of formula-based performance funding, two of the colleges in the study adopted revised mission statements that emphasize degree completion. Although participants acknowledged the value of performance funding as an accountability mechanism, they expressed concern that performance-funding could contribute to changes that might lower academic quality and restrict the community college mission. Recommendations for further research and implications for practice to protect academic quality and mission of the community college are presented.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In April 2012 the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) adopted a revised funding formula that incorporated performance funding based on student retention and graduation outcome measures (Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education [OSRHE], 2012b). Oklahoma's implementation of performance funding appears to follow a national trend that began among the states in the 1980s. Advocates of performance funding argue that linking funding for higher education to desired outcomes will shape the behavior of institutions to produce those outcomes (Albright, 2009; Complete College America [CCA], 2013; Harnisch, 2011; Miao, 2012). In the 21st century performance funding has been implemented by states as a mechanism for incentivizing colleges and universities to increase undergraduate degree completion rates (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, Thornton, Amico & Katisinas, 2013; Harnisch, 2011; Hermes, 2012; Lederman, 2008; National Conference of State Legislatures [NCSL], 2013).

Little research is available that addresses the influences of performance funding in colleges and universities (Connor & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013) and no published research is currently available on the influences of the revised performance

funding formula in Oklahoma institutions. This study is an exploration of the responses to performance funding within Oklahoma public community colleges. Proponents for increased graduation rates consider community colleges essential to reaching college graduation goals (Aldstadt, 2012; McPhail, 2011; Obama, 2009b). The first chapter describes the background of the study, presents the problem statement, discusses the significance of the study, and describes the study methodology.

Background of the Study

As the largest funder of U.S. public higher education, states have been leaders in demanding accountability from higher education. In the 1970s, states commonly allocated funds to higher education using funding formulas that emphasized enrollment and other input factors (Haupman, 2011; Layzell, 2007; Thelin, 2004). Beginning in the late 1970s, states developed performance funding policies as a mechanism for requiring colleges and universities to be accountable for outcomes. In performance based funding, state funds are allocated to the college or university based on the institution's performance on specified criteria (Burke, 2002a; Burke & Minassians, 2003).

The *Time for Results* (1986) report of the National Governor's Association (NGA) provided momentum for the performance funding movement in the states. That report raised concerns about the quality of higher education and called for increased accountability. The NGA (1986) report suggested that state funds for higher education be linked to quality that was documented with outcomes data from colleges and universities (Carey & Alderman, 2008; Ewell, 2005; Ewell, 2008; Gaither, Nedwek & Neal, 1994; Lazerson, Wagener, & Shumanis, 1999).

Prior to the NGA report, only Tennessee, which implemented performance funding in 1979, had a performance funding system for public higher education. In the period from 1979 – 2001, 19 states adopted performance funding policies (Burke & Minassians, 2003). During that period, most states used performance funding systems that supplemented, but did not replace, the basic funding formula (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). In the 21st century, funding formulas that incorporate performance funding elements are becoming more common among the states (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Performance funding formulas and criteria vary by state but all include consideration of an institution's performance on the specified measures in the allocation of funds (Albright, 2009; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Doyle & Zumeta, 2014; Friedel, et al., 2013; Hermes, 2012; Lederman, 2009).

Graduation and retention measures are the most common outcome measures used in state performance funding systems (Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2003; D'Amico, Friedel, Katisinas & Thornton, 2014). Concerns about the economic importance of a college-educated workforce have contributed to the emphasis on graduation and retention as performance outcome measures for higher education. The argument for college completion advanced by political leaders and other opinion leaders maintains that a significant increase in the number of college degree and certificate holders in the U.S. population is necessary for the U.S. to maintain its global economic position. The Complete College America initiative (CCA, 2013), and President Obama's College Completion Agenda (Friedel, et al., 2013; Obama, 2009a; U.S. Department of Education [DOE], 2011) are among the most well-known articulations of this goal. Advocates argue that performance funding based on the number of degrees and certificates granted is an important strategy for reaching those graduation goals (CCA, 2013; DOE, 2011; Harnisch, 2011; NCSL, 2013; Miao, 2012).

These national trends related to accountability and degree completion may have contributed to the OSRHE 2012 adoption of performance funding. Oklahoma is one of 34 states participating in the Complete College America Alliance of States (CCA, 2011; Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education [OSRHE], n.d.b). In a 2013 speech, Chancellor Glen Johnson of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education stated "College degree completion is our first priority for this year, next year, and the next 11 years" (Johnson, 2013). OSRHE identified performance funding of state-funded colleges and universities as a key initiative for accomplishing Oklahoma's college degree completion goals (OSRHE, 2013). The revised funding formula adopted in 2012 incorporates performance funding as an element in the funding formula for Oklahoma public higher education with retention and graduation outcome measures as the key outcome indicators in the funding formula (OSRHE, n.d.d.).

Problem Statement

Advocates of performance funding argue that holding colleges and universities accountable by linking funding to performance will induce colleges and universities to produce the desired outcomes (Albright, 2009; CCA, 2013; Harnisch, 2011; Miao, 2012). With the call for increased numbers of certificates and degrees, performance funding based on measures of graduation and retention has become a common strategy for increasing those desired outcomes (Albright, 2009; CCA, 2013; OSHRE, 2013b). However, research suggests that colleges and universities may respond to performance funding initiatives in ways that contribute to unintended consequences that may negatively influence the quality of higher education and the production of degrees and certificates. Possible unintended consequences of performance funding include changes of institutional missions, reduced

access to higher education, grade inflation, and lowered academic standards (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; St. John, 2011).

Although advocates argue that performance funding is an important strategy for influencing higher education institutions to accomplish college degree completion goals, there is little research available that examines the influences of performance funding systems nationwide and no published scholarly research available that specifically addresses the responses to performance funding in Oklahoma's public higher education institutions (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Further research is needed to explore responses to performance funding in Oklahoma public higher education and how those responses relate to the accomplishment of higher education goals.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore institutional and administrative responses to the newly implemented performance funding formula in Oklahoma public community colleges. The study seeks to answer the research questions:

1. In what ways are Oklahoma public community colleges responding to performance funding?
2. In what ways do mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges describe performance funding?
3. In what ways do mid-level administrators describe the responses to performance funding at their institutions?
4. What implications of performance funding for Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges?

a) What implications of performance funding for administration practices in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
b) What implications of performance funding for the institutional missions of Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
c) What implications of performance funding for teaching and learning in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
d) What implications of performance funding on access to Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?

Professional Significance of the Study

Although performance funding of public higher education has been used by state governments in the United States for over 30 years, there is little scholarly research that addresses the implications of performance funding. In Oklahoma, performance funding was only recently included in the funding formula for public higher education. No published research is available that addresses the influences of performance funding in Oklahoma's public colleges and universities. This study contributes to the scholarly literature by providing an exploration of institutional and administrative responses to performance funding within the community college segment of Oklahoma public higher education that goes beyond the commonly available advocacy literature on performance funding.

Policy makers describe the Oklahoma performance funding policy as a mechanism for increasing the number of college graduates in the state. The information provided by this study may be useful to policy makers in Oklahoma as they consider revisions to the performance funding policy. The findings of this study may also be beneficial to policy

makers in other states as they explore implementation and revision of performance funding policies.

Practitioners within higher education institutions may also find this study useful. For senior-level administrators, it may provide a perspective on the viewpoint of mid-level administrators in similar institutions. Practitioners in similar institutions may learn about strategies and responses that could be useful in effectively responding to performance funding while avoiding undesirable consequences.

Overview of Methodology

This study uses a qualitative case study methodology to explore responses to performance funding in public community colleges in Oklahoma. I used a multiple-case study approach (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014) to gather data from three community colleges located in various regions of the state. I interviewed three mid-level administrators at each institution and collected documents including public documents that reflect the institutional mission and practices from each college along with internal documents provided by study participants. Collection of data from multiple participants and multiple sources along with member checks contributes to the trustworthiness of the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002).

Both deductive and inductive processes were used in analysis of the data. Deductive processes were used to relate the themes identified in the research literature to the data gathered through this study. Inductive processes were used to uncover themes and findings beyond those found in the literature (Patton, 2002). Chapter Three provides a detailed discussion of the methodology for the study.

Delimitations and Definitions

This study addresses the administrative and institutional responses to the performance funding formula in Oklahoma community colleges. Rather than addressing the historical or political processes of developing and implementing the policy, it begins with the adoption of the revised funding formula by OSRHE in April, 2012. The study is limited to those responses within the colleges and does not seek to include reactions from outside of those specific public higher education institutions.

Generalizability

As qualitative research that seeks to describe responses within specific colleges in specific settings, the generalizability of the study is limited. The use of a multiple-case study design, however, enhances the generalizability of the study. Patton (2002, p. 581) describes the "principle of proximal similarity" stating that when "treatments, settings, populations, outcomes, and times are most similar to those in the original research" generalization can be more confidently applied. Including multiple settings in the study makes it more likely that a setting similar to that of another community college in Oklahoma will be addressed in the study. A second principle of generalization described by Patton (2002, p. 581-582) is "the principle of empirical interpolation and extrapolation." This principle suggests that when findings are consistent across variations, generalizations can be made more confidently. The multiple-case study design provides for variation across the mini-cases in the study. Findings that are consistent across these variations may be more confidently generalized to other settings.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest transferability is a more appropriate concept for qualitative research. Transferability of research findings depends on how well the conditions

of the study correspond to the conditions to which they are being applied by the reader. By including multiple community colleges in this study and by providing rich description of those colleges, readers of this dissertation may be better able to determine how well the findings fit with other possible settings.

Definitions

This study uses the definition of performance funding advanced by Burke (2002a). He states:

> Performance funding ties specific resources to institutional results on each of the designated indicators. The tie is automatic and formulaic. If a campus achieves a set target on a designated indicator, it receives a specific amount of performance money for that measure" (Burke, 2002a, p. 21).

Other definitions important to this study are terms used by OSRHE for the measures of completion and retention and budget descriptions.

Degree/certificate seeking student: A degree/certificate seeking student is enrolled in credit-bearing courses and recognized by the institution as seeking a degree or certificate. High school students who are enrolled in college classes for credit are not degree/certification seeking students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.).

Education and general (E&G) budget: OSRHE defines the E&G budget for an institution as the "primary operating budget of the institution." It includes instructional and research expenses and is funded with revenue from state appropriations, student tuition and fees, grants, and contracts. The E&G budget does not include capital expenditures or self-supporting auxiliary enterprises (OSRHE, n.d.c).

Fall Cohort: The fall cohort includes those first-time students who are enrolled as full-time degree or certificate seeking students at an institution during the fall semester (NCES, n.d.; OSRHE, n.d.c.).

First-time Student: A first-time student is a student with no previous postsecondary education. Students who enrolled in the summer prior to the fall term are considered first-time students for the fall semester and students who earned advanced standing credit in high school are first-time students when they enter the postsecondary institution (NCES, n.d.; OSRHE, n.d.c).

Full-time student: At the undergraduate level, a full-time student is any student who is enrolled in 12 or more semester credit hours, 12 or more quarter credit hours, or 24 contact hours per week (NCES, n.d.).

Graduation rate: The graduation rate is the percentage of students from a specific fall cohort who complete a degree program within 150% of the normal time. For a two-year degree, 150% of normal time is three years (OSRHE, n.d.c).

Retention rate: The retention rate measures student persistence at a specific institution. For two-year colleges, the retention rate is "the percentages of first-time degree/certificate-seeking students from the previous fall who either re-enrolled or successfully completed their program by the current fall" (NCES, n.d.).

Chapter Summary

Like other states, Oklahoma moved from an input-based funding formula to a funding formula that incorporates performance-funding elements. This study seeks to fill a gap in knowledge regarding the influences of performance funding in Oklahoma's public community colleges. This chapter provides the foundation for the study. The chapter

introduced the problem for the research study, provided a background for the study, described the research questions and professional significance of the study, established the delimitations of the study, and defined key terms related to the study. Chapter II, which follows, explores the literature related to performance-funding in U.S. public higher education and the theoretical lens of complexity thinking used in this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

State governments are an important source of funding for public higher education. Beginning in the 1950s, many states developed funding formulas that used enrollment as the primary determinant of funding allocations to public higher education institutions (Haupman, 2011; Layzell, 2007; Thelin, 2004). Challenges to the quality of higher education and the increased emphasis on the importance of a college degree for personal success and economic development contributed to increasing demands for accountability from public higher education institutions. As the primary funders of public higher education, states have taken the lead in demanding accountability through the funding process. Accountability systems using performance reporting, performance budgeting, and performance funding have been developed and implemented in various states (Burke, 2002a; Burke & Minassians, 2003; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; McLendon, Hearn & Deaton, 2006). In performance funding systems, some portion of the funding allocation for the institution is based on the institution's reported performance on designated performance measures (Burke, 2002a; Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2003). Many of the states now implementing performance funding are modifying the funding formula used to allocate the base funding of post-secondary

institutions to include consideration of performance factors (Albright, 2009; Altstadt, 2012; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; Hermes, 2012; Lederman, 2009).

Most research related to performance funding of higher education is concerned with the process of implementing performance funding policies in the states. There is little research available that examines the influences of performance funding on higher education institutions and, in particular, how higher education institutions have responded to the inclusion of performance funding in the base funding formulas for higher education (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel et. al, 2013; Rabovsky, 2013).

In this literature review, I provide an overview of the context in which performance funding systems have developed and describe the evolution of performance funding systems nationally and in Oklahoma. I discuss research findings on the influences and effects of performance funding and discuss complexity theory as a framework for exploration of the responses to performance funding in Oklahoma.

Search Strategy

To identify literature for inclusion in this review, I conducted a series of searches of the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Dissertation and Theses, and EBSCOHost databases with search terms of "performance funding," "performance accountability," and "higher education." I conducted another series of searches in those databases using various combinations of the search terms "complexity theory," "complexity thinking," "organizational theory," "educational research," and "education policy." I examined the search results and selected resources relevant to this study. As I reviewed the materials identified through these searches, I identified additional relevant resources referenced in those publications for inclusion in this review.

Context for the Development of Performance Funding

Demands for accountability from higher education increased through the end of the 20th century and into the beginning of the 21st century. These demands for increased accountability from higher education occurred in the broader context of demands for accountability throughout the public sector (Burke, 2005a; Fryar, 2011, McLendon, Hearn & Deaton, 2006; Rabovsky, 2013). Much attention has been directed to the value of postsecondary education in producing a globally competitive workforce. Private foundations and political leaders have emphasized the role of colleges and universities in producing the workforce necessary for success in the global economy. Performance funding of public higher education began in the late 20th century as a response to the demand for accountability and quality in higher education. The impact of the national recession in the early 21st century on state budgets contributed to a decline in the popularity of performance funding (Burke & Minassians, 2003; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Harnisch, 2011; McLendon, Hearn, & Deaton, 2006; Miao, 2012). In recent years, however, there has been renewed interest in performance funding with the states incorporating consideration of performance in the basic funding allocation for colleges and universities (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Hermes, 2012; Harnisch, 2011; Miao, 2012).

Traditional Funding for Higher Education

States are a significant source of funding for public higher education in the United States. With dramatic increases in enrollment during the 1950s, state funding allocations began to change from purely political allocations for individual institutions toward enrollment-based funding formulas. These funding formulas vary among the states with

factors such as enrollment, the type of institution, the physical plant, and other input related factors commonly considered (Thelin, 2004; Layzell, 2007). By the mid-1970s, enrollment-based funding formulas were the most common methods used to allocate state funds to public higher education (Haupman, 2011; Thelin, 2004).

Public higher education experienced unprecedented reductions in state funding in recent years (Doyle & Zumeta, 2014). State fiscal support for higher education dropped 40.2% between 1980 and 2011 (Mortensen, 2012). Mortensen (2012) suggested that continuation of the trend would result in state funding for higher education reaching zero by 2059. In Oklahoma, educational appropriations per FTE dropped 21.1% over the five year period from FY2008 to FY2013 (State Higher Education Executive Officers).

Demands for Quality and Accountability

States have taken the lead in demanding accountability from publicly funded institutions of higher education. In the 1980s and 90s, states developed incentive systems intended to improve the performance of colleges and universities by linking funding to performance outcomes (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel et. al, 2013; McLendon, Hearn & Deaton, 2006; Rabovsky, 2013). The *Time for Results* report issued by the National Governors' Association (NGA) in 1986 was influential in the early development of performance accountability systems in the states (Carey & Alderman, 2008; Ewell, 2005; Ewell, 2008; Gaither, Nedwek & Neal, 1994; Lazerson, Wagener, & Shumanis, 1999). The report criticized higher education and demanded more accountability. It cited evidence of declining test scores and employer reports of inadequately prepared graduates in the conclusion that the quality of higher education had declined. The governors challenged public universities and colleges to provide evidence of educational

quality and suggested funding be based directly on that evidence (National Governor's Association, 1986).

In 2005, national attention was focused on the quality of higher education by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education convened by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and commonly known as the Spellings' Commission. The Commission's report was highly critical of the quality of U.S. higher education. It called for more accountability with an emphasis on using outcomes to evaluate educational quality and advocated the adoption of common standards for student performance (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Even though many of the recommendations of the commission were not implemented in federal policy, they continue to influence higher education (Eaton, 2010; Ewell, 2008; Shavelson, 2010).

In the popular media, *Declining by Degrees* (Hersh & Merrow, 2005), challenged the quality of higher education saying, "We found an insidious erosion of quality that we now believe places this nation at risk" (p. 2). More recently, in *Academically Adrift,* Arum and Roksa (2011) argued that the limited learning on U.S. campuses is an important social problem that requires significant reform in higher education. A national public opinion survey conducted by Gallup in 2012 found that while most Americans believe higher education is important, many have concerns about its quality (Sander, 2013).

Emphasis on the Importance of College Graduates for Economic Development

These criticisms of quality and the demand for accountability for results from higher education contributed to the rise of performance funding (Dougherty, Natow, Bork, Jones, & Vega, 2013). Concerns about the importance of an educated workforce

for competition in the global economic market have contributed to an emphasis on degree completion as the primary outcome measure for higher education. Proponents of the "completion agenda" argue that society benefits when a high percentage of the population has completed postsecondary education (Harnisch, 2011; Humphries, 2012; Obama, 2009a). They point to statistics that list the U.S. as ranked lower than many other developed nations in the proportion of the population with postsecondary degrees or certificates and argue that the United States must increase the number of postsecondary degrees and certificate holders among its population to compete successfully in the global marketplace (Harnisch, 2011; Williams & Swail, 2005).

Private foundations have used their resources to advance this economic development argument for the importance of post-secondary education. The Lumina Foundation and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are key supporters of this argument (Albright, 2009; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.) and major funders for the Complete College America (CCA) initiative (CCA, 2013). CCA is a non-profit corporation with the mission of increasing the number of Americans with post-secondary certificates or degrees (Complete College America, 2013).

The CCA website lays out the argument for degree completion with simple bullet point assertions:

- America is slipping: behind our global competitors – and, even more alarming, *between generations*….
- The consequences of falling short of college completion are not only significant for once promising students, but are severe for states and our country….

- *Colleges and universities* must make graduation, not head counts, their measure of success…*States* must knock down obstacles, across entire educational systems, that unnecessarily block paths to college completion – and they must encourage and hold accountable institutions and students for measurable progress [italics in the original] (Complete College America, 2011b).

CCA emphasizes measures of degree completion as the most important indicators of higher education performance. The number of degrees and certificates produced, graduation rates, time to degree, credits to degree, remediation enrollment, transfer rates, and graduation rates are included in their "Metrics that Matter Most" (Complete College America, 2011a).

Political leaders have also argued for the importance of degree completion. The National Governor's Association "Complete to Compete" initiative emphasized the importance of postsecondary degree attainment for state economic success and recommended using performance on completion metrics as the basis for allocation of funds to higher education (Hoffman & Reindl, 2011; NGA, n.d.; Reindl & Reyna, 2011). President Obama has argued for the importance of raising the postsecondary degree attainment rate nationally. In his first speech to a joint session of Congress in early 2009, President Obama announced his 2020 goal for higher education and laid out the argument for increasing the percentage of the population who are college graduates. Referring to the United States' relatively low proportion of college graduates he said, "This is a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow" (Obama, 2009a). He called for "every American to

commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training" so that "by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world" (Obama, 2009a). The President's White House Completion Agenda calls for measuring success on five indicators: college costs, graduation, student loan repayment, student loan debt, and student earning potential (Friedel, et. al, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

In Oklahoma, Governor Mary Fallin and Chancellor Glen Johnson of the Oklahoma State System for Higher Education announced a degree completion initiative in September 2011. Their announcement echoed an argument similar to the one advanced by President Obama. They called for increasing the number of Oklahomans with college degrees in order to provide the workforce necessary for economic development. The Oklahoma initiative, which is associated with Complete College America, is designed to increase the number of degrees awarded by Oklahoma colleges and universities by 67% between 2010 and 2023 ("Governor Fallin, higher education officials unveil college degree completion plan," 2011). In her 2015 State of the State speech, Governor Fallin again highlighted Oklahoma's low educational attainment as a significant issue for the state and called for linking any increases in state funding to higher education with performance outcomes, specifically stating, "more students graduating from college in as close to four years as possible" (Fallin, 2015).

Evolution of Performance Funding for Public Higher Education

Demands for accountability and degree completion are integrated in performance funding systems that emphasize measures of retention and degree completion. Performance funding of higher education began with Tennessee's implementation of

performance funding in 1979 (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Doyle & Zumeta, 2014; Haupman, 2011). By the 1990s, performance funding was established in a number of states. These early performance funding initiatives were generally limited to a small percentage of overall state funding for higher education and were supplemental to the basic funding formula (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Haupman, 2011). Performance funding of public higher education has gained momentum in the 21st century. In 2012, 22 states had performance funding systems (Friedel, et al., 2013) and by 2013, the majority of states either had implemented or were considering performance funding for public higher education (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al. 2013; NCSL, 2013).

Types of Performance Accountability

Performance funding is just one type of performance-based accountability. Burke and Minassians describe three approaches to performance-based accountability in higher education: performance reporting, performance budgeting, and performance funding (Burke, 2002a; Burke, 2002b; Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2002; Burke & Minassians, 2003). Each type of accountability system seeks to address quality concerns by providing external accountability (Burke & Minassians, 2002; Burke, 2005b) and to assure stakeholders that colleges and universities are working toward and accomplishing desired goals (Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2003; Leveille, 2005).

In performance reporting, the institution reports on a set of indicators. Those reports are sent to policy makers and often published publicly. This system is intended to affect institutional behavior by drawing attention to the indicators (Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2002; Burke & Minassians, 2003). Because these systems allow for accountability reporting without requiring additional funding, performance reporting

systems were common in the states at the beginning of the 21st century. By 2003, 46 states had some type of performance reporting system (Burke & Minassians, 2003).

Performance budgeting is a somewhat stronger form of accountability. Institutions are required to report their performance on a set of indicators and that performance *may* be taken into consideration by policymakers when making funding allocations to institutions. With performance budgeting, there is no direct relationship between performance on the indicators and the funding allocated to the institution (Burke, 2002a; Burke, 2002b; Burke, 2005b; Burke & Minassians, 2002; Burke and Minassians, 2003). In 2003, state higher education finance officers of 21 states, including Oklahoma, reported that a performance-budgeting system was operating in their state (Burke & Minassians, 2003).

Performance funding is the strongest form of performance accountability. In performance funding, there is a direct relationship between institutional performance on the required performance indicators and the allocation of funds (Burke, 2002a; Burke, 2002b; Burke & Minassians, 2002; Burke and Minassians, 2003). Twenty-seven states had a performance funding system in place at some time during the period from 1990 through 2012 (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). In 2003, the number of states reporting performance funding systems dropped to 15 from the previous high of 19 states in 2001 (Burke & Minassians, 2003). By 2012, 12 states used performance funding systems for public higher education and several additional states were considering performance funding systems (NCSL, 2013). An update to the National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL) information, reports 22 states used performance funding for some portion of state higher education funding, another seven states were in the process of

implementing performance funding, and 10 states were in formal discussions regarding performance funding. In September of 2013, only 12 states and the District of Columbia were not actively involved in a performance funding initiative (Friedel, et al., 2013).

Performance Funding 1.0 and 2.0

Performance funding programs have evolved from early implementations that provided supplemental funds for institutions to the current programs that incorporate performance funding in the base funding formula that determines allocations to institutions. These types of performance systems have been classified as performance funding 1.0 (PF 1.0) and performance funding 2.0 (PF 2.0). In PF 1.0, performance funding adds to the institution's base funding. The additional funds institutions receive beyond their regular funding are awarded as an incentive or reward for meeting performance goals (Albright, 2009; Dougherty, et al., 2014; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; Hermes, 2012; Lederman, 2008). Most performance funding programs implemented in the 1990s and earlier followed the PF 1.0 form. The performance funding systems implemented in Tennessee in the 1980s and in Ohio, Florida, and Washington are examples of PF 1.0 (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Performance funding systems that followed the PF 1.0 form have been criticized for their emphasis on outcome measures over progress measures, disregard of the differences in institutional goals and missions, and the use of small amounts of incentive funding that were not sufficient for facilitating change (Friedel, et. al, 2013; Miao, 2012; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

PF 2.0 policies attempt to improve on earlier policies and create systems more likely to achieve the desired goals by including rewards for both progress measures and

outcome measures, recognizing differences among types of institutions and, most importantly, incorporating performance funding in the state's funding formula for higher education (Kazis, 2012). Rather than provide a bonus for meeting performance targets, the institution's funding allocation is tied to meeting the stated performance goals. PF 2.0 programs also often include higher education leadership and other stakeholders in the planning and protect institutions by allowing for a phase-in of the new funding formula and providing stop-loss provisions (Albright, 2009; Altstadt, 2012; Dougherty, et al., 2014; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; Hermes, 2012; Lederman, 2009).

South Carolina was the earliest state to implement PF 2.0 type performance funding that incorporated performance funding in the state's funding formula for higher education. The South Carolina initiative called for 100% of state funding for public higher education institutions to be awarded based on the institution's performance on the specified indicators (Burke & Serban, 1998). More recent performance funding initiatives in Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee are examples of performance funding policies that implement other aspects of the PF 2.0 model (Albright, 2009; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

Performance Funding in the States

Although performance funding has been utilized in many states, two states are illustrative of the evolution of performance funding in public higher education. Tennessee was the first state to implement performance funding and has the longest continually operating performance funding program (Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). South Carolina implemented the most extreme form of performance funding with all state funding allocated based on performance of colleges and universities

on the specified indicators (Burke, 2002c, Burke & Serban, 1998). The early aggressive approach to performance funding of public higher education in South Carolina was unsustainable; however, Tennessee provides an example of performance funding that has successfully endured (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010).

Tennessee. The history of performance funding in Tennessee includes both PF 1.0 and PF 2.0. Performance funding was implemented by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) in 1979 and has continued through the present without interruption (Tennessee Higher Education Commission [THEC], 2010). As the first state to implement performance funding for public higher education, Tennessee has the longest continually operating performance funding system in higher education. The Tennessee performance funding program has been reviewed and revised at five year intervals with resulting changes in performance standards and indicators and the percentage of funding affected (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Dougherty & Natow, 2010).

Tennessee's initial performance funding policy was a PF 1.0 type program. Most of the state funding for public higher education was enrollment-driven with performance funding providing additional funds. The percentage of allocated funds affected by the performance score has increased from the initial 2.0% to 5.4% of the funding allocation (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Dougherty & Natow, 2010). The performance score for a college or university is calculated based on its performance on the specified performance factors. In the scoring process, each institution is compared only with its prior performance. Initially, the program included five equally weighted performance standards addressing program accreditation, graduate performance in the major field of study, graduate performance in general education, student/alumni satisfaction, and peer

evaluation of academic programs (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). By the 2005-2010 cycle, the criteria evolved to five weighted standards: student learning environment and outcomes, student satisfaction, student persistence to graduation, state master plan priorities, and assessment outcomes. Weighting of the categories varies for community colleges and four-year institutions (Baxter, Brant, & Forester, 2008).

In 2010, Tennessee implemented a PF 2.0 program in addition to the PF 1.0 program instituted in 1979. The passage by the state legislature of the Complete College Tennessee Act revised the basic higher education formula from an enrollment-based formula to an outcomes-based formula that emphasizes student persistence and graduation. This program was intended to operate in conjunction with the previous performance funding policy (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). The longevity of the Tennessee performance funding program and its survival through a range of economic, social, and political conditions has been cited as evidence of the success of the initiative (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010).

South Carolina. The South Carolina performance funding program was proposed by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (SCCHE) and enacted by the state legislature in 1996. The enacting legislation included 37 performance indicators organized into nine critical success factors: mission focus, quality of faculty, instructional quality, institutional cooperation and collaboration, administrative efficacy, entrance requirements, graduates' achievements, user-friendliness of institution, and research funding. The law also included the provision that, after a three year phase-in period, *all* funding to public colleges and universities was to be allocated solely on their performance on these measures (Burke & Serban, 1998). During the first two years of

the phase-in period, performance scoring results using the mandated performance indicators resulted in wide variations in performance scores among institutions. The scores received by the low-performing institutions would have resulted in major loss of funds if they had not been protected by the three-year phase in period (Burke, 2002c).

The South Carolina performance funding was never fully implemented. In 1998-99, the third year of the program, the SCCHE changed the funding formula to reduce the percentage of the fund allocation affected by the institution's performance score from 100% to a more limited performance initiative pool (Burke, 2002c). Only 38% of the allocated funds were awarded through the performance funding program (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). In 2000, the SCCHE approved a plan that reduced the number of indicators from 37 to 11 indicators common to all institutions, one indicator common to all institutions in a given sector, and one institution-specific indicator chosen by the institution (Burke, 2002c). In the resulting scoring process, all institutions met or exceeded their performance goals (Burke, 2002c). No funds were provided through the program after 2001- 2002 (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

Performance Indicators

Each state's performance funding program defines a set of criteria for measuring institutional performance. Institutions report on indicators for those criteria and funding allocations are made based on that reported performance. Each state uses a unique set of performance indicators that includes measures selected to reflect that state's priorities for higher education (Harnisch, 2011). Burke and Minassians (2004) found 158 different indicators used by states in performance accountability systems. In general, indicators of

student success can be categorized as overall outcomes, progress outcomes, or institutional processes; these are subsequently described.

Even though states vary in the indicators used, graduation and retention rates are the most commonly used performance criteria (Burke, 2005b; Burke and Minassians, 2004). Members of the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges reported the most commonly used performance indicators for community colleges are retention and graduation rates, transfer rates, and remedial student success (D'Amico, et al., 2014). Rabovsky (2013) surveyed performance indicators used by the various states and found graduation and retention rates were the most commonly used indicators.

Overall outcomes. Indicators in the overall outcomes group represent an end-product of the student's educational process. These indicators have also been referred to as general outcomes (Friedel, et al., 2013) or ultimate student outcomes (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Burke and Minassians (2004) divide this group of indicators into output indicators and outcome indicators. Output indicators include measures of quantity such as numbers of degrees, graduation rates, and other measures of quantity. Outcome indicators (Burke & Minassians, 2004) include job placement and licensure exams and other indicators that address the quality of programs and services and their benefits for students and society. Regardless of the typology applied, this cluster of indicators includes measures of the number of degrees granted, graduation rates, success on licensure exams, and job placements (Burke & Minassians, 2004; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

Progress outcomes. Progress outcome indicators (Friedel, et al., 2013) or intermediate student outcomes (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013) address student progress

toward the overall outcomes. Intermediate student outcomes include such measures as course completion, completion of developmental education, passing a specified credit threshold, or passing gateway courses (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013). Other groups of indicators address outcomes for specific sub-groups including at-risk status, non-traditional students, minority groups, income status, or outcomes related to high-need subjects including STEM fields, nursing, and job placement in high-need fields (Friedel, et al., 2013).

Institutional processes. Another broad category of indicators concerns institutional processes. Processes are defined as "the means of delivering programs, activities, and services" (Burke & Minassians, 2004, p. 56). This group of indicators addresses practices such as strategic planning, institutional efficiency, faculty qualifications, and research. Rabovsky (2013) found process indicators of cost-effectiveness, research productivity, and diversity measures in use by multiple states.

Existing Research on the Influence and Effects of Performance Funding

Research on the influences and effects of performance funding examines both changes in institutional performance on the overall outcome indicators, progress indicators, and the intermediate changes made within colleges and universities in response to performance funding. Advocates insist that performance funding initiatives are successful in affecting higher education outcomes. In one example of that argument, a Lumina Foundation publication claims — without citations— that performance funding resulted in substantial performance improvement by colleges and universities in those states where it has been implemented. To support that claim, they point to a 43% increase in degrees and certificates awarded by Florida community colleges over the

period from 1996 to 2007. The same publication asserts that the learning gains observed in Tennessee institutions support the effectiveness of a small amount of funding on performance gains (Albright, 2009).

In spite of these assertions by advocates, there is little research available that addresses the effectiveness of performance funding systems. Most of the published research related to performance accountability addresses the policy implementation process rather than the effectiveness of the programs (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Rabovsky, 2013). Dougherty and Reddy (2013) conducted an extensive search of available research literature and found only 60 published studies addressing the effects of performance funding. These studies include those with a national focus and state specific studies for Tennessee, Florida, Washington, South Carolina, Ohio, Missouri, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. They found no published, peer-reviewed research of the effects of performance funding in other states. Published studies concerned primarily PF 1.0 programs because most PF 2.0 programs are only recently implemented and there is little research available on the effects of these programs (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

Effects on Outcome Indicators

As discussed above, the indicators used by performance funding programs can be classified as ultimate outcome indicators, progress outcome indicators, and process indicators. Ultimate outcome indicators include such measures as graduation rates, job placement statistics, and number of degrees produced. In some states with performance funding systems, increased graduation rates and other completion measures have been reported. Pennsylvania 4-year graduation rates increased from 26% in 2003 to "nearly"

34% in 2010 (Cavanaugh & Garland, 2012). In Ohio, main university campuses reported the median time to degree for in-state bachelor degrees diminished from 4.7 years in 1999 to 4.3 years in 2006. The percentage of in-state bachelor degree graduates who completed in four years increased from 34% to 43% over the same period (Petrick, 2012). Tennessee four-year graduation rates increased from 43.1% in 1985 to 50.4% in 2002, and community college graduation rates increased from 25.0% in 1985 to 31.0% in 2002 (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). Although some improvement in outcome indicators has been reported by some individual states, a number of studies suggest that performance funding has little impact on ultimate outcomes.

Three published studies considered the effects of performance funding on outcome indicators in individual states. Sanford and Hunter (2011) compared retention and graduation rates of Tennessee public four-year institutions over the 15 year period from 1995 to 2009 with peer institutions in other states and concluded that performance funding was not associated with increased retention or graduation rates. Hillman, Tandberg, and Gross (2014) examined performance funding in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PSSSHE) using data from the National Center for Education Statistics to compare Carnegie classified master's level institutions in the PASSHE with similar institutions in states without performances. They concluded performance funding did not improve degree completions in those PASSHE institutions. Hillman, Tandberg, and Fryar (2015) found the Washington Student Achievement Initiative (SAI), a performance funding initiative, had little effect on retention rates or production of associate degrees but Washington community colleges produced more short-term certificate graduates after implementation of performance funding.

Other studies considered the effects of performance funding across multiple states. A quantitative study that compared the IPEDS graduation rates of four-year public colleges and universities in all 50 states found graduation rates in states with performance budgeting or funding were not different from states without performance accountability polices (Shin & Milton, 2004; Shin, 2009). Even when controlling for institutional and state-wide characteristics known to influence graduation rates, the change in graduation rates was not significantly different between the two groups of states (Shin & Milton, 2004). In another quantitative study that examined IPEDS graduation rates across the states for cohorts from 1996-2003, Fryar (2011) found evidence that performance funding did not increase graduation rates. The study provided evidence that performance funding may actually have a negative effect on graduation rates (Fryar, 2011). Rutherford and Rabovsky (2014) analyzed graduation, persistence, and degree attainment data from IPEDS for all 50 states over the period from 1993 through 2010 and concluded that performance funding policies were not associated with improved student outcomes and may contribute to lower performance over time.

Tandberg, Hillman, and Barakat (2014) compared the production of associate degrees in states with performance funding to states without performance funding using a quasi-experimental process that controlled for other factors associated with degree completion, and found performance funding did not have a significant positive affect on associate degree completion. They also found performance funding in six states was associated with decreased degree production. In another study, Tandberg and Hillman (2014) examined the total number of public baccalaureate degrees completed for all states for the period 1990-2010 and concluded that performance funding had not increased

completion of degrees. Only those states with performance funding programs in place for seven or more years showed a significant positive relationship between performance funding and degree completions. Recent meta-analyses of the research literature on state performance funding of public higher education conclude that the available research does not support a conclusion that performance funding is successful in producing improvement in measures of the ultimate outcomes (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; Zumeta, 2011).

Intermediate Institutional Impacts

A number of studies describe intermediate institutional impacts of performance funding systems. Dougherty and Reddy (2013) define intermediate institutional impacts as those changes in the organization that are made in reaction to the implementation of performance funding systems. Dougherty, et al. (2014) reviewed available literature regarding the implementation of performance funding in public higher education across the states and concluded that the evidence indicated that colleges and universities made changes in policy and practices related to academics and student services. The Tennessee performance funding program was the incentive that led to implementation of a comprehensive assessment program at the University of Tennessee (Banta & Fisher, 1984; Banta & Moffett, 1987). In Tennessee, all eligible academic programs achieved program certification, and all institutions had active assessment programs by 2006 (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). The National Field Study, which examined fifteen community colleges in six states (Dougherty & Hong, 2006), found evidence that performance accountability affected those institutions through changes in funding, increased awareness of state priorities and the institution's performance related to those priorities,

and competition among institutions. Administrators from community colleges in the National Field Study reported the performance accountability system in their state led to changes at their institutions that were intended to improve performance on the desired outcomes. They reported increased attention to the performance of remedial educational students. Efforts to improve retention and graduation rates included deleting courses with low completion rates, establishing intermediate completion points in the progress toward a degree, and changes to remove barriers to graduation (Dougherty & Hong, 2006).

Studies vary in their findings about the effects of performance funding on university spending patterns. Rabovsky (2012) found that universities in states with performance funding spend a slightly higher percentage (0.89%) of funds on instruction than peer institutions in states without performance funding policies. Rabovsky (2012, 2013) found performance funding was negatively related to spending on research among four-year colleges and universities. In another study, no differences were found in the level of research funding between states with performance accountability policies and those states without performance accountability policies (Shin, 2009).

The intermediate institutional impacts observed in the studies reviewed by Dougherty & Reddy (2013) included changes in academic policies and practices, changes in developmental education, and changes in student service. They concluded that the available research provides evidence that performance funding has led to changes in the academic and student support practices of colleges and universities that are intended to improve performance on the outcome indicators, and has encouraged institutions to make greater use of data in planning.

Unintended Effects of Performance Funding

Scholars generally agree that performance funding can be beneficial but warn of the possible harmful effects. Bogue and Hall (2003) suggest that a well-designed performance funding program may provide incentives for performance improvement but "performance systems may also prove distracting and destructive to higher education purpose [sic] if ill-conceived in either design or process" (p. 211). St. John (2011) warns:

> The conventional approach to accountability could well be one of the causes of some of the current problems in the higher education system (for instance, inequalities in enrollment opportunities). If institutions are rewarded for high persistence, there is an incentive to admit students with high odds of persistence, denying access to low-income students who cannot pay the price or students who lack preparation (p.203).

Even advocates of performance funding caution that performance funding may contribute to undesirable consequences, including changes in institutional mission, limiting outreach and access and academic rigor (Harnisch, 2011; Kazis, 2012).

Evidence suggests that colleges and universities do change institutional practices in response to performance funding. However, these changes may result in undesirable consequences. In their review of research on the effectiveness of performance funding systems, Dougherty and Reddy (2013) describe a range of unintended effects including "the cost of compliance, narrowing of institutional missions, restriction of student admissions, and grade inflation and weakening of academic standards" (p. 71). For example, expensive information systems are required to provide the data stipulated by the performance funding program (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Community colleges in the

National Field Study reported concerns about the resources of time and money required to collect the data (Dougherty & Hong, 2006). Institutions may have to redirect funds from basic services to fund the necessary data management systems (Rabovsky, 2013).

Institutions may restrict their institutional mission to produce outcomes rewarded by the performance funding system and move away from missions that are not rewarded by the funding system. Transfer education, workforce training, and developmental education are all areas that may suffer from the narrowing of mission (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Some community colleges have limited admission to selected degree programs to increase graduation rates raising concerns that opportunities may be denied to students who are less prepared and need additional support for success (Dougherty & Hong, 2006). Texas administrators, commenting on a proposal for performance funding, anticipated making changes to admission policies that would disproportionately affect disadvantaged students (Fryar, 2011, Fryar, Rabovsky, & Moynihan, 2012). Lahr, et al. (2014) conducted qualitative interviews with over 200 personnel of community colleges and universities in Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana. In that study, restriction of admissions to community colleges and universities was the most commonly mentioned unintentional effect of performance funding.

Studies have also raised concerns about grade inflation and lessening of requirements to remove barriers to graduation (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). In the Lahr, et al. (2014) study, weakening of academic standards was the second most common unintended effect of performance funding identified by study participants. Community colleges in the National Field Study reported making changes in degree and graduation requirements to improve graduation rates. Faculty members at some institutions in the

study also reported feeling pressured to avoid assigning failing grades to students (Dougherty & Hong, 2006). Humphries (2012) argues that focusing on completion may contribute to a "quality shortfall" by rewarding changes that favor completion but lower the quality of student learning. She suggests the emphasis on completion may lead to shifting of resources away from comprehensive degrees and toward shorter term training programs.

McKinney and Hagedorn (2015) applied the criteria from the Texas performance based funding formula adopted in 2013 to performance data for students at one Texas community college from 2007 through 2013 to project the impact of the formula. They compared the results for a cohort of college ready students and a cohort of students placed into developmental math courses. They found significant variations in the performance success points produced by students based on the cohort, gender, and ethnicity. They concluded that some students are more likely to earn success points for the college and result in increased performance based funding and suggested colleges might be likely to recruit the students most likely to result in higher performance based funding.

Performance Funding in Oklahoma

Funding of public higher education in Oklahoma has followed a path similar to that in other states. From statehood in 1907 until 1941, public higher education institutions were funded through direct appropriation from the state legislature. In 1941, the Oklahoma State Constitution was amended to create the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE). The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education includes all higher education institutions

supported by state funds. The Oklahoma Constitution assigns OSRHE responsibility for coordination of all publically funded higher education institutions and grants the Regents authority to allocate funds to individual institutions from the lump-sum appropriation made to the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education by the state legislature (OSRHE, 2012a).

PF 1.0 in Oklahoma

Oklahoma's Brain Gain 2010 program is an example of performance funding 1.0. This program includes performance funding as one of the strategies for increasing the number of college graduates in Oklahoma. The Brain Gain 2010 program was implemented by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in 1999 to address Oklahoma's lower than the national average rate of college-going and low graduation rates. The initial goal for the program was to meet or exceed the national average for college graduates aged 25 years and older by 2010. The plan called for doubling Oklahoma's rate of degree attainment by adding 70,000 associate degrees and 94,000 baccalaureate degrees to the projected degree totals (OSRHE, 1999).

The performance funding component of the Brain Gain program provided for allocation of a maximum of 2% of the annual general fund appropriation for higher education as incentives and rewards for increased retention and graduation. The measures for Brain Gain performance specified by OSRHE policy included the number of degrees awarded, retention of first-time full-time students, graduation rates for first-time full-time students, and institution-specific measures related to the Brain Gain initiative (OSRHE, 1999).

In February 2010, OSRHE produced a brochure summarizing results for the Brain Gain strategies from the 2004-05 academic year to the 2008-09 academic year. That report describes slight changes in the retention and graduate rates of Oklahoma higher education institutions. Research universities, regional universities, and community colleges all had slightly lower retention rates than at the beginning of the program. The graduation rate for research universities increased from 60.7% to 67.8%. The graduation rate for community colleges fell from 21.4% to 17.5%. The brochure presents this data as charts and graphs and draws no conclusions about the success of the Brain Gain program (OHSRE, 2010).

PF 2.0 in Oklahoma

In 2012, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education adopted a new funding formula that incorporated performance funding into the base funding formula for public higher education colleges and universities. The revised funding formula was developed and recommended to the Chancellor of Higher Education by the Council of Presidents' Funding Formula Task Force (OSRHE, 2012c). The Council of Presidents is an advisory body to the Chancellor that is made up of Presidents of all colleges and universities in the state system (OSRHE, n.d.a). The Regents unanimously approved the revised funding formula as recommended by the Chancellor and the Presidents Council (OSRHE, 2012b). Oklahoma's participation in the Complete College America initiative and the leadership of Governor Fallin were important factors in the creation of the Funding Formula Task Force and the development of the performance funding formula. The performance funding formula is a key strategy for reaching Oklahoma's Complete

College America goal (Baumgartner, Helland, Hutchinson, & Zaback, 2012; OSRHE, n.d.b).

The Funding Formula Task Force recommended that performance factors be used as the incentive and performance component of the funding formula (OSRHE, 2012c). Nine performance elements are included in the funding formula:

- number of degrees and certificates awarded
- graduation rate of first-time full-time students
- progression rate of first-time full-time students
- first year retention of first-time full-time students
- first year retention of first-time full-time students receiving Pell grants
- number of students earning 24 hours of college-level credit within the first academic year
- the percentage of the Complete College America goal for degrees and certificates reached
- inclusion of a college completion plan in the academic plan submitted to OSRHE, and
- program accreditation (OSRHE, n.d.d).

For every numeric measure included in the formula, each campus competes only with that institution's performance in the previous year. Any improvement on a measure meets the criteria for that measure. For example, the definitions document states regarding degrees and certificates, "If a campus graduation rate improves even by a fraction they get the Measure" (OSRHE, n.d.d). The performance-based formula applies

to all new money for higher education and will be phased in over a three-year period (Baumgartner, Helland, Hutchinson, & Zaback, 2012).

I found only one reference to Oklahoma in the research literature considering the effects of performance funding. In a study that considered the effects of performance funding on associate degree production in states with performance funding systems, Tandberg, Hillman, and Barakat (2014) mentioned Oklahoma as one of three states that was operating a performance funding program without evidence of increased associated degree production resulting from the program. Oklahoma's implementations of performance funding are not addressed in any of the studies identified in the recent comprehensive literature reviews addressed above (Connor & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al., 2013; Zumeta, 2011). I have not discovered through multiple searches of academic databases and Google Scholar, any published research regarding the influences of Oklahoma's performance funding initiatives on public higher education institutions or the effectiveness of performance funding in achieving the desired outcomes. This study seeks to address that gap in the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Advocates claim that performance funding will induce colleges and universities to produce the desired outcomes specified in the performance measures. In support of its goal to increase the number of post-secondary graduates, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation argues that institutions should be held accountable for retention and graduation rates (Zumeta & Kinne, 2011). Burke states the belief in the value of performance funding simply, "Individuals and institutions are likely to perform better when they know their results become public and affect funding" (Burke & Minassians,

2002). Another report funded by the Lumina Foundation states, "the public purse strings often represent policymakers' most powerful levers for change" (Carey & Alderman, 2008, p. 23). These arguments advanced by proponents of performance funding reflect a simple linear cause and effect relationship: directing funding to an institution based on that institution's performance on designated criteria will lead to changes at the institution that produce improved performance on those criteria (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Harnisch, 2011).

Tandberg and colleagues apply the principal-agent theory in their research on performance funding programs in higher education. Using the principal-agent framework they explain that the state acts as the principal using rewards and sanctions to ensure agents meet the goals of the principal. The principal-agent framework argues that both the principal and the agent act from self-interest. Through performance funding of public higher education, states provide incentives to institutions to alter their practices to meet the state's desired performance outcomes. They argue the principal-agent framework can be used to consider why colleges do not meet performance goals by identifying competing pressures, capacity constraints and mistrust between the agent and principal that may interfere with accomplishment of the principal's defined goals (Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015; Hillman, Tandberg, & Gross, 2014; Lahr, et al., 2014; Tandberg & Hillman, 2014; Tandberg, Hillman, & Barakat, 2014).

In contrast to the simple cause-effect argument of advocates and the principal-agent theory framework discussed in the above paragraph, complexity theory suggests

that colleges and universities are complex systems that are intertwingled[1] with other complex systems. These systems interact in multiple nonlinear feedback loops. In these complex systems, even a small change may result in large and unpredictable changes to the system. Complexity theory potentially moves the discussion of the implications of performance funding beyond simple linear relationships that can only address a few factors or influences to consider the dynamic interactions of enmeshed networks of systems (Hillier, 2010).

Complex systems are open systems that constantly interact with their environments and in that interaction affect their own structure and the environment. The boundaries of a complex system are difficult to determine (Davis & Sumara, 2008). The processes within a complex system are enmeshed in other interacting complex systems. The processes and structures in each complex system influences processes and structures in other systems through recursive, nonlinear feedback loops (Sanger & Giddings, 2012).

Complex systems that are similar to each other will respond differently to the same condition and even the same complex system will respond differently when presented with circumstances that seem similar. A complex system is never in the same situation twice (Hillier, 2010). As a complex system adapts to the environment, it feeds back and influences that environment. In this dynamic interaction, consequences of policy directives are difficult to predict and may result in unintended consequences as members of the complex system respond to the those initiatives (Hillier, 2010).

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[1] The term "intertwingled" is attributed to Ted Nelson (1974) who used it to describe the relationship among components in complex computer systems.

Complexity theory offers a useful perspective for exploring higher education policy. Hillier (2010) argues that complexity theory "provides a different lens on higher education research, by anticipating change and seeking evidence on how organizations and individuals have adapted to the constant barrage of initiatives, policies, and requirements" (Hillier, 2010, p. 2). Colleges and universities function as a complex system of complex systems with interactions among many structures and processes, both internal and external to the university system. Faculty, academic divisions, staff, students, alumni, and their organizations are both complex systems themselves and agents within other complex systems that influence the university system. The university system and its subsystems interact with many other complex systems, including potential employers, professional organizations, families of students, the local community, and policy making bodies at the state and national levels. Borders of the college are indeterminate and difficult to distinguish. For example, an alumnus who is a potential employer of graduates can be viewed as simultaneously inside and outside the university.

Complexity theory provides a potential lens for viewing the qualities and conditions that are common in the reaction to performance funding by higher education institutions. It allows for consideration of the variety of higher education institutions and the diversity of participants in the higher education system. It provides a framework for exploration of the richness of responses to performance funding without the narrow constraints of the simple linear perspective. Performance funding has developed in the states with changing and varied economic, social, political, and cultural environments and is applied to higher education institutions with varying missions and unique environments. With its emphasis on the unpredictability of complex system responses to

influences, complexity theory is particularly well-suited to exploration of the unintended consequences of performance funding. It facilitates questions beyond the simple linear equation posited by advocates and extends the discussion to consider the interactions of performance funding with the complex web of structures and processes of higher education institutions. Complexity theory is accordingly be used as the theoretical framework for this dissertation.

Chapter Summary

This literature review provided an overview of the climate in which performance funding of public higher education developed and described the development of performance funding systems nationally and in Oklahoma. A survey of important research findings on the influences and effects of performance funding was presented. Finally, I proposed complexity theory as the theoretical framework for exploring responses to performance funding in Oklahoma. The following chapter presents the methodology for the proposed study to explore administrative and institutional responses to performance funding in Oklahoma.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As discussed in the literature review presented in Chapter II, previous research addresses the effects of performance funding on institutional performance and intermediate responses to performance funding by colleges and universities in several U.S. states. That research provides insight into the patterns of response within those institutions. This qualitative study explored responses to performance funding within two-year community colleges in Oklahoma. This chapter describes the methods for the study including the general perspective, the research context, research participants, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

General Perspective

Purpose & Research Questions

In April 2012, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) authorized a new funding formula that incorporated performance funding as a key element for allocating new funds to colleges and universities. The purpose of this study is to explore institutional and administrative responses to the newly implemented performance funding formula in Oklahoma public community colleges. This study seeks to answer the research questions:

1. In what ways are Oklahoma public community colleges responding to performance funding?
2. In what ways do mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges describe performance funding?
3. In what ways do mid-level administrators describe the responses to performance funding at their institutions?
4. What implications of performance funding for Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges?
    a) What implications of performance funding for administration practices in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    b) What implications of performance funding for the institutional missions of Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    c) What implications of performance for teaching and learning in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    d) What implications of performance funding on access to Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research methodology is well-suited for this study of performance funding in Oklahoma higher education. Qualitative research is useful for the exploration of issues that have not previously been researched (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The implementation of a performance funding formula for Oklahoma's public higher education institutions is recent and no research regarding the influences of performance funding or the reactions to performance funding in Oklahoma has been published to date.

In qualitative research, the researcher applies inductive logic to identify themes that emerge from the data rather than applying pre-existing categories or theory to the data (Patton, 2002). This emergent nature of qualitative research is particularly appropriate when studying a problem that has not been previously researched (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

This study is informed by complexity thinking which eschews simple linear explanations and embraces the exploration of the interrelations among complex systems. Complexity thinking maintains "Nothing is really isolated in the universe. Everything is interrelated" (Morin, 2008, p. 84). Complexity thinking asserts that emergence is a central feature of complex systems. New patterns or behaviors emerge as a complex system responds to influences in its environment (Hetherington, 2013; Mason, 2008). "Given a significant degree of complexity in a particular environment, or critical mass, new properties and behaviors emerge that are not contained in the essence of the constituent elements, nor can be predicted from a knowledge of initial conditions" (Mason, 2008, p. 36).

In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to build a holistic understanding of the problem being studied (Creswell, 2009). She seeks to understand the relationships among the themes that emerge from the data without applying pre-conceived notions (Patton, 2002). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to apply inductive processes to identify complexities in the problem being studied. Case study research is particularly useful for exploring emergence in a complex system. Each complex system is unique, and case study methods allow the researcher to examine the emergent behavior

within that unique complex system (Herrington, 2013). For this study, applying complexity theory facilitates the exploration of emergent responses to implementation of the performance funding formula within the complex system of each individual community college in the study and the complex system of public community colleges in Oklahoma.

Research Strategy

This project uses a case study research strategy. Case studies are useful for gathering information about a case of interest and using that information to develop a holistic understanding of the case (Patton, 2002). The case of interest may be an individual, a single system, multiple systems, a region, or a culture (Creswell, 2007; Patton 2002). A collective case study uses multiple cases to explore a single issue or problem (Creswell, 2007). For this study, the case is the collective of two-year institutions within the Oklahoma State Higher Education System. Patton (2002) suggests that a case study often includes additional "mini-case studies" that contribute to answers for the overall research questions. For this study, the mini-cases are the individual two-year institutions from which participants are identified.

Researcher Positionality

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). I have been a faculty member in a two-year public higher education institution in Oklahoma since 2000 but I am not currently employed at and have never been employed at any of the colleges selected for this study. I became aware of the implementation of performance funding in my role as a faculty member. Although not directly involved in the design of responses to performance funding, I have been present

in meetings of administrators when institutional responses to performance funding were discussed. My questions as a faculty member about the responses and potential responses to performance funding within my institution contributed to my interest in pursuing this research topic. As a doctoral student I began to explore the use of performance funding of higher education and found a lack of research literature addressing the effects of its implication in Oklahoma. This study emerged from the intersections of my professional interests as a faculty member in a two-year public institution and my scholarly interests as a doctoral candidate. The study provided the opportunity for me to move beyond my own perspective and work environment to the less familiar environments of institutions that were new to me and explore responses to performance funding through the perspectives of individuals in that college.

Research Context

This study was conducted in multiple two-year institutions of higher education within the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education (OSSHE). The OSSHE was created by an amendment to the Oklahoma State Constitution in 1941. The system includes the 25 publically supported colleges and universities in Oklahoma, with 12 community colleges and two two-year constituent agencies within one university system. These two-year institutions are located in the two major metropolitan areas and small cities in every quadrant of the state (OSRHE, 2012a.).

The same constitutional amendment established OSRHE as the coordinating board for all higher education institutions included in OSSHE. State funds for higher education are appropriated by the legislature to the OSSHE for allocation to individual institutions by OSRHE. Each institution also has a governing board to oversee the

management and operation of that institution. Ten community colleges have their own separate statutory governing boards. Two community colleges and the two constituent agencies are governed by the Board of Regents for the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges (OSRHE, 2012a.).

Research Participants

For this study, I identified three public community colleges as the mini-cases that contribute to the collective case study. These colleges are located in rural and urban settings in different regions of the state. A multiple-case study includes "mini-case studies" that contribute to answering the overall research question (Patton, 2002). By selecting colleges in different regions of the state in different types of communities, I have built a multiple-case study that explores the issue of performance funding across a range of community colleges. After identifying the colleges to be included in the study, I obtained permission to conduct research at each institution. Two of the institutions have Institutional Review Boards and I received authorization from those boards. The third institution had no formal process for approving the research request. In that case, I contacted the college president who provided authorization.

I interviewed three mid-level academic and student services administrators in each of the community colleges selected for the study for a total of 9 participants. I used a purposeful sampling technique to identify the interviewees for the study. A purposeful sampling technique involves identifying "information-rich cases" that allow the researcher to "learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the study" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Previous research indicates that awareness of performance funding rarely permeates the institution to the level of faculty (Burke, 2002; Dougherty &

Reddy, 2013). I chose to interview mid-level administrators because they can be reasonably expected to be aware of the performance funding formula. They are likely to be involved in implementation of responses to the policy but are frequently not involved in representing the "official" position of the institution. I consulted the online personnel directory of each college and sent email invitations to participate in the study to individuals who met the criteria of mid-level administrator. At each institution, I secured interviews with both academic administrators and student services administrators.

Data Collection

In case study research, the researcher gathers multiple sources of data to build the case description and to develop themes (Creswell, 2007). The use of multiple sources of data is a significant strength of case study research (Yin, 2014). For this study, I collected data through interviews and document analysis.

Interviews provide a method for "entering into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002. p. 141) and are "one of the most important sources of case study evidence" (Yin, 2014, p. 110). For this study, I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix A) to provide a framework of issues to be addressed in each interview, while allowing for flexibility in exploring issues that emerge in the interview. The interview protocol defines the topics within which the interviewer develops questions, a general sequence of questions, and provides guidance regarding areas to explore in depth (Patton, 2002). For this study, the interview protocol included open-ended questions constructed to invite participants to share their understanding of performance funding as implemented in Oklahoma and their experiences with the implementation of performance funding and

responses within their college. I used follow-up questions and probes to explore subjects that emerged during the interview that were not fully addressed in the interview guide.

All interviews were conducted in the interviewee's office and were recorded digitally. Interview duration ranged from forty minutes to just over an hour. I made a digital audio recording of all interviews and took field notes during and immediately following each interview. I transcribed the recorded interviews. After the transcription was complete, I invited interviewees to review the transcript to provide a member check for the data.

Public and private documents are an important source of information in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). They can provide access to information that cannot be directly observed and may be useful for "stimulating paths of inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 294). Yin suggests searching the Internet for publically available documents before beginning field work (Yin, 2014). For this study, I collected publically available documents from each of the colleges and the OSRHE. The public documents collected include selections from the college web site, the current college catalog, promotional materials, annual reports, and strategic plans.

Interviewing multiple participants at each institution and collecting documents from each institution facilitates triangulation of the data. Using multiple data sources obtained through multiple strategies allows the researcher to look for consistency in the findings (Patton, 2002). Triangulation is a strategy for establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Guba, 1981). Trustworthiness includes the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1985). The use of member checks of interview transcriptions also supports the

trustworthiness of the data. Following these processes facilitated the collection of trustworthy data for analysis.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) suggests qualitative data analysis involves three phases, "preparing and organizing the data…then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 148). In this study, I began by organizing the data using the framework of the individual institutional cases before beginning the coding process. I used both deductive and inductive coding processes to uncover themes in the data before developing the data representation.

Data Preparation

As the data for the study was collected, I built a case study database for each community college mini-case. The case study database is a "separate and orderly collection of all the data from a case study" (Yin, 2014, p. 123). It included field notes, documents, and interview transcriptions. I transcribed each recorded interview and printed the transcript. I identified each of the collected documents by institution, source, and method of collection, (i.e., whether they were offered by an interviewee or obtained from a public source). Digital copies of each of the collected documents were also made. These materials, including the interview transcripts and documents, were organized by institution to allow for preparation of the mini-case for that institution.

Coding

After the initial organization of the data into databases for each of the mini-cases, I began coding the data. The coding process used deductive and inductive processes.

Saldana (2013) describes the first phase of coding as "first cycle coding." In first cycle coding, the researcher examines the data and assigns initial codes to segments of data. I began coding with a deductive process using the categories of influences and effects of performance funding that are identified in the research literature as a provisional descriptive code set. Provisional codes may be based on the literature review, the researcher's previous experience, or the research questions (Saldana, 2013). Descriptive codes identify the basic topic of a segment of data (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). The research literature categorizes the influences of performance funding on higher education in relationship to outcome indicators and intermediate influences within the institution. I began my analysis of the data using descriptive coding with interview and document data to identify references to these outcome indicators and intermediate influences. Limiting data analysis to pre-existing codes derived from the literature can restrict the analysis (Patton, 2002). Using an inductive process allows discovery of "patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175.) I used an open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to uncover themes beyond the a-priori codes developed from the literature review.

The second cycle builds on first cycle coding to develop themes and constructs (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In the second cycle of coding, I used an inductive method to explore the data to uncover additional patterns and themes. I used pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) to organize materials from the first-cycle coding into themes. In reading and re-reading the interview transcripts and collected documents, I used an open-ended narrative analysis approach (Saldana, 2013) as an essential part of making meaning from the data. Using both inductive and deductive

analytic processes allows comparisons with previous research and facilitates the emergence of new findings.

Representing the Data

The next phase in the analysis process was to develop a case description for each of the mini-cases and the collective case. When developing a case study, the researcher constructs "a detailed description of the case and its setting" (Creswell, 2008, p. 163). The case description can be a useful strategy for analysis in a case study (Yin, 2014). For a multiple-case study, the analysis begins with the individual case and proceeds to cross-case analysis and generalizations across the individual cases (Creswell, 2007). In this study I used the data collected and the themes developed through the coding process to build individual case descriptions for each institution and develop a cross-case analysis for the collective case.

Although described as separate linear phases above, these analytic processes are not a simple progression from database to data representation. The processes are iterative and emergent. I moved back and forth between the analytic phases, with each influencing the other as the analysis proceeded.

Chapter Summary

This chapter describes the qualitative case study methodology I used to explore responses to the performance funding formula implemented by the OSRHE in 2012. The study was conducted as a multiple-case study including three separate public community colleges in Oklahoma. Data was collected through interviews and documents and analyzed using deductive and inductive techniques. I deductively examined the data in relationship to themes identified in the previous research and inductively looked for new

themes to emerge from the data. The data collection and analysis procedures allowed me to develop case descriptions for each individual college. I then organized and explored the data in cross-case analysis that applies the frameworks of the research questions for this study and previous research findings. The data collection and analysis was informed by complexity thinking which encourages the researcher to look beyond simple explanation to explore complex interrelationships among systems and agents. Chapter VI describes the research sites, participants, and documents included in this study. Findings based in the data collected and analyzed through the processes described in this chapter are presented in chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

Chapter III described the qualitative case study method used in this study. As indicated in Chapter III, I selected three Oklahoma community colleges for the study. I collected documents from each college and interviewed three mid-level administrators at each site. This chapter provides a description of each of the research sites, the documents and artifacts associated with that college that I collected for analysis, and a description of the participants at each site as the basis for findings and discussion to be presented in chapters V and VI respectively. To protect the confidentiality of the research sites and the individual participants, all names have been changed and unique identifying details masked.

Mayfield Community College

Mayfield Community College (MCC) was established in the early 20th century as an agriculture school and became a two-year college in the 1920s. The college serves a mostly rural seven county area with a higher than the state average poverty rate according to the background information provided in the MCC accreditation self-study report to the Higher Learning Commission. After experiencing declining enrollment in 2011 and 2012, enrollment increased slightly in the Fall 2013 semester (OSHRE, 2013).

Table 4.1 provides information from the Mayfield Community College profile available on the U.S. Department of Education College Navigator website.

Table 4.1 Mayfield Community College Profile

Mayfield Community College Profile	
Setting	Rural, Remote
Total Enrollment, Fall 2013	2,397
Full-time	61%
Part-time	39%
Student Age, Fall 2013	
24 and under	62%
25 and over	38%
First-time Full-Time students, Fall 2013	51%
Students receiving Pell Grant, Fall 2013	56%
Retention Rate for first-time time students	
Full-time	44%
Part-time	37%
Overall Graduation Rate **	12%
Total Degrees & Certificates granted in 2012-2013 Academic Year	347
Certificates (less than 2 years)	5
Associate	342

* First time students in Fall, 2012 who returned in Fall, 2013
** First-time full-time degree or certificate seeking students who entered in Fall, 2010 & graduated within 150% of the normal time to completion
All data from National Center for Educational Statistics College Navigator for the college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015)

The original campus is located near the edge of a small town with additional campuses located in the nearby city. The main administrative offices for the college are located on the original campus. I conducted my interviews in two visits to this campus. The college expanded to provide classes in the nearby city in the 1970s and currently has two branch campuses. Participants described the original campus as a traditional campus and the branch campuses as "car-class-car" commuter campuses.

MCC is an open admissions institution. The college website states "admission to Mayfield is open to high school graduates or any person whose high school class has graduated." According to the college catalog, applicants who are under 21 years of age are required to submit ACT scores. Those who do not meet the minimum required ACT sub-score of 19 in English, reading, mathematics, and science are required to complete entry-level assessment. Adult applicants who do not have ACT scores are required to complete entry-level assessment. Entering students are placed in developmental courses based on those scores.

I arrived for my first visit to the campus on a sunny Friday morning in September. The original campus seemed very much like a traditional college campus with multiple classroom and office buildings, a student center, student residential facilities, and athletic facilities. Sidewalks linked buildings across the campus and lawns. Benches were available near the sidewalks and landscaped garden areas. A large construction project was in progress when I visited this campus. Participants described the construction as a major renovation of the student center and just one of a series of recent construction projects on the campus. One participant, Ms. Summers, described the college as in a "building stage…I don't think there's a campus anywhere that's not building something."

When I arrived on campus for my initial visit the campus seemed quiet with only a few people moving around. Later, as I sat on a bench between scheduled interviews, I observed as students left classroom buildings in small groups and moved across campus toward other classroom buildings or the residence hall. After a period of activity that seemed to be the interval between classes, the campus seemed quiet again. When I walked to my car after the final interview of the day, the only activity I saw was what

appeared to be the baseball team practicing on the athletic field adjacent to the parking lot.

Study Participants

As described in Chapter III, I contacted potential study participants at MCC by email to arrange interviews. I met with each in his or her office on the main MCC campus. Brief descriptions of each are subsequently presented.

Camellia Cooper. Ms. Cooper is a senior academic administrator at MCC and the chair of an academic division. She is a life-long resident of the area and graduated from MCC as a young woman. Before starting full-time work at MCC as the chair of an academic division, she served as an adjunct instructor at MCC for six years and a public school teacher for more than 30 years. She has a Master's degree in an academic field related to the division she chairs. She told me that she wanted to be a teacher since she was six years old. In her closing comments for the interview, she emphasized "I love my job…I could just brag on MCC all the time."

I arrived a few minutes early for the interview but she invited me in and closed the door to minimize interruptions. Several minutes into the interview we were interrupted briefly by someone who came into the office and informed her that a student was waiting. She responded that the student would need to wait until our interview was completed and the interview continued.

The office was nicely furnished with carpeting and upholstered visitor's chairs. The office included a window on one wall that looked out into the neighboring tutoring center which she supervises. The blinds on this window were closed when I arrived and remained closed throughout our interview. For the interview, she sat behind the desk and

I sat in a visitor's chair across the desk from her. Other people were visible in other offices located off the hallways of the building, but there was little traffic in the hallways as I arrived for the interview and when I left the building following the interview.

Sarah Summers. Ms. Summers is the chair of an academic division at MCC and coordinator of an academic program within that division. She described herself as a "thirty-year teaching veteran" and has been a faculty member at MCC for 13 years. Before coming to MCC she taught in public high schools for 17 years. She holds a Master's degree in the academic discipline of the division she chairs.

She spoke about the college and her division with apparent affection and pride. She described her husband as a former student at MCC saying "he's got lots of tales" about his time living in the dormitory. She recounted her division's long history in the community describing the accomplishments of various teams affiliated with the division and the achievements of graduates.

I met her for our interview in her office on a Friday afternoon. Her office was in a suite of offices in a classroom building. The hallways were quiet and she was the only person in the office area when I arrived for our scheduled interview in the early afternoon. Her office was cluttered with books and papers spread on her desk and a small table in front of the desk. There were windows along one wall of the office with closed venetian blinds and a window air conditioner in one window. During the interview she remarked that her building was one of the buildings on campus that had not been remodeled. When I sat in a visitor's chair in front of her desk, she invited me to move to a chair beside the desk and pulled her chair toward me. Although her office door remained open throughout the interview we were undisturbed. Our conversation was

wide ranging and as we concluded the interview she commented that it was nice to have an opportunity to "rant on Friday afternoon."

Joe Johnson. Mr. Johnson is the director of a federally-funded grant program that provides direct services to students. He started at MCC in his current position four years ago; prior to that he was an athletic coach at the high school and college levels. He made frequent comparisons between his work coaching students for athletic success and his work supporting student academic success in his current position. He described himself as having a background in business with a Master's degree in management and an undergraduate degree in business and experience as a financial planner.

Mr. Johnson was the only person in the office area when I arrived for the interview on a Friday afternoon. His office was connected to an outer office but the desk there was unoccupied. As I walked through the hallway I could see people working in other offices on the hallway. I was greeted by one person in the hallway who asked if I needed help to find something. She directed me to the interviewee's office. He stepped into the hallway just as I approached the office door and invited me in to the office.

He invited me to sit at a small conference table with four chairs and moved several stacks of paper on the table aside. He sat at the table across from me for the interview. We were interrupted briefly by a young woman who appeared to be a student who was looking for another individual. The telephone rang several times and alert chimes from the computer sounded several times during the interview; however, he did not interrupt the interview to respond to any of those alerts. Overall, Mr. Johnson seemed eager to tell his story and said he felt "honored to be asked to participate."

College Website and Documents

I accessed the MCC web site on several occasions in early January 2015. I explored the site by following links that appeared relevant to the criteria of this study including the homepage, other pages, and archived pages as PDF documents for review. Documents and web pages that included elements I judged as making any specific reference to performance funding or providing content relevant to the criteria of college history and mission, the community served, student admissions, retention of students, or student graduation were selected for archiving and further consideration.

MCC Home Page. The MCC home page is the initial web page displayed when the MCC web site is accessed. When I visited the web site the home page displayed a rotating series of photographs and graphics with headlines in the center area of the page. Each photograph appeared to show activities at MCC and clicking on the photograph led to a more detailed news story about the event. One of the graphics in the rotating display portrayed a young white man apparently of traditional college student age holding a calculus book with the headline "Enroll Today For Spring 2015." When I clicked on this display a larger version of the graphic was displayed. Another graphic had the headline "December Calendar of Events" with a bold "ENROLL NOW FOR SPRING 2015" across the upper corner of the display. Clicking on that graphic displayed an image of a calendar page labeled December 2014. A current calendar was displayed in a box on the right side of the screen with highlighted dates. When I hovered the mouse pointer over a highlighted date a box with details of the event was displayed. I viewed all of the highlighted dates for January and all of the associated entries referred to athletic events. Icons linking to the campus newspaper, the campus magazine, and scholarship

information were below the calendar in that same box. A graphic across the bottom of this box was headlined "Future Students" and was linked to a page of admissions information.

The home page was framed with the college logo in the upper left with a menu of links to other pages in the website displayed across the top of the page. A row of icons that link to campus resources for students was displayed across the page just below the menu of links. The addresses, telephone numbers, and hours for each of the campus locations were displayed across the bottom of the page with a button link to a "Virtual Tour" of each. These page elements were repeated on most, but not all, of the pages I accessed on the site.

Getting Started with Mayfield Community College. I accessed this page by clicking on the "Future Students" link on the MCC home page. A white content box that occupied about two-thirds of the width of the page included a list of questions labeled "frequently asked questions." Clicking on each question opened a new page with a response to that question. I archived the initial "Getting Started" page and the subsequent pages for each link because the materials they contain relate to admissions. A column along the left side of the page provided a menu of links for information related to admissions with photographs and contact information for the admissions staff. This column remained consistent on each of the pages accessed from the links in the content box.

General Admissions Requirements. I opened the "General Admissions Requirements" page from the menu on the "Getting Started" page. It provided several paragraphs of text describing the application requirements for first-time college students,

returning students, transfer students, and concurrent students. It also included information about enrollment for non-degree seeking students and international students. Because this page details admissions requirements and procedures I archived it for further review.

Admissions, Advisement & Registrar Home. I accessed this page from the "Admissions, Advisement, & Registrar" link on the menu of links at the top of the campus home page. A white content box that takes about two-thirds of the width of the page includes text describing the admissions policy of the college. It includes a link to email the admissions office, their office hours, and other contact information for the office. A box on the right one-third of the screen includes links to transcript request procedures and forms and repeats the hours of operation and contact information. A menu bar across the top of the content area includes links to further information related to admissions, advisement, and the registrar. I archived this page as a PDF document for further analysis because it held content consistent with the selection criteria of student admissions.

Admissions, Advisement & Registrar General Information. I accessed this page from a link on the "Admissions, Advisement & Registrar Home." Like the admissions home page it has a content box that occupies about two-thirds of the width of the page and repeats the box with links to transcript request procedures and hours of operation and contact information. The content area details requirements for residency, entry-level assessment, and curricular requirements for admissions. It also includes a lengthy section entitled "Academic Policies and Procedures." Because this page contains information about admissions, I archived it to PDF for analysis.

Admissions, Advisement & Registrar Academic Information. Clicking the "Academic Information" link on the "Admissions, Advisement & Registrar Home" page opened the "Admissions, Advisement, & Registrar Academic Information" page. It is a long page with multiple paragraphs of text describing general requirements for AA and AAS degrees, a "performance guarantee" for AAS graduates, cooperative agreements with vocational-technical schools, and the articulation agreement with senior colleges in the state. This page also details a "Two-Year Graduation Plan" that assures participating students who meet the requirements of the plan will be able to graduate within two years of entering the college as a freshman. This page contains content relevant to graduation so I saved it as a PDF document for analysis.

Admissions, Advisement, & Registrar FAQ. I accessed this page from the FAQ link on the "Admissions, Advisement & Registrar Home" page. It presents several paragraphs of text in a question and answer format. Because the questions and responses address admissions, enrollment, and graduation, I archived this page to PDF for analysis.

Message from the President. I accessed the "Message from the President" page using the "Message from the President" link in the menu of administration links on the college home page. The page includes a portrait photograph of the president and three paragraphs of text describing the mission of the college and welcoming the reader to Mayfield Community College. I archived this page for analysis because of the references to the mission of the institution.

Student Organizations. I accessed the "Student Organizations" page using a link in the menu of links on the college home page. This page presents several paragraphs of text encouraging students to become involved in student organizations at

MCC. The page also provides links to a directory of campus organizations, student organization policies, and related forms. Because the page specifically states that students who are involved in campus organizations are more likely to graduate, I archived it to PDF for inclusion in the analysis phase of the study.

History. I opened the "History" page from a link on the college home page. This page lists years with significant events related to the college from its founding in the early 20th century to the present. I archived this page to PDF because of the historical accounts it contains.

Strategic Plan. I accessed the "Strategic Plan" page from a link on the college home page. The page includes two content boxes that are the full-width of the page. The first is labeled "Strategic Plan" and includes headings of "Mission," "Vision," and "Values." The second is labeled "Strategic Planning Process Goals" and includes the headings "Student Learning," "Graduate Production," "Faculty/Staff Development," "Resource Development," "Facilities Improvement," "Community Engagement/Economic Development," and "Efficiency and Modernization" with a goal statement corresponding to each heading. Because this page addresses the mission and vision of the college, I saved it as a PDF document for further review.

2014-15 Faculty-Staff Handbook. I downloaded the Faculty-Staff Handbook as a PDF document from the "Employee Resources" page of the college website. The Faculty-Staff Handbook includes an organizational information section that addresses the college history and mission. Because of the history and mission content of the handbook I collected it for analysis.

Self-Study Report. I used the search feature on the MCC website to locate the most recent comprehensive accreditation self-study report available on the college website. The Self-Study report is available as a 221 page PDF document which I downloaded for analysis. The introduction presents an overview of the college history, a description of the community served, and a summary of student characteristics. The bulk of the document addresses compliance of the institution with accreditation requirements. This document includes content related to the selection criteria of history, mission, and community so I archived it for analysis.

MCC 2015 Course Schedule. The "MCC 2015 Course Schedule" is provided on the MCC website as a PDF document. I clicked on a link labeled "Catalog" and the course schedule document was displayed. This document provides a general information section that addresses enrollment, tuition and fees, and academic policies and procedures and a detailed listing of courses available in the Spring 2015 semester. Because this document discusses enrollment policy and graduation requirements I archived it for further analysis.

2012-2013 College Catalog. Using the search feature of the college website, I searched for "college catalog" and found a list of links to past catalogs. The 2012-2013 MCC College Catalog was the most recent catalog available on the list of links. It includes detailed information about admissions requirements, tuition and fees, financial aid, student services and activities, academic regulations, course descriptions, and general graduation requirements in addition to the detailed requirements for specific degrees and certificates. I retrieved the catalog as a PDF document and archived it for analysis.

Prospective Student Information Packet. I completed the information request form on the MCC website and with two weeks I received in the mail a packet of information for prospective students from the admissions office at MCC. The packet included an 8 ½ by 11 inch multi-page booklet entitled "Admissions Packet," two full-color single-sheet publications, a brochure from the Federal Student Aid office of the United States Department of Education, several individual pages and stapled pages of printed material, and the admissions director's business card. Each of these MCC documents is described below and was scanned to a PDF document for analysis.

Admissions Packet. The Admissions Packet is a multi-page booklet with a glossy full-color front and back cover. The front cover is printed with the college colors as background, the college name and logo, and a large title, "Admissions Packet" printed vertically along the right side of the page. The upper left has a white box labeled "Name" with a smaller box below it labeled "Student ID." The inside front cover is printed with a full-color advertisement for the agriculture division with multiple photographs of individuals who appear to be students portrayed with livestock and crops. One photograph shows a group of individuals standing behind a display of plaques and trophies surrounding a banner with the college name. A map of the main campus is printed on the back cover and maps of the branch campuses are printed on the inside back cover. The majority of the inside pages of the booklet are instructions for applying for admission and forms to be completed by the applicant. These pages are perforated for removal. The booklet also contains several pages of text titled "Drug & Alcohol Prevention Program for Students and Employees" that provide the campus policy regarding illicit drugs and alcohol with a brief description of health risks, local resources

for assistance, and sanctions for violating the law or campus policy regarding drugs and alcohol.

Be the One Brochure. This brochure is an 8 ½ x 14 inch single-sheet printed in full color on both sides and folded once at the vertical center. The page is printed with a background design with the school colors in diagonal strips of varying intensity with white text. The slogan "Be the One" is printed across the top of the page with the college name and motto printed in white text on a dark horizontal stripe across the page. In the foreground, on the far right of this area, there is a silhouette of a person who appears to be wearing an academic gown and a mortar board holding a rolled paper in one hand with both arms extended up in apparent celebration. A row of small photographs across the page appear to show traditional-aged students engaged in sports and campus extracurricular activities. This side of the publication has two areas of text. The academic divisions and degree programs are listed in a section headed "Academics." A section headed "Campus Life" lists the available competitive sports and extracurricular activities available to students.

The reverse side of the document includes a similar row of small photographs that appears to portray students and student activities. There is also a cluster of photographs in the bottom right corner of the page. This group of photographs is dominated by a picture of the campus housing with the swimming pool in the foreground. These images appear to depict students engaged in recreational activities on campus. There are four areas of text on this page. A table of in-state and out-of-state tuition, fees, room and board, and other costs is at the top of the page under the heading "Tuition." Information about applying for financial aid and scholarships awarded by the college is provided in a

section headed “Financial Aid and Scholarships.” Text under a section heading “Housing” describes the campus residential facilities. The final section of text is headed “Campus” and provides the address and telephone numbers for each of the MCC campuses. Across the bottom of the page in larger text is “MCC.EDU/STARTHERE.”

MCC Checklist: Admissions and Enrollment. This document consists of one 8 ½ x 11 inch page printed on one side. It has five areas of text with bullet pointed information. Each area is headed with a question that a prospective student might pose, with answers in the bullet points that follow the question. Along the right edge of the page there is a photo of an apparently white traditional college-age woman who appears to be walking down stairs. The college colors are in a background graphic behind the photograph. The addresses and telephone numbers for each of the campuses are listed at the bottom of the page with the tag line “MCC.EDU/STARTHERE” below them.

Degree Sheets. A one-page checklist of requirements for the Associate of Arts – General Studies degree was included in the packet of materials. It listed the proficiency requirements, general education requirements, and the major requirements for the AAS degree with spaces provided to record information. A similar checklist for the Associate of Applied Science – Applied Technology was also included. In addition, the packet included a group of single-sided pages stapled together and labeled MCC Nursing Program Advisement Material. It included information about application and admission to the program, suggestions for success in the program, a list of required courses, and a checklist of program selection criteria with the point value for each.

Glendale Community College

Glendale Community College (GCC) is a large community college serving a major metropolitan area. The college has a five county service area that encompasses the metropolitan area and surrounding communities. They also accept in-state students from outside the five-county service area, out-of-state, and international students. GCC experienced declining enrollments, with a 5% loss in enrollment, between the Fall 2011 semester and the Fall 2012 semester and a 5 % loss again between the Fall 2012 semester and the Fall 2013 semester (OSRHE, 2013). Table 4.2 includes the college profile as provided by the U.S. Department of Education College Navigator website.

Table 4.2 Glendale Community College Profile

Glendale Community College Profile	
Setting	City: Large
Total Enrollment, Fall 2013	13,491
Full-time	34%
Part-time	66%
Student Age, Fall 2013	
24 and under	60%
25 and over	40%
First-time Full-Time students, Fall 2013 (as percentage of all entering students)	28%
Students receiving Pell Grant, Fall 2013	%
Retention Rate for 1st time students	
Full-time	44%
Part-time	33%
Overall Graduation Rate **	13%
Total Degrees & Certificates granted in 2012-2013 Academic Year	
Certificates (less than 2 years)	419
Associate	1,425
* First time students in Fall 2012 who returned in Fall 2013	
** First-time full-time degree or certificate seeking students who entered in Fall 2010 & graduated within 150% of the normal time to completion	
All data from National Center for Educational Statistics College Navigator for the college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015)	

GCC is an open admissions institution. The college web site describes admission procedures for recent high school graduates, GED recipients, adult students, transfer students and graduates from unaccredited high schools or home school. One study participant described the admissions policy as "We don't thin the herd. We don't talk about who has college potential." Study participants described the students as mostly traditional age college students who come directly from high school and reflect the ethnic diversity of the area.

I visited the GCC campus on three separate occasions to interview participants. On each occasion I walked around exploring the campus. The campus has a central building that is the original campus structure. As the college grew additional buildings were constructed. Many buildings are connected to the central building by enclosed walkways and corridors. Parking lots surround the expanded building. On the days I visited the campus the parking lot appeared to be more than half unoccupied.

Study Participants

I contacted mid-level administrators at GCC by email and arranged interviews with three administrators. Short descriptions of each participant and our interviews are subsequently presented.

Anne Robinson. Ms. Robinson became the dean of a relatively new academic division at GCC when it was created about a year ago when the previous division was split into two divisions. Prior to this position she served as a faculty member and a department director and interim dean at GCC. She also served as an adjunct faculty member for a private university in the area.

She described the division as including nine program areas with primarily A.A. transfer degrees and a smaller number of A.A.S degrees. She described her responsibilities as to "make sure all of the classes are covered," handling budgets, and responding to student issues as they occur. She indicated that she is responsible for working with 15 full-time faculty and approximately 150 adjunct faculty in the division.

I met the interviewee in her office in the late afternoon of Halloween day. There were several individuals working at desks in the outer office wearing what appeared to be Halloween costumes. A division staff member, whom I met earlier in the building hallway, escorted me into Ms. Robinson's office and introduced me to her. The telephone rang several times and alert tones sounded on the computer, but our interview was not interrupted.

George Simon. Mr. Simon is the director of a department within student services at GCC. He has been employed at the college for ten years and has served in his current position for six years. His responsibilities involve recruitment and admissions for the college. He describes his department as the "front door and the welcome mat" for the college. He also serves as a member of the Enrollment Management team. Prior to coming to the current institution he worked in community relations at a regional university. He is currently working toward a doctorate in higher education leadership.

Mr. Simon's office is in the central campus building near a main entrance to the building. We met for the interview on a late Friday afternoon. I asked to see him at a counter in a public area where several staff seemed to be assisting students. There appeared to be an area of offices and work cubicles in an area adjacent to the waiting area. After asking for him I took a seat in the waiting area. A staff person, who left the

counter, came to inform me that he was finishing a conference call and would be available soon. I waited for several minutes in an area with a counter where staff appeared to be assisting students. Racks in the area held informational brochures about the college. After a few minutes he came out to invite me back to his office. His office was a private office adjacent to the area of cubicles where several people appeared to be working.

Melissa Bradley. Dr. Bradley is the Dean of an academic division at GCC. Her division includes several academic departments which both provide Associate of Arts degree opportunities for students and general education courses. One Associate of Applied Arts degree is available in the division. She has been dean of the division for eight years and previously was a faculty member in the division for five years. She holds a doctorate in her discipline and practiced as a professional manager in the field prior to taking her faculty position. She described her position as dean as being very similar to her prior experience as a manager:

> Some of that experience that I had – I was the director of [a non-profit service organization] and also a little bit of other experience directing a grant funded program for [a state agency] are my professional background that led me to this. And all of them are very related.

She serves on the enrollment management committee for the college and provided me a working draft of recommendations they are considering. That document is described in the artifacts section of this chapter.

I met Dr. Bradley in her office on a late Friday afternoon during the college's finals week. Her office is in a building separate from the central campus building. The

hallways were quiet. I saw only a few individuals who appeared to be housekeeping or maintenance staff. I arrived early for the appointment and entered the division office where there was a woman working at a desk behind a counter. When I asked to see Dr. Bradley she left her desk and went into an office. She returned and directed me into Dr. Bradley's office. Dr. Bradley apologized for not offering to shake my hand saying that she had a cold. We were not interrupted during the interview.

College Website & Documents

I browsed the GCC website on multiple occasions over several days in early January 2015. Following the same selection criteria used when collecting documents from other institutions in the study I collected pages that address mission, history, student admissions, enrollment, retention, and graduation. GCC has a large and complex website and I did not attempt to make an exhaustive collection of those pages but archived pages that appeared to be typical examples in content and presentation. As I browsed the GCC website I found PDF versions of printed documents with content related to the artifact collection criteria for this study. The documents section below describes each of the web pages and the PDF documents I collected and identifies the criteria used to select each of those documents for inclusion in the analysis phase of the study.

Home Page. The college logo is displayed in the upper left of the page with a menu to campus resources and a search box along the top edge of the page. Below the logo there is a navigation menu for the site. These elements are repeated on pages throughout the website. Just below the navigation menu there is an area labeled "Information for:" with links for "Future Students," "Current Students," "Faculty and Staff," and "Community & Alumni." A rotating banner to the right of that menu displays

a series of eight graphics that depict campus events and services. Each graphic displayed in the banner links to a different page with more detail about the specific event or service. One banner prompts students to apply now for graduation and links to an application for graduation that the student can complete online. Another asks "Where Are You Headed After GCC?" and links to a page with information about transfer events and tours. The remainder of the page has links to upcoming events on campus, campus news, and a list of programs with each linked to a page for that academic program. I used the links in the navigation menu and in the banner area to navigate the site.

Future GCC Students. I accessed this page through the "Future Students" link on the home page. The page design is similar to the home page with a banner near the top of the page with rotating graphics and headlines. The first in the series has the headline "It's about You" with a photograph of an apparently traditionally-aged male college student and a female student who appear to be talking while sitting at a table with open books. The second graphic has the headline "It's About Your Needs" and shows a young woman sitting across a desk from another young woman with a computer screen visible in the photograph. The final graphic in the series is headlined "It's About Finishing" and shows a group of individuals who are wearing academic gowns and mortar boards who appear to be diverse in ethnicity and age. The center portion of the page begins with an embedded video "The 2018 Grand Plan" featuring the college president. There are several areas of bulleted text with the major headings "Glendale Community College Welcomes You," "Reasons Why We Want You to Consider GCC," and "Why Wait? Apply Now." A menu on the left side of the page includes links to information about academic programs, the admissions process and requirements,

financial aid, the current catalog, course schedule, and contact information for the admissions office. I archived this page for analysis because of the references to graduation and the college's "Grand Plan" that it includes.

Glendale Community College Recruitment and Admissions. Clicking the "Recruitment and Admissions" link on the "Future Students" page opened the "Glendale Community College Recruitment and Admissions Page." The rightmost two-thirds of the page displays several sections of bulleted text that describe the admissions process and provide links to further information about admissions and the admissions application. A menu on the left-side of the page presents links to additional information related to admissions and recruitment. Due to the admissions information provided, I archived this page for review.

Admissions Requirements. I accessed the "Admissions Requirements" page by clicking the "Requirements" link in the menu of links on the "GCC Recruitment and Admissions" page. This page presents text describing the requirements for recent high school graduates, adult students, transfer students, and students from home schools and unaccredited schools. Links are provided for concurrent students, English as a second language student, and health program applicants. I archived this page because it presents admissions information.

About Us. Clicking on the "About GCC" link on the top navigation window opened the "About Us" page. The content panel on this page provides several short paragraphs and bulleted text with short facts about GCC and GCC students. A menu on the left of the page provides links to additional information about the college including

the history, mission and vision, and a President's welcome. I archived this page for inclusion in further analysis and followed links to retrieve additional pages.

GCC: Through the Years. I accessed the "GCC: Through the Years" page by clicking on the "College History" on the "About Us" page. The content panel on this page offers a photographic display of the college history with a series of photographs displayed down the page accompanied by short paragraphs of text describing the history of the college from the initial interest in establishing the school through its current status. The series begins with a black and white photograph of the vacant land with a sign, followed by a photograph of construction in progress, and a photograph of the original building on the campus. The final photograph is a color photograph of the sign at the entrance to the current campus. Because this page includes historical background on the college I archived it to PDF for further consideration.

Mission/Vision. I accessed the "Mission/Vision" page from the "Mission and Vision" link on the "About Us" page. The page includes the one-sentence mission statement followed by a two-sentence statement of vision and value. Because this page contained information about the mission of the college I archived it for further analysis.

President's Welcome Message. I opened the "President's Welcome Message" page from a link on the "About Us" page. The page displays a photographic portrait of the GCC president standing with a slightly out of focus American flag on a stand behind him. The welcome includes several paragraphs of text with headings that address the college aspirations, goals, mission, and values and closes with the signature of the college president.

2018 Grand Plan. I accessed the "Grand Plan 2018" video from an embedded video link on the "Future Students" page. I also observed the embedded video link on the "Community and Alumni" page, the "Current Students" page, and the "Faculty & Staff" page. This video features the college president presenting an overview of the college's strategic plan. Using the closed captions attached to the video, I extracted a transcript for the video to include in the analysis phase of this study.

Planning and Research. Clicking the link "Planning and Research" on the "About Us" submenu of the top navigation menu led me to the "Planning and Research" menu. This page is similar in format to other pages on the website with the common menus across the top of the page and a section menu of links in a column occupying the left quarter of the page. On the right side of the page there is a column occupying about a quarter of the width of the page that has one bold link entitled "More Frequently Requested Statistics." The content area in the center of the page is headed by a graphic presenting a line chart of the annual student headcount from 1992 through 2012. Bulleted paragraphs of text below the graphic describe the functions of the Planning and Research department that meet the department's responsibility for "collecting, analyzing, and disseminating knowledge which helps academic managers and college faculty make data-driven decisions which continually move the institution forward towards achieving its mission." Because of the specific references to the college mission I archived this page to PDF for further review.

Glendale Community College Catalog. I downloaded the 2013-2014 GCC Catalog from a link provided in the Recruitment and Admissions section of the GCC website. The catalog is a large PDF document with almost 300 pages of material. As

downloaded from the website, the document appears to begin with the inside front page of the printed catalog. It shows a small picture of the campus in the upper right corner, a photograph of the president and a welcome from him in a boxed column at the left side of the page with an area of small print headed "IMPORTANT INFORMATION" across the bottom of the page. A three-page table of contents provides an overview of the contents of the document. Because it includes information about the college history and mission as well as admissions requirements, academic programs, student services, and graduation requirements, I archived the document for further review.

GCC FY 2015 Annual Plan. I retrieved the 2015 Annual Plan from a link on the "Strategic and Annual Plans" page of the GCC website. The cover of the multipage PDF document features a large photograph of clusters of apparently ethnically diverse traditional college student age men and women around a fountain with the main campus building in the background. Some appear to be reading, and others appear to be engaged in conversations. The document begins with a synopsis of the current situation of the college, presents the goals and initiatives in the five-year strategic plan, and describes the indicators, outcomes to be addressed in the annual plan, and a timeline for the planning process. I archived this document for analysis because of its current description of the college and the material it contains about the college's current goals and initiatives.

GCC Strategic Plan 2018. I accessed and downloaded the GCC strategic plan document from a link on the "Strategic and Annual Plans" page of the GCC website. This multipage PDF document presents the GCC five-year strategic plan that was adopted in 2013. The cover features a photograph of the campus with a hand holding a smartphone displaying the college name and logo in the foreground. Each of the inside

pages is full-color and includes either a photograph of the campus or photographs of what appear to be graduation ceremonies with rows of individuals wearing academic gowns and mortar boards. The document describes the GCC mission, vision, and goals for the five-year period ending in 2018. I archived this strategic plan document because of the information it provides related to the study criteria of mission and history.

The Way Forward and Why It Matters: 2007-2017. I retrieved this document from a link on the "Strategic and Annual Plans" page of the GCC website. It is a multipage PDF document that describes the college mission, five broad outcomes, and ten specific initiatives adopted by the college board and administrators in 2006. This document was collected for inclusion in the analysis because of the background it provides about the college mission, vision, and goals.

Monitoring Report on Achieving the College's Outcomes: Student Success. I retrieved this document from a link on the "Monitoring Reports" page of the GCC website. This report presents data related to the college outcome, "Our students successfully complete their academic course, persist in college, and earn certificates or degrees at GCC or another institution." It identifies target indicators for the outcome and presents graphs of data related to each of those indicators. Because this report contains material related to the student graduation and retention I archived it for further review.

Draft Enrollment Management Strategic Plan. The draft enrollment management strategic plan document was provided to me by Dr. Robinson during our interview as a source of information about the college's response to performance funding. The document is a five-page word-processed document. Dr. Robinson located the document in a folder and handed it to me during our interview. When I asked if I could

keep it, she offered to copy it and then provided a copy at the end of our interview. The document identifies annual initiatives of interest to the enrollment management committee. As a document provided by a study participant, this document was archived for inclusion in the analysis phase of the study.

Rosedale Community College

Rosedale Community College (RCC) is located at the edge of a town in a predominantly rural area of Oklahoma. The campus is almost an hour drive from the nearest city and at least a two hour drive from any major metropolitan area. The college serves a rural five-county area. Study participants describe the area as primarily agricultural with a declining population and a high rate of poverty.

The campus consists of one main building surrounded by parking lots with one detached classroom building, a maintenance building, and a small dormitory on the outside edges of the parking lot. I visited the campus on two occasions: the Tuesday before the Thanksgiving break and the Friday of final exam week. On both occasions the parking lot seemed quiet with many empty spaces. On my first visit, it appeared to be less than a quarter full.

Rosedale was established to serve the local community in the late 1920s. Over time the territory expanded to include the immediate 5 county area. In-state students are accepted from anywhere in the state. Out-of-state students are also accepted. The mission as stated on the college website includes provision of general education to all students, transfer education, technical education to prepare students to enter the job market, remedial and developmental education, and continuing education opportunities. The college is currently engaged in a strategic planning process and in developing the

institutional self-study report in preparation for a comprehensive site visit by the Higher Learning Commission scheduled for 2015.

The college is an open admissions institution. Policies defining admission processes for prospective students with GEDs, those who have not completed high school, as well as high school graduates are outlined in the RCC catalog. The vision statement says "Rosedale will accept a student at whatever level he/she enters and advance them along the learning spectrum as the student's desires and abilities will allow." In the words of one of the participants, Mr. Bridges, "one of our missions is to try to reach the students where they are at, and then move them along."

According to the college catalog, applicants who score less than 19 on any of the ACT sub-scores, or who do not submit ACT scores, are required to take the COMPASS placement test and are placed in developmental education courses based on their COMPASS scores. Study participants reported that the majority of students require developmental education. The college mission specifically includes provision of remedial and developmental education for those students who are not sufficiently prepared for college.

Enrollment at the college declined significantly over the past three years. The most dramatic decrease occurred between the Fall 2012 semester and the Spring 2013 semester, with a reported enrollment of 5,223 in the Fall 2012 semester and only 2,136 students in the Spring 2013 semester. The headcount enrollment dropped 68% between the Fall 2012 semester and the Fall 2013 semester (OSRHE, 2013). One study participant, Mr. Bridges, explained the loss of enrollment resulted from the discontinuation of the online delivery of many courses. Enrollment continues to decline

with a 12% loss reported in the Fall 2014 semester according to a report from the August meeting of the college's board. Table 4.3 includes the Rosedale College profile information from the U.S. Department of Education College Navigator website.

Table 4.3 Rosedale Community College Profile

Rosedale Community College Profile	
Setting	Rural, Fringe
Total Enrollment, Fall 2013	1,690
Full-time	40%
Part-time	60%
Student Age, Fall 2013	
24 and under	67%
25 and over	33%
First-time Full-Time students, Fall 2013	31%
Students receiving Pell Grant, Fall 2013	54%
Retention Rate for First-time students	
Full-time	49%
Part-time	13%
Overall Graduation Rate **	20%
Total Degrees & Certificates granted in 2012-2013 Academic Year	276
Certificates (less than 2 years)	5
Associate	271

* First time students in Fall 2012 who returned in Fall 2013
** First-time full-time degree or certificate seeking students who entered in Fall, 2010 & graduated within 150% of the normal time to completion
All data from National Center for Educational Statistics College Navigator for the college (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2015)

Study Participants

I contacted mid-level administrators at Rosedale Community College by email to arrange face-to-face interviews. Brief biographical sketches of each individual and an overview of the interview circumstances for each follow.

Roberta Stewart. Ms. Stewart is the Dean of an academic division at Rosedale Community College. She came to Rosedale to take that position and has been in the

position just over one year. Prior to coming to Rosedale she held administrative positions in community-colleges in several states, most recently Texas. She remarked on her previous experience in other states several times during our interview. She holds a Master's degree in a liberal arts field and has completed a number of hours toward a PhD. The academic division she heads includes a number of degrees, with Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and a smaller number of Associate of Applied Science degrees. The most common degree granted through the division is an Associate of Arts in Liberal Studies.

I met her in her office on a Tuesday morning just before the Thanksgiving holiday. She shares an office suite and administrative assistant with another academic dean. I waited in the outer office while she finished a conversation with a student. During the time I waited several individuals were in and out of the office area and the administrative assistant was busy with multiple telephone calls.

When Ms. Stewart came out to greet me we realized that we had both been employed at a previous institution but were never personally acquainted with each other. She was welcoming and seemed eager to talk. She invited me into her office She began talking with little prompting. Her telephone rang several times during the interview. She answered one call and quickly told the caller that she would return the call later. She offered to provide additional information by email if needed. She responded within a day to my email with the draft transcript of our interview for her comments.

Susan Hughes. Ms. Hughes is the Dean of an academic division at Rosedale Community College. She began working at Rosedale as a faculty member twelve years ago. She holds a Master's degree in a health-related area. She is a native of the region

of the state where the college is located and currently lives in another town in the area where her husband is a public school administrator. Her division includes several Associate of Applied Science degrees, including nationally accredited health-related fields and other technical programs.

I met Ms. Hughes on the Tuesday before the Thanksgiving holiday. She shares an office suite with the other individual I was scheduled to meet on that day. I did not have an appointment for an interview with her but she agreed to an interview that afternoon. When I arrived for the interview she was occupied with advising a student in her office. I waited in the outer office for several minutes while she completed her work with the student. After the student left she invited me into her office where she took a seat behind the desk and I sat in a visitor chair facing the desk. We were not interrupted during the interview.

Chase Bridges. Mr. Bridges is a Dean at Rosedale State College with oversight responsibilities for nine departments in the student services area. He has held several positions in student services at Rosedale Community College. As he described it, "My entire higher education career has been at Rosedale."

I met Mr. Bridges in his office on the Friday of finals week at the college. His office is located near a main entrance of the central campus building. I passed several individuals who appeared to be students in the hallways as I walked to his office. When I arrived at his office Mr. Bridges was speaking with his assistant in the outer office connected to his office. He greeted me and invited me to go into his office while he finished his conversation with her. When he came into the office he apologized and explained that it was her first day on the job. Our interview was interrupted briefly near

the end when he appeared to notice something through the window to the outer office. He excused himself and went to the outer office but soon returned.

Mr. Bridges is a native of the town where the college is located and holds an Associate degree from the college. While I waited in his office I noted the diplomas displayed behind his desk. Three diplomas were displayed vertically with his Associate degree diploma from Rosedale State College at the top and diplomas below for his Bachelor degree and Master's degree. When I remarked on seeing his diploma he pointed out his homecoming king crown on a shelf in the office. He described himself as, "I am Rosedale. I bleed purple and cream. I love this place and would fight to the death for it…I hope I can retire here."

College Website and Documents

I accessed the Rosedale website on multiple occasions in a several-day period between December 15, 2014 and December 31, 2014. I collected several documents published by the college and reviewed the website for the college with particular interest in content related to the institution's history and mission, the community served by the college, student admissions, retention of students, and student graduation. I navigated through the site following links and archived pages relevant to this study as PDF documents. A brief description of each page selected for archiving and each document retrieved is subsequently provided.

Rosedale Home Page. The Rosedale home page is the initial page displayed when a user accesses the RCC website. When I accessed the page in December 2014 a large banner with the headline "START to FINISH" was displayed at the top of the main panel. Under the headline an image of a partially filled progress bar was labeled

"Degree Loading…" "25% remaining…" and below that the text "Just a few credits away from that diploma? Find out below how you can start to finish your degree!" Clicking on the banner area opened a page titled "Start to Finish." Large button links below the banner were labeled "Online Education," "Online Transcripts," "Student Services," and "Course Schedule." Below the banner and buttons there were three columns of content. An academic and event calendar was in the left-most column and a list of college news headlines was in the right column. The center column displayed an animated graphic with a progress bar labeled "Degree Loading" filling from left to right. When the progress bar filled the graphic changed to a line drawing of a mortar board. Clicking on that graphic opened the "Start to Finish" page. The page is framed with the college seal and name just above a row of menu headings at the top, a narrow navigation menu on the left side of the page, and a row of links at the bottom. As I moved through the website this frame remained consistent with only the contents of the main panel and left-side navigation menus changing. Because of the content related to degree completion I archived this page for further review.

Start to Finish Page. The "Start to Finish" banner displayed on the home page is repeated at the top of the main content panel on this page. A button below the banner labeled "Enroll Today" links to a page describing the enrollment process. Several paragraphs of text are presented in this section with paragraph subheadings: "Tuition... Books... Supplies... Housing... Every year of college is expensive!" "Finish College Faster. Earn More Money!" "Get your degree on time by taking the right course!" and "Why is taking 15 credits important?" The overall message of the content on this page seems to encourage completing the associate degree in two years by taking the correct

required courses and maintaining full-time enrollment. The page also contains links to admissions and enrollment information in the left navigation menu.

About Rosedale State College. I accessed the "About Rosedale State College" page by clicking on the "About RCC" link in the top navigation menu. The content panel includes several paragraphs of text with headings of "Historical Background," "Vision," Mission and Purposes," and "Philosophy." The page includes links to the master plan, strategic plan, HLC self-study report and assessment reports. I followed those links and retrieved the documents. Each of the documents retrieved is subsequently described. Due to the specific references to the vision, mission, and history of the institution I archived this page to a PDF document for further analysis.

Enrollment. Clicking on the "Enrollment" link in the top navigation menu opened the "Enrollment" page. The headline in the main content panel states, "Enroll Now! Just 3 Easy Steps." Below the headline is a smaller section with 3 tabs labeled "Step 1 (Apply)," "Step 2(Enroll/Pay)," and "Step 3 (Course Manager)." The "Step 1 (Apply)" tab is displayed by default. It contains a button that when clicked opens the online application admission. Clicking the "Step 2" tab changed the contents to show a button labeled "Enroll and Pay." Clicking that button opens the campus student information system and prompts the user to login in to that system. Clicking the "Step 3" button displays a button labeled "Course Login and E-Mail." Clicking that button opens a window that prompts the user to log in to the learning management system. A link to the step-by-step description of the application and enrollment process is available below the tabbed area of the page. The page also includes a non-discrimination statement for

the college. The left portion of this page contains a menu of links for enrollment and a menu of links for admissions.

Admissions. I accessed the "Admissions" page by clicking on the "Admissions" link in the "Enrollment Menu" displayed on the Enrollment page. Four buttons are displayed under the Admissions headline in the right portion of the page. Each button has a photo with a descriptive label and link below it. A photo of an apparently white female, of traditional college student age lying in the grass with a notebook computer open on her lap, is labeled "Enrollment Information & Procedures." Clicking the associated link opens a page titled "Admission Procedures and Information." A photo of a white apparently teen-aged male standing in front of a row of lockers is labeled "Concurrent Students." Clicking the "Concurrent Students" link opens a page titled "Concurrent Students." A photo of the earth as viewed from space being held in two hands is labeled "International Students." Clicking that link displays a page titled "International Students." The final photo is a group of women labeled "Admissions Staff" and clicking that link displays a page titled "Admissions Staff" with individual photographs and contact information for the college admissions staff. The remainder of the right portion of the page contains text describing the steps for applying to the college, how to get a transcript, and a section of frequently asked admissions questions. Because this page provides information about the admissions process and policies, I archived it for inclusion in further analysis.

Scholarships. I accessed the Scholarships page from a link on the Financial Aid page. The content panel on this page presents several paragraphs of text describing scholarships available directly from RCC and the application process. A link to an

application that is to be completed online is provided. I archived this page because study participants made comments about scholarship programs in the interviews.

Student Support Services. The Student Support Services page is accessed from a link on the Student Services page. This page includes text describing the services available through Student Support Services and includes a slideshow of rotating images of what appears to be ethnically diverse, traditionally aged students involved in activities on the RCC campus and other campuses. Because the page content states that services are intended to improve student graduation and retention I archived it as a PDF document for further analysis.

Articulation Agreements. I accessed the Articulation Agreements page from a link on the Academics menu in the top navigation bar of the home page. This page contains one paragraph of text describing how articulation agreements between the community college and other higher education institutions benefit students and provides a link to a list of articulation agreements and links to the campus websites for institutions with which RCC has an articulation agreement. Because the "Articulation Agreements" page refers to the value of graduation to the student I archived it for further consideration.

RCC News/Blog. The RCC News/Blog page is accessible from the college home page. It is arranged with the most recent posts at the top of the page, as is typical of online blogs. The RCC website contains RCC News/Blog archives from July 2010 through the present. I scanned only those archives from May 2012 through the present and collected individual articles with relevance to the study as previously described. Materials collected for analysis include the following items:

- The "RCC Strategic Planning 2014" blog post describes the current strategic planning process and invites participation in the process
- The "Board of Regents Report for August 2012" blog post includes a report to the board on enrollment at RCC
- The "Board of Regents Special Meeting for May 2013" blog post includes information related to the college budget and enrollment
- The "Board of Regents Report for June 2013 Meeting" blog post includes information about the FY14 Budget
- The "Board of Regents Report for August 2014 Meeting" blog post references reports to the Regents on the current enrollment and the strategic planning process
- The "Board of Regents Report for December 2014 Meeting" blog post includes information about efforts to increase enrollment of students for the spring semester
- The October 2012 edition of the campus newsletter includes content related to the recruitment of students
- The July 2014 edition of the campus newsletter includes content related to the strategic planning process and enrollment, and
- The October 2014 edition of the campus newsletter includes content related to the strategic planning process and the "Start to Finish" campaign.

Master Plan & Strategic Planning Guide: 2012 – 2017. The Master Plan & Strategic Planning Guide is a 29 page PDF document accessible on the Rosedale website. The introduction to the document describes it as a "dynamic document" with data that provide "past, present, and future projections" for the college as a basis for planning. The

document gives a brief description of the history; vision, mission and purposes; and philosophy of the college. It presents an institutional profile with data describing the students and faculty of RCC and a summary of the financial status of the institution over the past seven years. It describes the strategic planning process at RCC, the assumptions used in that process and presents the strategic planning goals and objectives for 2013-2014. Because this document addresses the college's mission and goals I collected it for inclusion in the analysis phase of the study.

Rosedale Catalog 2014-2015. I retrieved the RCC catalog from the RCC website where it is available as a downloadable PDF document. The catalog includes background information on the college, admissions policies, information about costs and available financial aid, services for students, and the student code of conduct as well as academic policies, degree requirements, and course descriptions. I collected it for further review.

Rosedale Employee Handbook. The Employee Handbook is a 121 page PDF document that is retrievable from the RCC website. The introduction to the handbook describes it as providing an "informational foundation" of the operations, policies, and procedures for Rosedale. Because the handbook includes information related to the college history, mission, vision, and goals, I archived it for further review.

Accreditation Self-Study Report. The Rosedale Self-Study Report for the most recent accreditation comprehensive visit is available on the RCC website as a PDF document. I archived the self-study document because of the description of the college history, goals, and activities that it includes.

Rosedale 2013-2014 Assessment Report. The 2013-2014 Assessment report fulfills the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education requirement for an annual

report on student assessment. I downloaded the 2013-2014 Assessment Report from the RCC website as a PDF document. The assessment report addresses entry-level assessment, mid-level assessment, and learning outcomes assessment. It is included in the study for further analysis in relationship to entry-level assessment and admissions policies and mid-level and learning outcomes assessment in relationship to retention and graduation.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced and described the community colleges and individual participants in the study. An introduction to each institution was presented with a description of the documents and artifacts that I collected for analysis. Each individual participant in the study was described with an emphasis on his or her experience in higher education and the circumstances of our interview. These materials were used to develop the findings and conclusions presented in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Chapter IV presented descriptions of the community colleges included in this study and the documents and individual participants from each college. As described in Chapter III, I conducted this study as a multiple-case study. In a multiple case study the researcher considers each of the individual cases and then builds a cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). This chapter presents themes for each community college included in the study as an individual case and a cross-case analysis with findings for the collective case. Following this introduction, Chapter V presents each of the three community colleges as a separate mini-case. In each mini-case, I describe the study participants' perceptions of performance funding at their college and the responses to performance funding at that college. Finally, I present a cross-case analysis with findings for the collective case of the three community colleges in the study related to each of the research questions that guide this study.

As described in chapter III, all of the documents and interview transcripts were analyzed using an open coding process to develop emergent themes from the available data. My analysis and the themes developed through that analysis were guided by the research questions for the study and a complexity thinking lens. The research questions

seek to identify responses to the implementation of a performance funding formula for Oklahoma public community colleges and the perceptions of mid-level administrators at those community colleges regarding performance funding. Applying a complexity thinking lens suggests that community colleges as complex systems may respond to influences in unpredictable ways and facilitates asking questions that look beyond simple linear causality.

The themes presented here emerged primarily from the comments provided by the mid-level administrators interviewed at each institution. I used the documents collected from their respective institutions to provide background context for participant comments. The emergent themes uncovered through this analysis reflect participants' observations about responses to performance funding within their college and how those responses affect the institution and its students.

Mayfield Community College

As described in Chapter IV, Mayfield Community College (MCC) serves a predominately rural region of Oklahoma. I visited the college on two occasions and interviewed three mid-level administrators. The findings presented in this section emerged from my review of the transcripts of interviews that I conducted and my review of the MCC website and public documents. In this section I present findings related to the participants' perceptions of performance funding, their perceptions of responses to performance funding at MCC, their concerns about performance funding, and the perceived benefits of performance funding.

Perceptions of Performance Funding

Each participant was asked to explain his or her understanding of performance funding as it affects community colleges. Their responses to that question strongly associated performance funding with an emphasis on degree completion. Ms. Summers commented, "We only get to count the ones we graduate…it's all about if they cross that graduation stage with a mortar board on their head." She said that with performance funding, the emphasis on graduation replaced the previous focus on enrollment:

> It's not enough to get the students in your front door anymore. The emphasis used to be we've got to have x number of students enrolled in our classes. Well, that doesn't count anymore. What counts is they have to complete.

Ms. Cooper summed up her understanding of performance funding saying, "my understanding is that one of the biggest things is we need to be sure that we are getting our students through the pipeline, that they are not stopping out or dropping out. That they are continuing -- completing a certificate program or a degree." Mr. Johnson stated that the emphasis is on graduation by simply saying the message of performance funding is, "we want you to be awarding degrees."

One participant credited the MCC president with providing leadership for the college's response to performance funding. She described his leadership saying, "every time we have in-service meetings he talks about it [performance funding]. He brings it out…he's an advocate of being transparent." The MCC webpage and the documents I reviewed for this study made no specific references to performance funding.

Joe Johnson is the director of a grant-funded program at MCC that he described as serving students with the goal to "graduate and transfer students within four years." He

said that the emphasis on graduation in the Oklahoma performance funding system is similar to the long-standing emphasis on graduation in the federally-funded program that he directs at MCC. According to him, both are saying to the institution, "We are looking. We want you to be awarding degrees." The program he directs offers tutoring, academic advising, transfer assistance, and cultural enrichment. He seemed to think that although the students who are served in his program make up a significant proportion of the overall MCC graduates the work that the program does is "underappreciated." He suggested that the college as a whole could benefit by modeling responses on the practices of the program he directs at MCC.

Responses to Performance Funding

All of the mid-level administrators interviewed at MCC agreed that performance funding has affected MCC. One participant described the overall response to performance funding as, "We are trying every way we can to entice someone to get a degree because that's the way we are funded." They described responses intended to increase the number of graduates and improve graduation rates. They also described several responses as intended to improve retention of students. They described academic initiatives as responses to performance funding.

Increasing graduation. Responses in this category are directly associated with increasing the number of graduations. MCC participants described the use of certificate programs as one method for increasing the number of graduates. They also described the use of reverse transfer to increase the number of graduates.

Increased use of certificate programs. Both academic deans that I interviewed at MCC stated that certificate programs are used at MCC to meet graduation goals and

indicated that they expect the number of certificate programs to increase. Ms. Summers described the emphasis on certificate programs saying "they keep talking to us about they want us to build certificates." She continued "I think the certificate program is going to explode…we're going to have to come up with different levels besides just college degrees where we can count students…that's a direct effect of performance based funding." Ms. Cooper described a "sequence of certificates" created in nursing that allows a student to complete a certified nursing assistant certificate and a licensed practical nurse (LPN) certificate while working toward completing the nursing associate degree. She said the certificate sequence allows students to "see the possibility of finishing a degree once they've gotten the certificate" and suggested that granting certificates could be a tool to retain students in an associate degree program.

The overall requirements for a Certificate of Achievement at MCC are described on the MCC website on a page that describes the academic requirements for the associate degrees offered by MCC. Students can receive the Certificate of Achievement when they "successfully complete a list of courses with an overall grade point average of 2.0." That webpage specifically acknowledges that a student who completes the requirements for an associate degree may also apply for and receive the Certificate of Achievement for the same program.

Reverse transfer. One participant I interviewed at MCC described reverse transfer as a mechanism for increasing the number of MCC graduates. Ms. Summers told how MCC implemented systems for "keeping track of those students and how many hours they are short and we are doing follow-up with them." According to her description of the process students who transferred to universities are contacted "to see if

we can get them to transfer those hours back so we can put that degree on their transcript and *we* can count them as graduates." An article in a 2013 issue of the MCC Magazine describes the reverse transfer agreement between MCC and the nearest regional university. According to the article students at the regional university are able to transfer university credits to MCC in order to complete an associate degree. Under the terms of the agreement the regional university provides MCC staff access to information about recent transfers from MCC. MCC staff then contact those students and offer them the opportunity to participate in the reverse transfer program and potentially receive an associate degree from MCC.

Improving retention. The MCC website defines retention policies as "designed to serve the students' welfare in obtaining their educational objectives within a reasonable timeframe." Participants described multiple initiatives that seem to be intended to address retention issues and help to move students toward graduation. These efforts as described by Ms. Cooper are "just trying to keep them in the pipeline – keep them here, so we can get them out."

Building connection. The importance of building connections with students appears to be a common thread among multiple retention initiatives. Ms. Cooper observed "we want them to connect with us and to help them realize that we want to connect with them." Mr. Johnson emphasized the importance of building connections in his advice to the staff he oversees when he said, "the main thing I always tell my advisors is 'be sticky' – how many times can you talk to that student?"

Ms. Summers recounted a new retention initiative recently implemented in her academic division for building connections with students. Students who are not part of a

sports team or another competitive team associated with the division were invited to be guests of the division at a special lunch. At the lunch each student received token gifts and door prizes, including a $400 scholarship, were given to randomly selected students. The students were divided into groups of five to eight students with an instructor assigned to each group. The faculty member was tasked with talking with the students about topics including subjects like "what was your moving-in experience like…tell me about your teachers" with the goal "to bring these students together, to make sure they have some face-to-face contact with an instructor…to make them feel a connection to the division." As a follow-up to the lunch division instructors and student ambassadors were tasked with contacting the students who did not attend. Ms. Summers described their task as:

> Making some kind of contact with that student – going by their room, sitting down with them at lunch, going to the tutoring center with them, just calling them, sending them a text message – something to make some kind of contact.

She reported receiving positive feedback from students and seemed certain that the initiative would have a positive effect on retention of those students.

The Student Life page on the MCC website appears to also reflect the theme of building connection. The page headline proclaims in bold letters "GET INVOLVED! GET CONNECTED!" Text on the page explains that according to research "actively involved students perform better academically, are more satisfied with their college experience, and are more likely to graduate." Students are encouraged to get involved with the campus extracurricular activities to become more connected to the college.

Participants seem to find building connections with students at the branch campus to be more problematic than establishing those connections on the main campus. They observed that many students on the main campus are likely to be traditional students who participate in competitive teams and extracurricular activities associated with the academic division. They described the branch campus students as "car-class-car students" who are less engaged with the campus. One participant described efforts to build those connections as:

> We struggle with trying to get them affiliated and feeling like they are in the actual college atmosphere …so we work at activities for that… trying to get them involved and feeling, like they are actually in college and not just walking away when struggles happen.

Attendance monitoring. An initiative to track attendance and follow-up with students regarding their attendance in class was described by Ms. Cooper and Ms. Summers. As Ms. Cooper explained:

> All the faculty have a list, a roster of each participant in any of our scholarship programs and they contact those coaches or those advisors and let them know such and such has missed class. Then the advisors and coaches are coming down on them.

When I interviewed Ms. Summers she described the attendance tracking system as part of her division's strategic plan. She opened the attendance-tracking spreadsheet on her computer to show me the system they developed. She explained that faculty take attendance in every class and record it in the spreadsheet. As the division head she can look at the attendance for any student and look for patterns of absences. A team coach

reviews the attendance information for his team and uses that information to intervene with the students on his team. She said "It's a lot of chasing them down but we feel like if we can just get one or two or five or ten more kids attending class…because we know that's what it's going to take." Both academic deans indicated that the attendance monitoring and intervention program was successful.

Support services. Participants mentioned other support services that are intended to improve retention and graduation. They described student success centers on each of the campuses that provide free tutoring for students. One division was described as "working on some things to increase GPA" by providing recognition to students for academic achievements. Ms. Cooper mentioned the development of a pilot project for mentoring students. In that project 30 students were assigned mentors who "get them where they need to go, make sure they're staying on track, [and make sure] they've gotten caught up on their classes." All of these services seem to share the common goal of strengthening student connections to MCC.

Data collection. Ms. Cooper reported that MCC is collecting more data related to persistence and completion (to see "what is stopping our students from being successful") than they have collected in the past. She described retention as a focus of MCC's assessment efforts saying that they are trying to "make sure that we're truly connecting with the student and keeping them where they need to be until we can get them to the end of this goal and then starting into the four year program." The November/December 2014 issue of the MCC magazine features an article on a multi-year retention initiative beginning in 2014 designed to "increase student retention and keep students on track to graduate." According to the article data collection and analysis are key components for

accomplishing the project goals to "connect us [faculty and staff] more closely with our students and their endeavors to complete their degree."

Academic responses. Academic responses are defined as changes to academic programs that appear to be responses to performance funding. Participants at MCC described academic responses that include initiatives associated with developmental education, implementation of a required student orientation course, and changes in course delivery methods.

Developmental education. Many incoming students at MCC are required to participate in developmental education. Ms. Cooper observed that around 80% of students have low ACT scores and need remediation. According to the admissions pages on the MCC website and the college catalog all students under age 20 are required to take the ACT and those scoring under 19 in English, reading, math, or science are placed in developmental courses. Students over age 21 are required to provide ACT scores or take an entry-level assessment test provided by the college and placed in developmental courses as indicated through that assessment. Ms. Summers said, "we don't necessarily get students who are ready for the university" as she commented about the importance of developmental education.

Each of the participants commented on efforts to address developmental education in order to "get them through the pipeline," or as Mr. Johnson observed, to "help [students] push through those [developmental] classes quicker." According to Ms. Cooper, MCC was engaged in redesigning developmental education before the initiation of performance funding but the efforts recently increased. The reforms they described include changing the developmental course sequence to allow students to progress more

quickly, adding summer academies to build skills, providing supplemental tutoring, and conducting outreach efforts with area high schools. Ms. Cooper described the summer math academy as a highly successful initiative with 75% of the students who participated moving to a higher level when they retested at the end of the four-week academy. Her conclusion about the success of that effort ("…that makes a difference. You're talking students are saving semesters and money") appears to reflect the overall goals of efforts to address developmental education needs.

Student orientation course. Each of the participants commented on the required student orientation course. According to the current catalog each first-time freshman student or transfer student with less than 24 credit hours is required to take a minimum of one credit hour of college orientation. The catalog describes the one-credit hour orientation as "A variety of topics are discussed to assist the student in being successful in college." As described by participants, students may take a minimum one-credit hour course that is designed to help them understand what is required in college or they may take a "more thorough" three-credit hour course that explores topics in greater depth. Ms. Cooper said the orientation course has had "great success rates" for students with "68% of those who took orientation came back as opposed to 48% that did not come back if they did not have orientation class."

Changes in course delivery. In response to a question about how performance funding might have affected course delivery or degree requirements, Ms. Summers stated, "It's definitely affected course delivery because now we have to have more students so we can graduate more so the big push is to online delivery and blended delivery." All of the participants reported that more online courses are now being

offered. Ms. Cooper observed that the MCC faculty are "trying to innovate the way we present our courses" with techniques such as the flipped classroom model that allow students to "see that we are not just the sage on the stage." Both Ms. Cooper and Ms. Summers associated the shifts in course delivery with the need to appeal to contemporary students. Ms. Summers observed "I think that [flipping the classroom] is probably going to be more necessary as we encounter this generation that is coming through now." Ms. Cooper identified students as "this Generation Next" and said "their expectations, their understanding of how education works is different." Both Ms. Cooper and Ms. Summers implied that new methods are necessary to engage and retain contemporary students.

Recruitment and admissions responses. There was little consensus among study participants from MCC regarding changes in recruitment and admissions that they associate with performance funding. When asked how she thought performance funding might have affected recruitment practices, Ms. Cooper apologized that she had little knowledge of the recruitment practices but described changes being considered. She said:

> I do know we are looking at different avenues on what high school to target. You know, some [students] just are going to come here anyway because they are close to here or whatever. But what ones do we need to target to try to get them to come in and stay?

When asked about how recruitment might have been influenced by performance funding, Ms. Summers indicated that recruiting has dramatically expanded with advertising and marketing efforts. She described expansion of the recruiting department with three full-time recruiters and other personnel related to community relations, the website, and

creative services. When asked how she thought the expansion in recruitment related to performance funding, she replied, "I believe that it is probably used to build our numbers. I don't know that it is used to increase our performance. You know, there is a difference between looking good and being good."

Scholarships. Both Ms. Summers and Mr. Johnson made comments about the use of scholarships in the recruitment of students that they associated with performance funding. Mr. Johnson described a scholarship program that supports nursing students in exchange for their commitment to work in the local community as a recruitment tool that has been successful. Ms. Summers suggested scholarships were created by "administration" to recruit students in response to performance funding. She described these scholarships as offers of free tuition to recruits who won competitions as high school students. The MCC magazine describes a program that appears to be consistent with that description. The article reports that MCC provided scholarships to area high school counselors to award to "a deserving student at their local school."

Concurrent enrollment. Mr. Johnson associated performance funding with an increased emphasis on concurrent enrollment saying, "We're probably pushing the envelope a little bit more on the concurrent enrollment." According to the MCC catalog and website, concurrent enrollment at MCC is available to high school students in their senior year with a minimum ACT composite score of 19 or a 3.0 high school GPA and high school juniors with a minimum ACT composite score of 21 or a 3.5 high school GPA. Mr. Johnson suggested that concurrent enrollment supports efforts to increase graduation rates because students who begin as concurrent students are more likely to "go ahead and come here to finish their degree" and they are more likely to graduate since

they come out of high school with as many as 30 credit hours toward the associate degree.

Benefits of Performance Funding

Each of the MCC participants pointed to the importance of accountability as a benefit of performance funding. In response to my question about the benefits of performance funding Ms. Cooper said, "the most obvious one for me is that it has made us look at ourselves in a whole different way…I think it's changed the way we look at our data…I think that's one of the biggest things." Ms. Summers was somewhat less enthusiastic in her description of the benefits of performance funding, "well, you have to have some form of evaluation…and you have to provide incentive for that evaluation to be improved upon. So I guess that's [performance funding] the current remedy." Mr. Johnson compared performance funding for the institution is with compensation of individual employees with payment for good performance. He explained that for an individual employee pay for performance is associated with meeting or exceeding expectations and went on to suggest "[It is] the same thing with the institution, if these are the guidelines, these are the objectives, you ask us for this money and we send it to you then we expect you to hit these objectives."

Concerns about Performance Funding

Each participant was asked to identify his or her concerns with performance funding. Their concerns clustered into three primary issues. They identified concerns related to the potential for weakening of academic standards, the fairness of the process, and the effects of "factors beyond our control."

Academic quality. Each of the study participants at MCC voiced concerns about the possible effects of performance funding on academic quality. They all suggested that the emphasis on degree completion could lead to weakened academic rigor but maintained that the faculty at MCC would not respond by reducing their standards. Ms. Cooper expressed this concern saying, "The drawback would be everybody's fear that we are just watering everything down just to keep them in…they [MCC faculty] would never do that…I just think that could be something for some places and some areas." She stated that faculty "struggle to make sure we have the integrity and rigor that we should have." Mr. Johnson voiced a similar concern saying, "Ultimately, we don't want students just passing tests and classes to get a degree." Ms. Summers was less confident that academic quality can be maintained under the demands of performance funding saying, "eventually with performance based funding, if they can't get them through that [difficult course], they are going to change the requirements and go around it. That's what they'll have to do to keep the program performing."

Another area of shared concerns that is related to quality centers on the possibility that statistics and reports can be manipulated. Ms. Summers recounted a recent news article she read saying that reported that Oklahoma higher education had already "shattered" the goal set for the number of degrees and certificates awarded. She said that her response was "it's all in making those numbers make us look good" and went on to suggest that granting certificates to those students who also completed associate degrees allowed for them to be counted twice saying, "I'm just reading between the lines here, but I think that is probably what they did. We didn't go in that small amount of time and create that many more graduates. We just didn't do it." Mr. Johnson described a similar

concern saying, “Right now everyone is focused on losing money…and how they can get these statistics to look like the government wants them to look.”

Fairness of the process. Participants at MCC challenged the fairness of the performance funding process. They questioned the sufficiency of available funds to support performance and raised concerns about the fairness of the distribution of funds. Both Mr. Johnson and Ms. Summers made comments that reflected concerns about inadequate funding to support efforts to improve performance. Ms. Summers talked about having to cancel classes to avoid additional overload pay to instructors. She said she knew of at least one student who was unable to graduate because of the class cancellations. As she described it, “We’re trying to perform on a budget…we were unwilling to pay that instructor and therefore that student can’t graduate. Well, then we’re shooting ourselves in the foot.” Mr. Johnson’s comments also reflected a sense that available funds are insufficient to support performance improvements. He phrased his concerns as, “You can only do so much with 100 pennies…when you make these types of mandates, I think it’s important that the funds are there.”

Mr. Johnson was concerned about how funds are allocated among higher education institutions and though that funds are allocated differently among institutions. He commented, “Let’s have everyone write the same formula across the board. I don’t want to have one different from other community colleges. It should all be the same…there should be one standardized formula that shows us what success looks like.” He extends a similar concern to the distribution of funds within the college saying, “The institution is rewarded as MCC but then the way its disseminated is – is not disseminated accordingly. If you have a division that goes from being very average to now they are

putting out stellar students then that division should be rewarded." Another participant also questioned the fairness in resource distribution within the institution. She said, "We are under a lot of pressure here to perform in order to survive" and described the source of that pressure as:

> They use them [statistics] to put more pressure on us saying we're not performing by showing us *this* number instead of looking at *this* number. Ok, I may only be graduating 23% but look how many students I've got. I'm bringing in the credit hours. I'm bringing in the money but we don't get credit for that.

She described her experience with that pressure as frustrating. Another participant suggested that morale within institution suffers when the faculty and staff believe funds are not allocated in a manner that reflects the division's performance.

Factors beyond our control. Ms. Summers spoke at some length about her concerns regarding the factors beyond her control as a teacher and beyond the control of the institution that can affect student success and the institution's performance. She described the lack of control as:

> Life here gets in the way big time...We have parents die. Kids have to go home. We have kids that can't pay. They have to go home. We have kids with injuries in car wrecks and things where they have to take out a semester. I mean, it's just life intervenes. And whether the governor wants those degrees or not, we're living with the real life situation of you know, you've got no option. You've got to go home.

The MCC campus profile presented in the self-study report to the regional accreditor appears to provide some support to Ms. Summers' assertion that "life intervenes" for

MCC students. According to the profile, the primary service area is predominately rural with low-income and low education attainment level. A high percentage of students receive financial aid and are required to complete remedial courses.

Both Ms. Summers and Mr. Johnson pointed to the economy as an influence on performance that the institution cannot control. Johnson observed, "We had the flood of new and returning students when the economy was down. We got them almost ready to graduate and guess what -- now there are jobs again so off they went." Ms. Summers said, "When the economy is down, our numbers go up. We're always going to have better performance when the economy is not performing." Both participants suggested that the performance of individual faculty and staff members and the institution as a whole are being judged without proper consideration of these external factors.

The Mayfield Community College Mission

The MCC website and other public documents describe the MCC mission, vision, and values. According to the faculty and staff handbook, the current mission, vision, and values statements were adopted in May of 2014. The self-study report prepared for the regional accreditors and made available on the MCC website includes the previous mission, vision, and values statement. That mission and vision predate the implementation of the performance funding formula in Oklahoma public higher education.

The earlier mission states, "Mayfield Community College utilizes the highest standards in its commitment to provide affordable, innovative, life-long learning opportunities that enable students to succeed in a global society." The current mission states "Mayfield Community College is committed to building futures one at a time by

providing quality learning, service, and leadership designed to promote excellence in a global society." The MCC website includes a message from the president that addresses the current mission and expands it to say, "all of us strive to recognize that everyone at the college has their own goals, hopes, and dreams…we realize the key to our success is helping our students, faculty, staff, and supporters fulfill the promise of their potential." The MCC president continues to say, "because we are committed to our mission to view and treat people as individuals, it doesn't matter if you are full-time or part-time, traditional or non-traditional, on one of our campuses or at a distance; we're ready to help you start achieving your success." Neither the current mission statement nor the previous mission statement specifically addresses degree completion. In the current mission statement, the phrase "building futures one at a time" and the comments of the MCC president appear to identify success as the accomplishment of individual student goals.

Mayfield Community College Summary

The MCC mid-level administrators participating in this study associated performance funding closely with degree completion efforts. According to their reports, MCC responded to performance funding with initiatives intended to increase student retention and graduation. Those efforts included changes in developmental education, the addition of a required student orientation class, and the use of reverse transfer. MCC participants described an emphasis on building connections with students to improve student retention and described strategies they used to increase those connections between the MCC faculty and staff and their students. They voiced concerns that performance funding could contribute to weakened academic standards and manipulation

of reporting to "look good." They also voiced concerns that factors beyond the control of a college's faculty and staff could influence performance and negatively affect MCC.

Glendale Community College

Glendale Community College (GCC) is a large urban community college. Chapter IV described the three mid-level administrators I interviewed at GCC and the GCC documents I reviewed. In this section I present findings from my review of GCC documents and analysis of the transcripts of my interviews with mid-level administrators at GCC. This section describes the participants' perceptions of performance funding and GCC responses to performance funding with related information from GCC documents. Participant perceptions of the benefits of performance funding and their concerns about performance funding are also presented.

Perceptions of Performance Funding

All participants were asked to describe their understanding of performance funding. Each of them associated performance funding with the allocation of state funds to the college based on student success and most specifically graduation numbers. Mr. Simon described the importance of performance funding as, "At GCC, we care more about graduation than anything else. I would say if you're looking at how performance funding has permeated our soil here, we eat, breathe, sleep, think about it all the time." Dr. Bradley described performance funding as:

> My understanding is that we are measured by the regents and legislature regarding the success of our students …graduation rates are important and our success rates are important … in some areas if there aren't improvements then we don't receive additional funding.

Ms. Robinson offered this explanation of her understanding of performance funding:

> The story of the college really is becoming how many people *got* that certificate or *got* that degree [emphasis added]. And that's the measurement that someone in the legislature, or whatever, is going to be using to decide whether or not our programs are successful and that, that's where our funding is going to come from.

Mr. Simon described the OSRHE funding formula as including "30 different metrics" based on "outputs rather than inputs." However, he concluded by stressing the importance of graduation as the primary metric saying, "We really, really, really need graduates and degrees. That is our number one priority."

All GCC participants pointed to the college senior administration as providing leadership for responses to performance funding and the emphasis on graduation. When asked how she learned about performance funding, one participant said:

> I heard about it specifically through Dean's Council and those types of meetings… for the past few years, any time we have talked about assessment data, any time we have talked about state funding…the bottom of the equation is the 'because we have to,' because our dollars may very well come down to whether or not we can prove that we have increased this number by a certain percentage.

Another participant responded to a question about who on campus provided leadership regarding performance funding with, "It would be the president. For the last three or four years, one of his consistent messages [is] it's [graduation] related to how we get money and how we're judged as an institution but it's also, it's what matters."

Mr. Simon stated the institutional planning and budgeting process was influenced by the emphasis on graduation that he associates with performance funding. He said "Every time I do that [submit an initiative request], it has to be connected to one of the outputs and the number one and most important one is how do we get more people to graduate." In contrast, one GCC academic dean I interviewed described the same budgeting and planning process and concluded "those initiatives traditionally have not been that much affected by performance funding. It's just whatever allocation we've had."

Specific references to performance funding were absent from the GCC documents I reviewed for this study. However, statements in the strategic and annual plan documents address funding concerns and appear to associate accountability and those funding concerns. The strategic plan adopted in 2007 includes the expectation of increased demands for reporting of student achievement "for accreditation and funding purposes" as a critical factor affecting the strategic plan development. The 2013 strategic plan document describes funding as a challenge to the accomplishment of the mission and includes a major goal of increasing funding from sources other than state appropriations.

Responses to Performance Funding

One participant indicated that the central questions for the effort to increase degree completion are "How can we get more people through?" and "How can we remove barriers to completion?" Participants attributed a range of responses within the college to the demand for increasing the number of degrees and certificates that they associate with performance funding. These responses include strategies to increase the

number of graduates and improve the graduation rate, recruitment and admissions changes, retention efforts, and academic responses.

Increasing graduation. Participants linked the implementation of performance funding with an emphasis on initiatives to increase graduation rates and the number of graduates. They identified graduation as the highest priority of the college with statements such as "getting people through is our first priority and we talk about it in every big meeting we have" and "at GCC, we care more about graduation than anything else." They described several strategies that appear to be designed specifically to increase the number of graduates and improve the graduation rate.

Marketing degree completion. Mr. Simon described one campus promotion that appears to be directed at supporting the achievement of graduation goals. In this promotion, posters with silhouettes of male and female individuals wearing mortar boards were placed around campus with the 2018 goal for the number of graduates displayed at the top of the silhouette. The outline was "filled-up" to indicate the number of degrees and certificates that were granted toward that goal. He described these posters as a powerful image reinforcing the goal of graduation for staff, faculty, and students.

The importance of degree completion also appears to be a recurrent theme in the public documents and the college webpages that I reviewed. The GCC mission and initiatives as stated in 2013 strategic plan emphasize degree completion. The mission, goals, and outcomes defined in the 2013 strategic plan document are repeated in many GCC publications.

Large, bold type in the strategic plan document proclaims, "Traditionally, community colleges have been about providing access. But, it's not enough that students

pass through our doors — earning a degree is what changes lives." The plan document begins by laying out an argument for the importance of degree completion stating "It has become increasingly difficult to even contemplate the 'American Dream' without a post-secondary degree" and continues to present GCC's mission, goals and key outcomes that address the identified need for degree attainment.

The GCC College Catalog and the Faculty Handbook include the mission, goals, and outcomes from the 2013 strategic plan. The same themes are evident on multiple pages of the GCC website. In a video available on multiple pages in the college website, including the current student page and the faculty page, the president describes the GCC 2013-2018 strategic plan, the rationale for the plan, and how the college intends to achieve the outcomes included in the plan. In the video, the GCC president reiterates the plan as a "pathway to a place where more students graduate, where historic gaps in achievement are erased and where we have more resources to do this important work." It seems likely that any visitor to the GCC website would be aware of the importance of completing a degree or certificate and the importance of efforts to support degree completion at GCC.

Reverse transfer. Reverse transfer was described by participants as a method used to increase the number of degrees granted by GCC. They described reverse transfer as allowing former GCC students who did not graduate but who have subsequently completed the courses necessary for a GCC degree to transfer those courses back to GCC and receive an associate degree. As Mr. Simon described the process, college staff actively use a data mining process with college records to identify students who "transferred early" without a degree. They use the National Student Clearinghouse to

identify former GCC students who completed credits at universities that can be transferred back to GCC to allow the student to complete an associate degree at GCC. According to Mr. Simon, a related response combines recruitment of highly performing high school students into concurrent enrollment programs and the use of reverse transfer to grant degrees to them. He described that process as, "I mean, we get a concurrent enrollment student in here that takes 15 hours, we can reverse transfer them and graduate them." He observed that before granting a degree through reverse transfer students are normally contacted with the message "Hey, we can transfer the credits back and get you a degree" but said that in some cases degrees may be granted without contacting the student.

Advisement. Participants described an expansion of effort in student advisement activities to promote degree completion. Dr. Bradley described the effort saying, "The amount of man and woman power being spent across the college on improving advising is tremendous and that is just to try to ensure that if a student could be eligible to graduate and hasn't that we make it happen." The GCC Faculty Handbook describes student advisement as a shared responsibility of the centralized advisors located in the Student Services division and faculty in the academic programs. The draft enrollment management plan that I reviewed seems heavily focused on academic advisement and addresses efforts to improve the frequency and effectiveness of advisement contacts between students and faculty or staff advisors.

Outreach to non-completers. Efforts to increase graduation through advisement include outreach to students who earned a substantial number of credit hours but have not

completed a degree to encourage them to complete a degree. Mr. Simon characterized this outreach effort as:

> The immediate action was to reach for low –hanging fruit … all of the students out there that have 80 hours when all you need is 62 to get a degree but for whatever reason they didn't finish the capstone or whatever it is. A phone call, an advisor check to see surely there is something we can do to fix this.

Dr. Bradley described this outreach effort as "lots of time spent contacting students talking with them about 'you just need this course. Why don't you come back and get it done?'" According to participants, students who need just a few hours to graduate may be offered a tuition waiver for the courses needed. One participant said the essential message to those students is "Hey, you've got two classes left. We will pay for them if you come back." Another participant described this outreach to students as the source of the largest increase in degrees over the "past couple of years."

General Studies degree. Interviewees also identified the general studies degree as a tool used to increase the number of degrees granted. Mr. Simon described the general studies degree as a highly flexible degree that allows students to combine courses freely from different academic areas to earn a degree. He stated, "The [general studies] degree has some basic gen eds …but everything else is up for grabs…as long as you have 62 hours and 12 of them are from here, you can have a degree. " The GCC catalog describes the general studies degree as "often used to meet specific academic needs… [general studies] gives you the chance to create your own major." According to the GCC catalog, the general studies degree is the most common degree granted each year.

Study participants described a process in which advisors review the student's progress toward their desired degree and, in some cases, suggest the student could complete a degree more quickly by changing from their current degree program to the highly flexible general studies degree. According to one participant:

> We just made the process easier. We took students who were maybe two classes away from a psychology degree and we talked to them about what their goals were and if we could get them into our [general studies] which is our most flexible degree program…We would encourage them, if not push them into [general studies] because we could get them out and get them on their way.

Certificates of mastery. Another advisement strategy that appears intended to increase the number of graduates relies on certificates of mastery. These certificates are described in the GCC Catalog as "quick, turn around programs that get them [students] into the classroom and back to the workforce immediately." Participants suggested that students may be advised to graduate with a certificate even though they plan to continue and ultimately complete an AAS degree. Ms. Robinson described the use of certificates saying:

> I think lately more certificates have been happening. [Before] if we thought they were really going to get the AAS, there was no push for them to get their certificate. But if they've been two years in the program and they're just getting to the point of a certificate, we've been advising people go ahead and get this [the certificate]…

Ms. Robinson reported that the creation of new certificates for students who had only completed a subset of the credits required for the associate degree was considered

but the GCC administration insisted that all certificates be associated with available employment. She said, "as we started putting them together, administration really said, 'No, unless we can send somebody out with that 30 hours and they are going to be employable and we can show that there is a distinct job ready for that person."

Improving retention. "Retention is a bit of bear" was Mr. Simon's response to my question about retention efforts in response to performance funding. He described a retention intervention system that was developed to allow GCC faculty to refer students for intervention by student services staff. That retention intervention system is also described in the faculty handbook. Faculty use the system to report a problem with a student and the alert system notifies student services staff who contact the student. The academic deans I interviewed emphasized the faculty role in retention efforts with comments including, "Retention is on everybody's lists and hopefully minds" and "There's discussion in classes… there's a lot of 'when you take this, if you take this, this is how these things are going to fit together'… trying to help students understand the big picture."

The student success course that all GCC students are required to take was described as a successful retention effort by one participant. The GCC catalog describes this course as "an introduction to some of the best practices for success in college and life" that is required on all degree plans and should be taken during a student's first semester at GCC. Early enrollment, labs, and other services to support students were also mentioned by participants as supporting student retention.

Academic responses. Participants agreed that performance funding had little effect on academics at GCC. Mr. Simon suggested most of the responses to performance

funding are being made through student services. He said, "I think the majority of the efforts are not so much in the faculty but on the student services end" and concluded that changes were not made that affect degree programs saying, "I mean, I haven't seen anything that was a 'we're going to make this degree easier to get."

Participants said that faculty are largely unaware of performance funding but are aware of the emphasis on increasing graduation rates. One participant observed:

> So far it [performance funding] hasn't touched them [faculty] in our institution. It really hasn't…They know about improving outcomes. They know about this emphasis on course completion. They know about this emphasis on student success but as it's being tied to funding, I just don't think so.

Mr. Simon suggested that faculty may be more heavily affected in the near future through a major grant-funded initiative that will review degree programs in order to improve graduation outcomes. He commented:

> They are looking – top to bottom looking at the degree requirements and where people are stopping out, where people are moving from…There is money and movement and power from the top down to if there is a problem fix it and if the faculty don't like it, go to another school.

Each participant seemed concerned that the emphasis on graduation that they associate with performance funding could affect faculty and academics more in the future.

Recruitment and admissions responses. The GCC website, the GCC catalog, and other documents describe GCC as an open admissions institution and present multiple pathways that allow for admission of incoming students. Mr. Simon suggested that the current emphasis on degree completion affected recruitment and admissions

practices with a shift in emphasis from access to completion. He described the shift in admissions and recruitment saying:

> It's so much less about numbers and [is] about the – who's coming in the door. Are these students ready for college? What interventions can we do early? What changes to the way we assess them can we do to get them into the course work that matters and get them in the degree program as quickly as possible?

He said that although GCC is an open admissions institution they now pay closer attention to the credentials of incoming students and their readiness for college.

He also described efforts to recruit larger numbers of highly performing high school students as, "We're much more competitive than I think we have ever been as far as who we want…That all goes back to the fact that graduation numbers matter more than anything … and we know that." He described a shift toward more offering more merit based scholarships as a tool for recruiting higher performing students. He explained:

> After we initiated performance-based funding… we looked at our scholarships and we moved them…We probably have 30-40 % more merit based scholarships than we ever had before, simply to get a higher quality student in the door.

A statement repeated in the GCC Catalog and the GCC Faculty Handbook appears consistent with Mr. Simon's description of changes in admissions and recruitment. "Traditionally, community colleges have been about providing access. But it is not enough that students pass through our doors – earning a certificate or degree is what changes lives."

Mr. Simon described a "holistic admissions process" used to place incoming students. Recruiters are encouraging students to take the ACT exam. Although no minimum score is required, they tell students that the score is important, "you've got to get about a 19, let's do that." He explained that students who score at that level are not required to take developmental education courses to remediate academic deficiencies. High school grades are also considered in in the placement of students. The admissions office then does the first semester enrollment for students who perform at the college level on the ACT or have met the high school grade requirements. He attributes these changes in recruitment and admissions practices to the emphasis on graduation in performance funding:

> The move to performance based funding and the fact that the money we get is -- a big part of that is how many graduates we produce. I would say we look at things a lot closer that we probably ever have.

Mr. Simon's comments indicate that for GCC, the emphasis on graduation that he associates with performance funding may concentrate recruitment efforts on those students who are considered most likely to complete the degree.

Benefits of Performance Funding

Each participant was asked to discuss the benefits he/she perceives from performance funding. Their responses to this question cluster into two themes. They suggested that the benefits of performance funding include increased internal accountability and an increased focus on student graduation.

Accountability. Participants reported that accountability within the college increased in response to performance funding. One academic dean stated that the

primary response she observed was "a stronger emphasis on making sure that people like me turn in things correctly." Because of that pressure she is "beginning to put more pressure on them [faculty] to make sure that when they do assessment that it is accurate." Another participant emphasized the accountability of each person to contribute to the graduation of students:

> There's no endless supply of money so at some point that janitor if he or she is not directly related to the graduation of students, I don't know if they're going to be here…I think that's probably what performance funding has done to us.

Participants agreed that the increased accountability they associate with performance funding is beneficial and can strengthen the institution. One participant remarked, "I would say, we look at things a lot closer that we probably ever have and, I think that's good. It's painful but it's good." One interviewee pointed to the range of metrics included in the performance funding formula and suggested that the overall effect of performance funding is positive saying, "I'm glad our model is more holistic and looks at other things…Those are good things. Those will strengthen institutions."

Focus. Focus on student success and graduation was a recurrent theme in responses of participants to the question about the benefits of performance funding. They suggested that the focus benefits both the institution and students. Ms. Robinson observed, "I suppose that's the benefit – that it helps people stay focused on the prize – not funding but the students being successful." Mr. Simon suggested that through the focus on student success performance funding has the "potential to help eliminate waste" and reduce mission creep by asking, "Are there some areas of the community college

mission that we should get rid of? …Asking that question is a good thing. It helps mission creep. It helps things not get too big and unmanageable."

Participants thought that students also benefit from the focus engendered by performance funding. They observed that services to students have increased, "I've actually seen more one-on-one services to students being performed. I see the labs being strengthened. I see tutoring being strengthened because we are trying to increase retention and performance of students." They also indicated that efforts to encourage graduation may provide needed motivation to students. As one participant said, "Some students really do need a kick in the rear…focusing on doing things that work and are proven by data to help students graduate is a good thing." Another participant stated, "We're just saying think about it– what could you do to make your students more successful."

Concerns about Performance Funding

Participants were asked to identify disadvantages of performance funding. They voiced a number of concerns in response to that question. Those concerns clustered in themes of faculty fears of future effects on academic quality, lost opportunities for students, and changes in the definition of success for students and the college.

Academic quality. Each participant described faculty as fearful that changes in the classroom and academic environment might be forced as a consequence of performance funding. One participant pointed to the "financial areas" as the source of fears. She said, "The greatest fear is coming out of the financial areas. You know the people with the budget who are always kind of sending out the 'at any moment, the axe is

going to come down' message." She said that although "our numbers are fine … there's a lot of fear and fear is not always helpful and encouraging."

All agreed that academic standards were not yet affected by performance funding but emphasized the importance of the fears felt by faculty that academic quality could be compromised. One participant described these fears saying:

> There is still definitely a feeling that, that…this is just the beginning and that there is going to be more pressure applied later…that it's going to be about getting people through as quickly as possible for as cheaply as possible and that there are going to have to be cuts somewhere that are going to affect quality...I think the faculty are very worried that the bar that they've tried to put in place for student excellence is going to be tampered with.

Another participant observed, "I think they [faculty] are truly worried that this is going to change the entire culture of what college looks like." Another said, "People are kind of spooked about what are you going to make me change…are you going to come in and judge my classroom environment?" They suggested that these faculty fears contribute to faculty resistance.

Effects on students. Mr. Simon spoke at some length about his concerns that the emphasis on graduation restricts students' opportunities for exploration and runs the risk of "shortcutting the educational process." He described his own experience as an undergraduate and how he changed careers because of his experience in one particular course that he just took for fun. He talked about how students now have "no room to explore." Speaking about how advisors encourage students to transfer into the general studies degree in order to graduate, he said, "Now your academic advisor is offering you

these little get out of jail free cards. That's not really what they are [offering] but they're offering you a faster route to complete something."

He seemed passionate about how the emphasis on graduation associated with performance funding and changes in federal student aid may have limited opportunities for students to experience "the transformative power of education:"

> Maybe that was the course that changed everything for the student and our direct intervention because we are so scared about graduation numbers and so concerned about it. Our direct intervention to get a degree out of that student early may have denied them an educational opportunity that might have been life-changing.

Another participant approached the theme of lost opportunities from a slightly different perspective. She described how she views some academic offerings as important to the college as a whole beyond just the number of majors and degrees:

> We do not have the highest graduation rate of all the different divisions…We have always been a support to the college…That's [lower graduation] always been ok and that's always been accepted…It's like that's ok because we also offer this service…The idea is that you can be a history major, whatever, but we want you to be a well-rounded person.

She voiced concerns that those programs might not survive:

> There's concern from those faculty that say when the chopping block comes…will it come down to the numbers? Will they say well, you only had 20 graduates in your area last year whereas that area had a hundred and so you're gone?

She also suggested that some degree programs could be lost as potential graduates move away from more specialized degree programs toward the general studies degree. "Maybe if we don't have enough graduates because they're going to general studies what if we ended up just not having our program and all we did was just offer courses."

Mr. Simon spoke about his concerns with admissions practices. He described shifts in admission practice that target higher-performing students saying "we look closer now at our incoming class than we ever have before." He observed that this approach represented a change in the institutional mission, "I'm at a community college and I'm thinking about the quality of the student that we're getting in the door … that's not what we were invented for." He said the emphasis changed from barriers to access to "How can we get more people through? How can we remove barriers to completion" and concluded "It changes, it changes who we are fundamentally."

All of these concerns are related to a central theme of lost opportunities for students. Opportunities may be lost when barriers to access prevent a student from attending college. Opportunities may be lost when a student who feels pressured to graduate quickly does not take that extra course that might have changed his career. Opportunities may be lost when academic programs and degrees are discontinued.

Definition of success. Participants expressed concerns about the relationship of performance funding and the definition of student success. Student success is a persistent theme in the comments of study participants and the GCC documents reviewed for this study. Study participants emphasized the commitment of faculty and staff to student success; however, they offered varying ideas about the nature of that success. They associated performance funding with external influences on the definition of success for

students and were concerned about how that influence affects the understanding the nature of student success.

Participants referred often to the importance of student success. One participant summed up the centrality of student success saying, "We are committed to ensuring that students are as successful as we can help them be." GCC documents emphasize the importance of student success to the college mission. The GCC catalog and faculty handbook state simply, "GCC was built for student success." The strategic plan document includes "student success" as one of five key outcomes. A search of the GCC website using the search feature of the website revealed 180 documents on the site that included the term "student success." Clearly, student success is important at GCC.

Comments by study participants reflected varying ideas about the nature of student success. Some statements characterized student success as graduation. Mr. Simon stated directly "student success is graduation." Ms. Robinson explained "sometimes it's more important that you have a degree. It doesn't really matter which degree it is. It's that you were able to get through it. You accomplished the goal." However, she challenged that understanding of student success in another statement she made in our interview:

> People come here for a lot of reasons. If what they really need is two or three refresher courses and they come here and they get that, then that's success for them. They weren't here to get a degree…Success is a big topic and it's a lot bigger than how many people got that piece of paper this year.

Dr. Bradley raised the concern that grades and degrees do not necessarily reflect learning. She called for an accountability system that would place "greater emphasis on true

assessment that is authentic and meaningful." Although all of the study participants from GCC agreed that student success is their goal, they had different ideas of what that success may be.

Participants were also concerned that performance funding with its emphasis on degree completion contributes to student success being defined outside of the college by someone other than students and faculty. One participant observed:

> Student success may become redefined not by what students need to accomplish while they are here but someone else is going to set that standard. I think faculty are very worried… that lawmakers or taxpayers are going to be in charge of setting educational goals.

Another said, "Performance funding is big government…If our job is to get you out of here quickly and the fact that you have certain years on aid…then the government has pretty much told you what you have to do."

Participants stated that external definition of student success does not appropriately reflect what they believe to be the role of higher education in society. One participant said, "We want to create an educated citizenry… we want to create a strong employment labor force and yet those don't seem to be the things that are called a success for us." Dr. Bradley called for an awareness of the value of college to individuals and society saying, "I would much rather see a commitment from the legislature and general populace to recognizing the value that a college education brings to society as a whole and to individuals in their own lives and therefore succeeding generations."

The Glendale Community College Mission

The availability of documents containing the mission, vision, and goal statements in effect prior to 2012 and the revised mission, vision, and goals in the strategic plan document adopted in 2013 allows for comparison between those statements that predate the implementation of the performance funding formula and the current mission, vision, and goals for the college. The mission as stated in a 2011 report to the GCC accrediting body emphasized access to a range of educational opportunities and the importance of individual student goals:

> GCC provides the people of Oklahoma and our community with broad access to certificates of mastery, associate degrees, community education, and cultural programs of exceptional quality, empowering our students to achieve their educational goals and our community to thrive in an increasingly global society.

The strategic plan document adopted in 2013 stated the mission as:

> GCC provides broad access to learning that empowers students to complete a certificate or degree and that enriches the lives of everyone in our community.

The previous mission states that GCC provides access "empowering our students to achieve *their educational goals* [emphasis added]." According to the most recent mission statement, GCC provides access that "empowers students to *complete a certificate or degree* [emphasis added]." The current mission statement emphasizes the importance of degree completion as the goal for all students.

The 2013 plan identifies three overarching goals for the college with one of those goals calling for increasing the number of students who complete a degree or certificate by 50% by the year 2018. Two of the five key outcomes included in the strategic plan

specifically address degree completion. The GCC 2013 strategic plan and other documents explicitly associate the college's degree completion efforts with Complete College America. The strategic plan document lists participation in Complete College America as a "key initiative." It describes the Complete College America national initiative and states, "GCC embraces this challenge and will focus its efforts to increase the number of degrees." The GCC website includes links to reports on GCC's Complete College America initiative dating from 2012 through 2014.

Although participants associated the implementation of the performance funding formula with efforts to improve degree completion, there is evidence that attention to student retention and degree completion is not new at GCC. The strategic plan adopted in 2007 recognized the educational attainment gap in Oklahoma as a critical factor considered in development of the plan. The plan document states, "Too few Oklahomans are prepared for success in college and too few Oklahomans complete a degree." That plan calls for "standards of excellence that will result in improved retention and graduation rates" as essential for achieving the college's aspiration for national recognition for the "amazing success of our students."

Both the 2007 strategic plan document and the 2013 strategic plan document highlight the centrality of "student success" to the accomplishment of the GCC mission. According to the vision statement in the 2007 strategic plan, GCC aspires to be known nationally for the "amazing success of our students." The 2013 strategic plan states, "Their [students] success is our success." In both the 2007 and the 2013 strategic plan documents one of the five key outcome statements is labeled "student success."

However, the meaning of student success differs in the two strategic plan documents. In the 2007 strategic plan student success is broadly defined. By 2013 student success is more narrowly characterized as completion of a degree or certificate. In the 2007 strategic plan the problem of educational attainment is discussed in a section entitled "The High Cost of Not *Going* to College [emphasis added]." The student success outcome in that plan states, "our students achieve their individual educational aspirations." The 2013 strategic plan states "Their [students] success is our success. And, increasingly that success means not just going to college, but *completing a certificate or a degree* [emphasis added]." The student success outcome in the 2013 plan makes it clear that student success is equated with graduation saying, "Our students successfully complete their academic courses, persist in college and earn certificates or degrees at GCC or another institution." During the period from 2007 to 2013, the language of the GCC mission shifted from a focus on individuals accomplishing their personal goals to an emphasis on degree completion as the mission of the college.

Glendale Community College Summary

The study participants from GCC associated performance funding with a focus on degree completion. They described a number of efforts that are intended to increase degree completion and improve graduation rates at GCC. GCC's public documents also reflected an emphasis on degree completion. Study participants identified this enhanced focus on degree completion and increased accountability as benefits of performance funding. They described faculty fear of possible effects of performance funding on academics and questioned how the emphasis on graduation might affect how student and college success is defined and result in lost opportunities for students.

Rosedale Community College

Rosedale Community College (RCC) is located at the edge of a small town and serves a mostly rural region of the state. I interviewed three mid-level administrators in my two visits to the campus and reviewed the RCC website and the documents provided through the website. Chapter IV provides descriptions of the study participants and the documents I collected for review. This section presents the findings from my analysis of the transcripts of the interviews and the documents collected.

Perceptions of Performance Funding

In our interview each participant was asked to describe his/her understanding of performance funding as it relates to community colleges in Oklahoma. Their responses indicated an understanding of performance funding as a method of providing accountability that emphasizes graduation and retention. Ms. Hughes stated "definitely we're very much aware of it." She went on to say that her understanding of formula based performance funding is, "We want to see completers and we're going to put our money where our mouth is. We want to see that retention and completion and we're going to give you increased funding for that." She recalled hearing Chancellor Glen Johnson of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education speak about performance funding and concluded, "It does impact us. It's going to impact every institution." Other participants also associated performance funding with degree completion and student retention. Ms. Stewart said that performance funding "forces us to encourage those students to graduate." She also associated performance funding with the emphasis on retention efforts in the strategic planning process that was ongoing at the time of our interview. Mr. Bridges specifically referenced Complete College America in a comment

about the importance of graduation numbers for RCC. Mr. Bridges described performance funding as a pervasive influence saying, "It's always in the back of your mind. You don't ever not think about it."

Participants pointed to the campus leadership team, including the president and vice-presidents, as providing leadership for the campus in relationship to performance funding, with the academic vice-president emphasizing responses to increase completion and the finance vice president addressing the budget issues. Ms. Stewart reported that performance funding and the emphasis on graduation and retention associated with performance funding was a concern in the strategic planning process that was in progress at the time.

Participants indicated that they did not adequately understand performance funding. One participant began her response to the question about her understanding of performance funding by saying, "I have to say my knowledge is somewhat limited on performance-based funding." Another participant said that "we haven't done a good enough job of emphasizing the real importance of performance funding" and added that the finance vice president is "the one person on this campus that truly understands it better than anybody." Mr. Bridges suggested that it would be helpful for the State Regents to provide additional guidance on performance funding in the form of training that presented the "basics" and presentations from other schools on the initiatives they are pursuing. He went on to say, "I think if we can get some guidance from the top then maybe we could do a better job of guiding here…We know it's important but are we *really* strategizing and making that a priority."

Responses to Performance Funding

Each study participant was asked to describe how RCC responded to performance funding. Their responses clustered into strategies that are intended to increase the number of graduates and improve the graduation rate, strategies for retaining students, and academic responses. Participants also discussed recruitment and admissions concerns at RCC.

While discussing their understanding of performance funding and responses to it, the RCC study participants thought it was important to place those responses in the context of the challenges they see facing RCC. They talked about the strategic planning process. They described the economic influences of poverty and the availability of oilfield jobs in the region and they referred to challenges with oversight bodies and declining enrollments. One participant summed up the relationship of those challenges to RCC's responses to performance funding saying, "at this point in our journey our focus has been switched to other obstacles."

Increasing graduation numbers. Strategies in this category are specifically focused on increasing the number of graduates. At RCC, these strategies include a marketing campaign, reverse transfer, and removal of barriers to graduation. Participants also discussed the availability of Certificates of Mastery at RCC but indicated that those certificates are not part of their strategy for increasing degree completion.

Marketing degree completion. Ms. Stewart noted a campus-wide focus on encouraging students to take 15 credits a semester and cited a marketing initiative on the campus website that promotes degree completion to students who are only a few courses short of a degree. During our interview she opened the webpage on her computer to

show me that campaign on the front page of the RCC website. The front page of the RCC website, when I viewed it in December 2014, was dominated by a graphic that challenged the viewer to "Start to Finish" saying "Just a few hours from that diploma? Find out below how you can start to finish your degree" and offered links to information about degree completion. Clicking the links on that page opened another webpage entitled "Start to Finish" which featured photographs of RCC graduates and encouraged students to enroll in 15 credit hours each semester. The webpage advised students to "Graduate on time and get ahead." The overall message to students was that they will pay less in college expenses and begin to earn higher wages sooner if they take 15 credits each semester and graduate within two years. Ms. Hughes reflected a similar theme in her comments about departmental advising saying, "We've talked more about showing the pathway – saying 'this is your pathway to finish this degree."

Reverse transfer. Each participant described efforts to "get students to graduate" that include the use of reverse transfer of credits from universities to complete an associate degree at RCC as a response to performance funding. Mr. Bridges described "working the 50-plus list" as a daily responsibility for the registrar and assistant registrar. In that process, students who have completed 50 or more hours toward graduation, but are not currently enrolled, are contacted about reverse transfer. Ms. Stewart described the outreach as, "we're sending out letters to students that left here before they completed their degree and trying to get them to send us their current transcripts so we can give them that associate degree." Mr. Bridges observed that even though sending the university transcript would "more than likely that would get them a degree from us" it is

hard to get students to submit transcripts and complete the graduation application requirements.

Removing barriers to graduation. Mr. Bridges described adaptations in the graduation process that are primarily intended to increase the number of students who complete the reverse transfer process. According to him the retention specialist revised the graduation application form so that a potential graduate can complete it online rather than completing a paper form that has to be mailed or faxed. He indicated that the immediacy of the online form led to better participation. He also reported that the required graduation exam is waived "on a case-by-case basis…for individuals who can give us a good reason for not being able to come to campus." He indicated that online students and reverse transfer students may find it difficult to come to the RCC campus to complete the exam. He explained that the exam is required for all graduates but "the results don't keep them from graduating," so completing the exam is not important enough to stop them from graduation if they are unable to come to the campus.

Certificates. RCC offers a very limited number of "Certificates of Mastery" in some of the academic programs that also offer Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees. According to the RCC catalog these certificates include courses from the associate degree program and are designed for students who will "enter the work force immediately." Only one Certificate of Mastery program was listed in the current RCC catalog. According to the catalog students may complete the certificate as an "embedded certificate" while working toward an associate degree or the certificate may be a completed as a "standalone" credential. Mr. Bridges reported that increasing the number of embedded certificates was considered in response to performance funding but not

implemented, saying "…embedded certificates, that was one of the first things that we talked about. We have a few programs that we felt like we could have done that with but it didn't go any further." The responses of participants indicated that RCC has not increased the availability of certificates in response to performance funding.

Improving retention. Mr. Bridges described RCC's retention rate for part-time students as "horrific." He indicated that retention is an especially difficult problem for RCC because of the high level of poverty in the area and the availability of lucrative oilfield jobs. He recounted a story told to him by a faculty member about one student. The instructor called the student because he was absent from class and the student responded that he was working in the oilfield because "I've had some things come up and I'm not going to be able to finish." According to Mr. Bridges many RCC students and potential students face "financial issues" and "need to go to work to help mom and dad."

Retention specialist. RCC added a retention specialist in August 2014 in an effort to improve retention. One participant characterized the hiring of the retention specialist as the one response to performance funding where RCC has "put money to get money." Each participant described the work of the retention specialist as central to RCC's strategies for improving retention. They all described the retention specialist's role in contacting students who have attendance problems. In that system, as they described it, each instructor submits status reports that identify students who have not attended class or who are "not doing well." Before the retention specialist was hired those attendance reports were sent to the financial aid office and to the RCC counselor who "would contact them as she could." The retention specialist is now responsible for systematically

following up with those students. Participants reported that the revised system of contacting students is much better than the previous approach.

Intrusive advisement. Mr. Bridges also described an 'intrusive advisement" intervention program led by the retention specialist. He described it as a cohort of about 30 students on academic probation who signed a contract saying essentially, "I want you to hold me accountable." The retention specialist worked intensively with each of those students. He made weekly contacts with the members of the cohort to encourage them. Participants also described the retention specialist as providing other services including reaching out to students who completed significant hours toward a degree to "see if there's something that we can do to get those students back and completing [the degree]."

Faculty encouragement. Ms. Stewart emphasized the role of faculty in encouraging student retention. She said that she encourages faculty to make personal contacts with students saying, "I always tell them the most effective thing is for them to contact the student directly." Her message to faculty is "take the time to tell them what they are doing right and what gifts they have." She has also described working with the faculty in her division to collect and share the strategies that instructors use to improve the student success rate in their courses.

Academic responses. Participants agreed that academic quality at RCC was not been affected by responses to performance funding. They described changes in developmental education and the addition of required student orientation course. These academic changes appear to be intended to improve retention and graduation.

Developmental education. Study participants at RCC identified developmental education as an important issue in degree completion. They indicated that as an open

access college many of RCC's students need remediation. Mr. Bridges reported that 85% of all RCC students are required to take at least one developmental course and 40% of students take all of the developmental courses offered. Participants observed that students who need remediation have low completion rates. As Ms. Hughes stated:

> We feel like the students coming in…seem to kind of lose their way. They are taking a lot of remedial classes. They don't see a lot of success and we feel like sometimes they need to see those incremental little steps, to see that success.

She highlighted math remediation as an example of the problem with developmental courses. She reported that 75% of students need remediation in math courses and observed:

> Even though those students may pass the courses, they only go on to – maybe 8-10% of the students actually end up completing and graduating…There's a large problem with remediation but I think as open access we are probably receiving students that aren't quite prepared for college.

She then described an effort within the math faculty to "redesign their remediation so it's more student friendly."

Student orientation. Ms. Hughes reported that RCC is considering implementing a mandatory student success seminar as a way to "grab those students and give them the tools that they need to succeed." She briefly discussed the RCC experience with requiring student orientation saying they tried various options, including requiring a face-to-face orientation, offering an optional face-to-face orientation, and finally offering an optional online orientation. She said that the online orientation is not being well utilized and suggested that a mandatory course would be necessary for student participation. The

strategic plan adopted in 2015 cites evidence that students enrolled in success classes are twice as likely to be successful in college as students who do not complete those classes and supports making the student success course mandatory for all RCC students.

Recruitment and admissions responses. In response to a direct question about how performance funding affected recruitment and admissions at RCC study participants referred to the declining population in the service area and the economic conditions in the area as problems for recruitment of students. The 2015 strategic plan document cites data from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce that projects a continuing population decline for the region. Ms. Stewart summed up the recruitment problem in her comment:

> We've lost a lot of students to oilfield jobs because they can make such a good living right now … the economy is getting better -- we're losing students. But also, this area is losing population which kind of is a double-whammy.

Mr. Bridges observed that recruitment efforts increased "over the last several years" but those efforts are not targeted in any way "to try to bring in a higher caliber student." Ms. Hughes said that general recruitment efforts were good but she would like to see more "strategic program-based recruitment" that would focus on recruiting students for specific academic programs. With the declining population and the competition from the oilfield, participants agreed with Mr. Bridge's comment that, "the fact of the matter is we need every student who is willing to walk through the doors right now."

Data collection and analysis. Study participants at RCC identified increased data collection and analysis as a response to performance funding. Mr. Bridges told me that RCC recently adopted specific graduation and retention goals as a direct response to performance funding. He said that the campus enrollment management committee

reviewed institutional data and developed those graduation and retention goals. Ms. Hughes remarked, "We're analyzing our data more closely to see where we really are…and what do we have to do to fix it." Ms. Stewart described her efforts to collect information about faculty strategies for increasing student success in their courses and an effort to solicit input from "front-line staff" about the "things they have heard from the kids because they were front-line folks" as part of an attempt to address those problems.

Benefits of Performance Funding

All participants were asked to discuss their perceptions of the benefits of performance funding. Their responses can be categorized as benefits related to accountability and benefits related to the increased focus on graduation and retention. They agreed that the accountability demands they see in performance funding are beneficial. They also agreed that the RCC can respond to the focus on graduation and retention in ways that benefit the institution and its students.

Accountability. Each participant gave responses that centered on performance funding as a mechanism for accountability. Mr. Bridges stated, "the benefit is that it does hold us accountable." Ms. Hughes responded, "The benefit, I think, would be accountability…in the long run, I think we all have to be accountable for what we are tasked to do." Ms. Steward seemed to talk about accountability in her response, "it forces us to try to do what is really in the best interest of the state and the students." She went on to say that she thinks that higher education institutions have "crazy accountability" with accountability to students, the community, the regents, accreditors, and the Department of Education. She concluded, "I don't think people have to worry about us going off on crazy directions."

Focus. Participants also suggested the focus on graduation and retention that they associate with performance funding is a benefit to RCC. Mr. Bridges recounted the establishment of graduation and retention goals for the college as an example of "thinking of ways that we can work that [performance funding] to our advantage." Ms. Hughes said, "We always knew that we needed to graduate students and that was our goal, but I think we are so much more aware of the importance…In the long run we feel like this is what our mission is, to help these students achieve their education." She characterized herself as "a glass half full kind of a person" who says "ok, this [performance funding] is going to evoke change, this is going to be a positive thing" and concluded that her attitude was shared by others at RCC with the overall sentiment of "We're going to take it and embrace it and move forward."

Concerns about Performance Funding

Each participant was asked to discuss his/her concerns about performance funding. They responded with concerns regarding the maintenance of academic quality and the effects of performance funding on students. They also spoke about the challenges community colleges in general and RCC specifically face in responding to the requirements of performance funding. They suggested that they are disadvantaged by their mission and circumstances.

Academic quality. Although the RCC participants reported that no changes in course or degree requirements were made at RCC in response to performance funding, they were concerned that academic quality could be negatively affected by performance funding. One participant, Ms. Stewart, observed:

> I'd hate for us to go to complete performance-based funding because if we did that…everybody knows what would happen. I mean, you have to be funded, you have to have some help…so it would decrease rigor and nobody wants that…I think that people in higher ed are so personally committed that that won't be something that happens right away. I think that will probably be the last straw so to speak. But that's definitely a possibility.

Another participant echoed a similar concern that she reported hearing from faculty saying, "They [faculty] don't want it to get to the point where we're just passing people through so we can say they completed it when they are not really earning the grade." She also indicated that the faculty she works with would not sacrifice academic quality.

Effects on Students. Ms. Stewart was concerned that responses to performance funding could have negative effects on students. She suggested that the emphasis on graduating within two years could limit student exploration that might ultimately benefit that student. She observed:

> Students sometimes don't know what the future holds … I know that the regents would prefer they not take a lot of extra classes, but I would rather see them taking a few extra classes than getting a degree that they are totally unhappy with.

She also suggested that the student's interests and the institution's interest may sometime conflict. She recounted a recent event when she was advising a student who was planning to transfer into a specialized degree program at a research university. She described how she reviewed the university degree plan and concluded that it would benefit the student to transfer before completing a degree.

> When I looked up the degree at [university], there were almost no core classes…so, it was in the student's best interest that I not encourage him to get an associate degree at RCC…You want to support your college and you know that it's important for those degrees to be completed but ultimately we have a higher calling than that. We need to do what's best for the student. So with him, I said 'you know, to tell you the truth, it won't be a good idea for you to get your, your degree here. You need to take these courses and then you need to transfer because that's in your best interest.' Not in my best interest, not in RCC's best interest, but in the student's best interest.

She offered that the pressures of performance funding forced her to choose between the option she thought would benefit the student, advising the student to transfer, and the response that would be more beneficial to the college, encouraging him to complete an associate degree at RCC.

Disadvantaged by the mission. Participants indicated that community colleges in general are disadvantaged by performance funding and that RCC faces specific challenges contributing to additional disadvantages for their institution. They referred to the open admissions mission of community colleges as presenting a disadvantage when funds are allocated based on performance. One participant expresses this concern with apparent passion:

> The heartache I have with performance funding at the community college is simply that we are disadvantaged from the first…we are open arms. [We] take anyone who wants to walk through the doors…That's great because that's our

> mission…But when it comes to being rewarded based upon how your students are performing, I'm just not so sure that it's a fair way of divvying out dollars.

Ms. Hughes phrased her view of the problem for an open access college as "we are kind of starting behind the beginning… we're getting students that probably aren't as prepared as at other schools. I think that because of our mission we have a little bit of a disadvantage." One participant expressed concern that performance funding could negatively affect the open access mission of the community college, saying:

> I truly believe as a community college our mission has to be to help reach those students that may not be college ready and wouldn't be able to go to a school if they didn't start at this level. I would hate for it [performance funding] to affect it but I think inadvertently it may.

Participants also suggested that not all students who attend a community college intend to graduate and that serving those students is a part of the community college mission. One participant observed "not everybody is here for the degree so if we are giving them what they are here for, we shouldn't be penalized for giving them what they are here for." Another participant stated, "We have a mission to serve those in our community who aren't interested in credit and a degree or certificate."

Participants also returned frequently to comment on the conditions they considered unique for RCC. One participant questioned whether performance funding "takes into account declining population and the socioeconomics of your community and your demographics...from my knowledge, it doesn't …I think that could certainly be looked at as to maybe make that a little more fair." Mr. Bridges commented on his perspective on the mission of RCC saying "they started off being called community

colleges and I think that's for a reason because I think, ultimately, the need is to serve the community." He went on to say:

> I mean, it's very broad. That's a great thing about the community college because you feel like you need to meet the needs of everyone, and that's difficult, difficult to do especially when you're facing tough economic times with population decline, low enrollments, decreasing state funding – all those things.

Another commented:

> Who's going to decide what the performance is and is it going to be different for universities and community colleges? Is it going to be different for metro and rural institutions? You know, there are a lot of things to consider because we are not all the same.

They shared a concern that allocation of funds based on performance neither considers the community college mission of open access nor accounts for the uniqueness of individual institutions.

The Rosedale Community College Mission

When I interviewed study participants at RCC in November 2014 they mentioned that RCC was currently involved in a strategic planning process that was expected to culminate in announcement of new strategic plan in early 2015. The timing of this study offered an opportunity to consider the RCC mission and vision as addressed in the strategic plan developed in 2012 and the mission and vision included in the strategic plan published in 2015.

I reviewed the RCC website and collected documents from the website in December 2014. The campus mission, philosophy, and vision statements were included

multiple times in those materials. The mission and purpose stated in the 2012 strategic plan and the 2014 materials was:

> Rosedale Community College is committed to providing exemplary educational opportunities to meet the needs of the individual and the community in an increasingly global society.

The vision statement said:

> RCC will continue to be an institution that is student centered, both in philosophy and operation. All components of the institution will focus on how best to serve the needs of the students – traditional, non-traditional, on-campus, and off-campus. RCC will accept a qualified student and advance him/her as far along the learning spectrum as the student's desires and abilities will allow.

In the portion of the vision statement that says, "accept a qualified student and advance him/her as far along the learning spectrum as the student's desires and abilities will allow," RCC specifically acknowledges the open access mission of the community college and the role of developmental education in the community college. Both the mission and the vision are focused on the student as an individual and the goal of meeting the needs of that individual student. The comments of the study participants reflected a similar understanding of the RCC mission and vision.

The strategic plan document published in 2015 includes revised mission and vision statements that were adopted by the faculty and staff who participated in that strategic planning process. The revised mission statement says:

> The mission of Rosedale Community College is to provide high quality education, support student success, and empower individuals to become productive members of local, regional, and global communities.

The revised vision statement says:

> RCC aspires to be the outstanding and innovative community college known for its focus on student success and its service to community and regional development.

Unlike the previous mission and vision statements, the revised statements do not specifically acknowledge an open access mission for the community college. The language shifts from a focus on the needs of students to "student success." The 2015 strategic plan document includes a section entitled "Student Success" that provides data on retention and completion rates for RCC students. The 2015 strategic plan document includes the goal "Increase Student Success" as one of three goals adopted by the participants in the planning process. The rationale for the goal states, "simply providing access to community colleges is no longer adequate. Instead, a focus on college success is critical so that students can move through their courses and programs of study toward sustainable employment and/or transfer to other educational opportunities." Although no specific definition of student success is offered in the strategic plan document, these statements imply that success is strongly associated with degree completion.

Rosedale Community College Summary

Each of the mid-level administrators that I interviewed at RCC linked performance funding to retention and degree completion. They described efforts at RCC to improve retention and increase the number of RCC graduates. They agreed that

performance funding has contributed to a focus on graduation that is beneficial to the college and its students. They also accepted and perhaps even endorsed the accountability required by performance funding but questioned how performance funding might affect academic quality and the community college mission.

Cross-Case Analysis

Previous sections of this chapter presented themes associated with the individual community colleges included in the multiple-case study. In this section I look across the individual cases and present findings relevant to the collective case of the three community colleges with attention to each of the study research questions. Colleges were selected to reflect some of the diversity across Oklahoma community colleges, and include a large urban community college and two smaller rural colleges with each located in different geographical regions of the state. A total of nine mid-level administrators were interviewed across the three community colleges in the study. Three of these participants hold administrative positions with primary responsibilities related to student services. Six of the participants hold academic affairs administrative positions. Descriptions of each of the research sites and participants are presented in Chapter IV.

Research Question 1: Institutional Responses to Performance Funding

Finding 1.1. Oklahoma community colleges included in this study made changes that study participants describe as intended to improve retention and increase the number of graduates produced by the college. One participant characterized their response to performance funding as, "We are trying every way we can to entice someone to get a degree because that's the way we are funded." Study participants identified several types of responses to performance funding that appear to be similar across the institutions in

this study. The categories of responses they described included reverse transfer, outreach efforts, certificate programs, the shifts in recruitment, retention efforts, and academic responses. This section presents the initiatives described by participants as responses to performance funding.

Reverse transfer. Each of the colleges employs the reverse transfer process as a tool for increasing the number of degrees conferred. Participants at each college described the use of reverse transfers at their college as a response to performance funding. The basic reverse transfer process is consistent across all the institutions in the study. Students who transferred away from the community college to a university are identified, contacted, and encouraged to compete an associate degree by transferring courses from the university to the community college. At RCC, students who completed 50 hours or more toward graduation are contacted by letter and invited to "send us their current transcripts so we can give them that associate degree." MCC has an active reverse transfer agreement with the nearest regional university that allows for the sharing of student information to facilitate reverse transfers. GCC has reverse transfer agreements with several universities and also uses the National Student Clearinghouse to provide student information and transcripts.

Outreach for completion. Participants described several outreach efforts to encourage students to complete degrees as responses to performance funding. These efforts include marketing campaigns on the campus and on the campus website as well as contacts with students by advisors. The RCC website, when I viewed it in December 2014, highlighted their "Start to Finish" campaign. The website provided information on the value to the student of completing the degree in two years and encouraged students to

take steps to complete their degrees. RCC revised their graduation application to make the application available online and will waive the required graduation exam to remove barriers to graduation for individual students. A participant at GCC described an on-campus promotion that displayed posters of graduates showing progress toward the GCC graduation goals. He described that poster as a powerful image promoting the goal of graduation for faculty, staff, and students. GCC participants also described an outreach program in which advisors identify and contact students, who have a significant number of credits but have not completed a degree, to provide information and encourage them to complete the degree. GCC can provide tuition waivers for some students who need just a few hours to complete. Advisors at GCC may also recommend the general studies degree as an alternative for students who could complete that degree more quickly than the more specific degree they may be pursuing. According to one GCC participant, an advisor might review a student's progress toward the specific degree and after talking with that student about his/her goals might "encourage them, if not push them into [general studies] because we could get them out and on their way." These efforts all share common characteristics of identifying and reaching out to students who are near degree completion, encouraging them to work toward degree completion, and helping to remove barriers to completion.

Certificate programs. Certificate programs allow a student to complete a credential with a subset of the requirements for an associate degree. Certificates are used differently by the community colleges in this study. One participant from MCC suggested that certificate use may increase as a response to performance funding because "we're going to have to come up with different levels besides just college degrees where

we count students." Participants from MCC indicated that certificate programs are now being more heavily emphasized at MCC and academic divisions are being encouraged to create more certificate programs. GCC participants also reported increased use of certificates and said they are advising students who are in an associate degree program that has an embedded certificate for two years but are "just getting to the point of a certificate, we've been advising people go ahead and get this [the certificate]." One GCC participant said although they had initially considered creating more certificate programs in response to performance funding, senior administration insisted that all certificates be clearly linked to job opportunities and few new certificates were created. RCC currently offers only one certificate program. Participants there said they considered creating more certificate programs but have not yet developed any new certificate programs.

Shifts in recruitment and admissions. Participants from GCC described changes in recruitment practices that they link to the demands of performance funding. They said that although as an open access institution they do not restrict enrollment, recruiting efforts are more targeted toward higher performing high school students. One participant described the change as "being more competitive than I think we ever have been as far as who we want" and described the increased use of merit-based scholarships as a way "simply to get a higher quality student in the door." One MCC participant reported that MCC made more scholarships available in a recruiting effort and linked that effort to performance funding. Another MCC participant said they are considering how to target recruiting practices to "get them to come in and stay." RCC participants stated that they have not made any changes in recruitment and admissions related to performance funding. Participants at RCC report working to strengthen recruitment efforts but said

there were no efforts "to try to bring in a higher quality student." GCC is the only college in the study that prioritizes the recruitment of high school students who are more academically qualified.

Participants at both MCC and GCC referred to concurrent enrollment as an important recruitment tool for students likely to graduate. At GCC, participants said they are working to increase concurrent enrollment because the eligible high school students are likely to be higher performing students. According to one participant, even if concurrently enrolled students do not enroll in GCC after graduating from high school they may be granted associate degrees using reverse transfer. MCC participants also described an aggressive concurrent enrollment program and suggested that it increases the number of degrees granted because those students who earn college credits while in high school are more likely to enroll in college at MCC and complete the degree.

Retention efforts. Participants from each college identified student retention as a problem and associated efforts to improve retention with performance funding. One participant phrased the problem succinctly, "Retention is a bit of a bear." Participants described a variety of retention efforts. RCC created a new position of retention specialist in 2014 to provide staff resources to address retention issues. Each college implemented a process that allows faculty to report student problems, especially with attendance, into a system that results in a contact with the student about the problem. Participants from MCC and RCC described formal programs to intervene with students. At MCC, 30 students were assigned mentors who are charged with "making sure they are staying on track." At RCC, students who are on academic probation were invited to participate in the intervention program. The RCC retention specialist makes weekly

contact with a cohort of about 30 students who agreed to participate in the program. Study participants from MCC described several efforts to build connections among students and the college faculty and staff. Participants from each college discussed the importance of faculty relationships with students and the encouragement of students as a retention strategy. Although the mid-level administrators I interviewed agreed that improving retention is important in relationship to performance funding, those at MCC and RCC were more focused on retention efforts than those I interviewed at GCC.

Academic responses. All of the participants interviewed in this student denied any changes in academic programs that might lower academic quality at their college. Changes related to developmental education and student success courses that participants associated with degree completion efforts were reported at multiple colleges in the study. Participants at one college, MCC, reported changes in course delivery that they associated with performance funding. They said that more courses are delivered as blended courses with online components or completely online because of pressure to increase the number of graduates. MCC participants reported that students are required to complete a college orientation course and that the course has a high success rate with 68% of those students returning the next semester. RCC participants said they are considering requiring a student success seminar based on research that suggests students who complete those courses are much more likely to be successful in college. GCC participants reported that they advise students to complete a success course early in their college career but do not require the course.

Participants from each college reported that substantial numbers of students are required to complete developmental education courses. At MCC, participants said that

80% of students test into developmental courses. RCC participants indicated that 85% of RCC students are required to take at least one developmental course. They all agreed that students who must take developmental courses have low completion rates. One participant stated the problem as, "[They] seem to kind of lose their way." Participants from all of the colleges reported that they were working on ways to move students more quickly through the developmental course sequence. MCC participants reported making changes in developmental education to facilitate student movement through the sequence of courses. They suggested that efforts to revise the developmental education program were intensified after the initiation of performance funding. RCC participants reported that the faculty are beginning to make changes in the math remediation program. GCC participants also indicated faculty are redesigning the math and English developmental programs and indicated that the changes in math courses resulted in improved success rates.

Finding 1.2. Subsequent to the implementation of performance funding, two of the community colleges included in the study made changes in their stated institutional missions that emphasize degree completion more heavily than the previous mission. I reviewed public documents for each community college and found that each adopted a revised mission and vision statements subsequent to the initiation of the performance funding formula for Oklahoma public higher education institutions. Documents with the mission, vision, and goal statements prior to 2012 and documents with the mission, vision, goal statements adopted after the implementation of performance funding were available through the institutions' websites. This section addresses the changes in those statements.

The revised mission, vision, and goal statements for RCC and GCC shift from providing access to meet individual educational goals to more specifically focusing on the importance of degree completion. At RCC, the previous mission and vision emphasized the individual with the language "providing exemplary education opportunities to meet the *needs of the individual* [emphasis added]" in the mission and "RCC will accept a qualified student and advance him/her as far along the learning spectrum *as the student's desires and abilities will allow* [emphasis added]." The revised mission and vision omit references to the individual and to individual goals but add the phrase "student success" and include the goal for students to "move through their courses and programs of study toward sustainable employment and/or transfer…." The most recent GCC mission and vision explicitly includes language about degree completion stating that GCC "provides broad access to learning that empowers students to complete a degree or certificate…." The previous statement describes the GCC mission as "access to certificates of mastery, associate degrees, community education, and cultural programs." The GCC 2007 and 2013 strategic plan documents both refer to "student success" as a key outcome for the college. In the 2007 document success is individually oriented in that, "our students achieve their individual educational aspirations." In the 2013 strategic plan document, student success is defined as "completing a certificate or a degree."

Research question 2: Description of Performance Funding

Finding 2.1. The mid-level administrators describe performance funding as an association between the allocation of state funds and the institution's performance on metrics related to graduation rates and degree production. Participants across all of the

community colleges strongly associated performance funding with retention and degree completion. All were asked to explain their understanding of performance funding as it affects Oklahoma community colleges. Each responded with comments that specifically referenced degree completion. One participant from RCC phrased the message of performance funding as, "We want to see completers and we're going to put our money where our mouth is. We want to see that retention and completion and we're going to give you increased funding for that." Other participants echoed that emphasis on degree completion and retention with comments like "We are looking. We want you to be awarding degrees" and "the story of the college really is becoming how many people got that certificate or got that degree…and that's where our funding is going to come from."

Each participant seemed convinced that the allocation of state funds to their college is associated with degree completions and the graduation rate, and to maintain or increase state funding the college needs to improve retention rates, increase the number of graduates, and improve graduation rates. All considered performance funding to be an important consideration for their community college.

Research question 3: Description of Performance Funding Responses

Finding 3.1. Study participants described performance funding as having a pervasive influence in their community college. At each community college, I heard participant comments about the pervasive influence of performance funding on the college. One participant observed, "It's always in the back of your mind. You don't hardly ever not think about it." Another said, "If you are looking at how performance funding has permeated our soil here, we eat, breathe, sleep, think about it all the time."

Research question 4a: Implications of Performance Funding for Administration

Finding 4a.1. Participants across the range of colleges in the study agreed that that senior level administrators, the president and vice-presidents, have been the principal leaders regarding performance funding. They credited those senior administrators with focusing attention on performance funding and the importance of responses to performance funding. They described senior administrators as emphasizing the importance of improving graduation and retention in response to performance funding. They spoke about the messages they received in meetings and through the planning processes at their schools. One GCC participant described the message she received in administrative meetings as, "for the past few years, any time we have talked about state funding…the bottom of the equation is 'because we have to,' because our dollars may very well come down to whether or not we've increased this number." A mid-level administrator at MCC said, "every time we have in-service meetings he talks about it [performance funding].

Finding 4a.2. Participants stated that planning processes within the college were affected by performance funding. Participants at RCC said consideration of issues related to performance funding was a significant factor in the strategic planning process that was underway at the time of our interview. Another participant described the influence of performance funding on the planning process, saying that any initiative he proposes for his department must be connected to the output measures related to increasing the number of graduates.

Participants described how they made increasing use of data in the responses to performance funding. Participants from GCC referred frequently to the use of data to

support decisions and planning. One MCC participant described collection of data related to persistence and retention as a primary focus of an intensive program for improving retention. A participant from RCC commented "We're analyzing our data more closely to see where we really are…and what we have to do to fix it."

Finding 4a.3. Mid-level administrators described the focus on graduation and the accountability engendered by performance funding as beneficial to their institutions. Participants at each institution identified the focus on student success and graduation as a positive effect of the implementation of the performance funding formula. They also suggested that performance funding provides a necessary and beneficial accountability mechanism. Some participants made comments that indicated performance funding could contribute to overall positive changes at their college.

Participants used the word "focused" repeatedly as they talked about how performance funding contributed to the attention to certificate and degree completion. They suggested that performance funding "helps people stay focused on the prize – not funding but the student success." Another participant phrased the benefit to students bluntly saying "some students really do need a kick in the ass…us focusing on doing things that work…to help students graduate is a good thing." Another characterized the response to performance funding as "we're just saying think about it and what could you do to try to make – what could you do to make your students more successful."

The study participants also agreed that the accountability associated with performance funding is beneficial. They suggested performance funding holds the institution accountable and increases accountability within the college. One interviewee remarked, "It [performance funding] forces us to try to do what's in the best interest of

the state and the student." Administrators at each of the colleges accepted the necessity of accountability, with comments similar to one made by a participant at MCC who said, "We all have to be accountable for what we are tasked to do." One participant from RCC said by bringing change, performance funding "is going to be a positive thing…we're going to take it and embrace it and move forward." Another, who said performance funding could have an overall positive effect, pointed to the variety of metrics included in the performance funding formula and said, "Those are good things. Those will strengthen institutions." Although both of these participants raised concerns about performance funding, they shared a sense that it could encourage change in ways that are beneficial to their community colleges.

Research Question 4b. Implications of Performance Funding for Institutional Missions

Finding 4b.1. Participants indicated that the emphasis on degree completion that they associate with performance funding could limit the ability of the college to serve what they consider to be the community college mission. Participants from each of the community colleges said that the community college mission is more than producing graduates. They described the broad community college mission as serving the entire community with services like non-credit learning opportunities, recreational activities, and cultural events. One participant explained:

> They started off being called community colleges and I think that's for a reason because I think, ultimately, the need is to serve the community…That's, that's a great thing about the community college but at other times, that's the disadvantage because you feel like you need to meet the needs of everyone.

They voiced concerns that those aspects of the mission might be neglected under the influence of performance funding with its emphasis on degree completion. A GCC participant said, "They [faculty] are truly worried that this is going to change the entire culture of what college looks like."

Finding 4b.2. Participants expressed reservations about how the influence of performance funding and the emphasis on graduation that they associate with performance funding influenced the understanding of the concept of student success. They suggested that although student success may be degree completion for most students some students have other goals and for those students success is the accomplishment of their goal. One RCC participant said that the emphasis on graduation that she associates with performance funding may contribute to a conflict between the interests of the student and the interests of the college. They raised concerns that with performance funding success is being defined by interests outside of the educational process. Participants stated that colleges have broader goals of creating "an educated citizenry" that benefit society as a whole and they believed that those broader goals may not be recognized by external parties who are defining student success.

Finding 4b.3. Participants across all of the community colleges in the study suggested that community colleges are disadvantaged with regard to performance funding because of their mission. They referred frequently to the open admission mission of the community college and the high percentage of students who need developmental education as a challenge to community college performance. Participants also observed that the community college mission includes serving students who have goals other than completing a degree. Some participants questioned whether performance funding

requirements are applied consistently across all institutions. One participant remarked, "Let's everyone have the same formula across the board." Participants at RCC and MCC said that the circumstances that they see as unique for their institutions are not appropriately considered.

One participant talked about how uncontrollable factors affect the institution's performance saying "Life gets in the way big time…we're living with the real live situation of, you know, you've got no option." RCC participants described the declining population and economic conditions they face and were concerned that performance funding does not take those factors into consideration. One participant from RCC summed up these concerns:

> We are open arms. [We] take anyone who wants to walk through the doors…That's great because that's our mission…But when it comes to being rewarded based on how your students are performing, I'm just not so sure that it's a fair way of divvying out dollars.

Participants stated that as community colleges they face challenges under performance funding that are not faced by universities. Participants from rural community colleges believed that they have additional disadvantages because of the populations they serve.

Research Question 4c. Implications of Performance Funding for Teaching and Learning

Finding 4c.1. Study participants denied that performance funding reduced academic quality but they did express concerns that the emphasis on degree completion that they associate with performance funding could lead to reduced academic rigor. Concerns about the possibility that academic quality could be negatively affected by

responses to performance funding were expressed by the mid-level administrators that I interviewed at each community college. Each also indicated that they did not believe academic rigor was reduced at their college. They were confident that the faculty at their institution would maintain academic standards because of their personal commitment to quality. One participant described her primary concern as the faculty fear "that there is going to be more pressure applied later…that it's going to be about getting people through as quickly as possible for as cheaply as possible and that there are going to have to be cuts somewhere that are going to affect quality." Participants indicated that the fears held by faculty contribute to faculty resistance to performance funding.

Academic administrators at MCC and RCC suggested that performance funding could ultimately lead to diminished academic quality. One stated that difficult courses might be removed from degree programs to increase the number of graduates for the program. She said, "Eventually with performance based funding, if they can't get them through that [difficult course], they are going to change the requirements and go around it. That's what they'll have to do to keep the program performing." Another said, "I would hate for us to go to complete performance-based funding because if we did that…everybody knows what would happen…you have to have some help…so it would decrease rigor and nobody wants that."

Finding 4c.2. Participants expressed concern that student opportunities may be limited by the emphasis on graduation that they associate with performance funding. Participants were also concerned that the focus on graduating students as soon as possible might limit student exploration while in college and restrict student learning opportunities. One participant suggested the emphasis on graduation runs the risk of

"shortcutting the educational process" by limiting students opportunities to explore other academic areas. A participant from MCC also commented about limiting student exploration of different fields saying, "I'd rather they find the good fit that they're going to have a happy career forever than just be sure that they graduate without taking a single extra class."

Other participants expressed concern that academic programs that do not produce enough graduates might be discontinued or under-resourced as a result of performance funding. At GCC, participants indicated that the diversion of students into general studies degrees could lead to the number of graduates for a program dropping to a level that would lead to discontinuation of the degree. One GCC participant suggested that some academic offerings have value beyond the number of majors and degrees offered in that area and said that the support value of an academic department might not be recognized under the constraints of performance funding. An academic division head at MCC said she felt frustrated about the allocation of funding within the institution and was concerned that funding is inadequate for the efforts to improve graduation rates in the division. She stated, "We are under a lot of pressure here to perform in order to survive."

Research Question 4d: Implications of Performance Funding for Access

Finding 4d.1. Participants at each college commented that the focus at their college shifted away from emphasizing access to emphasizing degree completion. A GCC participant said that even in the college division responsible for recruitment and admissions they are concerned with barriers to completion rather than barriers to access. He described the change as, "[We are asking] how can we get more people through? How can we remove barriers to completion? We are not talking about barriers to access."

A participant described the effect of performance funding at MCC as, "It's not enough to get the students in your front door anymore…What counts is they have to complete." Similar comments were made by participants at each institution. A statement in the GCC Catalog and Faculty Handbook echoes the same theme, "It's not enough that students pass through our doors – earning a certificate or degree is what changes lives." An RCC participant commented on her fear that performance funding could challenge the open access mission of the community college saying, "As a community college our mission has to be to help those students that may not be college ready…I would hate for it [performance funding] to affect it but I think inadvertently it may."

Finding 4d.2. Changes in recruiting practices varied by the size and location of the college. Each college continues to have open admissions policies with pathways for entry available to potential students who have a wide range of educational experiences and preparation for college. However, at the large urban community college in the study, shifts in recruiting practices to focus on recruiting students who perform at higher academic levels were described by participants. The rural colleges in the study did not report changes in recruiting or admissions practices that might affect the open access mission of the college.

A GCC administrator described shifts in recruitment to focus on students with higher demonstrated academic performance who are more likely to graduate than students who are more academically challenged. He described changes in recruitment practices to reach those students, including targeting students at highly regarded area high schools, reaching out to them through concurrent enrollment, and awarding of merit-based scholarships. He suggested this shift in recruiting contradicts the traditional

community college mission saying, "I mean – you know, I'm at a community college and I'm thinking about the quality of the student that we're getting in the door. That's not what we were invented for."

At MCC, study participants reported that recruiting efforts have intensified and they attributed the change to the demands of performance funding but did not associate those changes with efforts to recruit a different type of student. Administrators at RCC reported they have seen no changes in recruiting efforts that they associate with performance funding. Referring to the declining population and economic conditions in the region, one RCC participant observed, "We need every student who is willing to walk through the doors right now."

The Cross-Case Analysis Summary

This cross-case analysis presented findings relative to each of the research questions from across all of the community colleges in the study. Findings regarding institutional responses to performance funding, participant descriptions of performance funding, and performance funding within their respective institutions were presented. Other findings presented included the implications of performance funding for administration, institutional missions, teaching and learning, and access perceived by mid-level administrators in the study. Participants from each college discussed a range of responses at their respective colleges that they described as intended to increase retention and graduation in response to performance funding. Revised mission, vision, and goal statements were adopted by each college subsequent to the implementation of performance funding. For two of the colleges, the revised mission reflected a shift toward graduation as the measure of student success rather than the accomplishment of

individual learning goals. Study participants across all of the community colleges associated performance funding with a focus on degree completion and described performance funding as having pervasive influence within their colleges. They agreed that the accountability and focus on graduation engendered by performance funding is beneficial to their institution but raised concerns about the implications of performance funding for institutional missions, teaching and learning, and access.

Chapter Summary

Chapter V reported themes and findings from the participant interviews and documents gathered in this study. As described in Chapter III, an open-coding process was used to analyze interview transcripts and selected documents. This chapter presented mini-cases for each of the community colleges. For each college themes that address study participant's perceptions about performance funding as it relates to community colleges in Oklahoma, the responses of their colleges to performance funding, their perceptions of the benefits of performance funding, and their concerns about performance funding were described. The chapter concluded with a cross-case analysis that presented findings for each of the research questions guiding the study.

Chapter VI discusses the findings presented in this chapter in the context of the study research questions, the theoretical lens for this study and the relevant literature. Study limitations are also be discussed. Finally, Chapter VI addresses implications of the study for practice and future research.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Chapter V presented the findings of this multiple case study as individual cases for each of the three community colleges in the study and a cross-case analysis with findings across all of the colleges. This chapter revisits the statement of the problem, research questions, and the methodology of the study and summarizes the findings presented in Chapter V. I then discuss the findings in relationship to previous research and theories, discuss implications for practice, describe study limitations, and provide recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with an overall summary.

Statement of the Problem

Performance funding of colleges and universities based on measures of graduation and retention is a common strategy for increasing the number of graduates produced by higher education institutions (Albright, 2009; CCA, 2013; OSHRE, 2013b). Advocates of performance funding argue that associating funding with performance will hold colleges and universities accountable and will lead to increased performance on the desired outcomes (Albright, 2009; CCA, 2013; Harnisch, 2011; Miao, 2012).

Existing research indicates that the responses of colleges and universities to performance funding may lead to unintended consequences that may negatively influence higher education quality and the production of degrees and certificates. Changes in institutional missions, reduced access to higher education, and reduced academic quality are suggested as possible unintended consequences of performance funding (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; St. John, 2011).

There is little research available that examines the effects of performance funding systems for higher education in the United States and no published scholarly research that specifically addresses responses to performance funding by Oklahoma's public higher education institutions (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Research is needed to explore the responses of Oklahoma public higher education institutions to performance funding and how those responses relate to the accomplishment of higher education goals.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore responses to the newly implemented performance funding formula in Oklahoma public colleges. This study addresses the research questions:

1. In what ways are Oklahoma public community colleges responding to performance funding?
2. In what ways do mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges describe performance funding?
3. In what ways do mid-level administrators describe the responses to performance funding at their institutions?

4. What implications of performance funding for Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators in Oklahoma public community colleges?
    a) What implications of performance funding for administration practices in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    b) What implications of performance funding for the institutional missions of Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    c) What implications of performance funding for teaching and learning in Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?
    d) What implications of performance funding on access to Oklahoma public community colleges are perceived by mid-level administrators?

Review of the Methodology

In this study I explored responses to performance funding in Oklahoma public community colleges using a qualitative multiple case study approach (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014). Data were gathered from three community colleges located in different geographic regions of the state. Three mid-level administrators were interviewed at each college and public documents that reflect the institutional mission and practices were collected from each college. Collection of data from multiple participants and multiple sources along with member checks contributes to the trustworthiness of the data collected (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 2002). All interviews were transcribed by the interviewer for analysis. I used an iterative open-coding process to analyze the interview transcripts and documents associated with each institution. Chapter III provides a detailed discussion of the methodology for the study.

Summary of the Findings

The mid-level administrators who participated in this study consistently described performance funding as an association between the allocation of state funds and the institution's performance on metrics related to graduation rates and degree production. They described the influence of performance funding as pervasive at their respective institutions. They reported that senior administration stressed the importance of performance funding for the institution. They also described the issues of graduation and retention that participants associate with performance as major concerns in institutional planning processes.

Each of the Oklahoma community colleges included in this study made changes subsequent to the inclusion of performance funding in the funding formula for Oklahoma public higher education. Study participants described these initiatives as intended to improve retention and increase the number of graduates produced by the college. The initiatives they described include efforts to increase the number of degrees produced through the use of reverse transfers, outreach to non-completers, and certificate programs. Initiatives designed to improve retention of students were also described at each of the colleges in the study. Those initiatives included efforts to identify and intervene with students who are having problems and efforts to build relationships between students and the college personnel. Shifts in recruitment were reported with one institution reporting an increased emphasis on recruiting incoming students who are better academically prepared. Participants described concurrent enrollment as a tool to increase the number of incoming students who are likely to complete a degree. Academic responses that

included changing the developmental education sequence and mandating a student success/college orientation course for all students were reported by study participants.

Subsequent to the implementation of formula-based performance funding, two of the community colleges included in the study made changes in the institution's mission statement that emphasize degree completion more heavily than the previous mission. Prior to the implementation of performance funding, the mission, vision, and goal statements for these two institutions included phrasing that recognized accomplishment of individual student goals as success for the student and the institution. The revised mission, vision, and goal statements include language that explicitly addresses degree completion as student success and the mission of the college.

Study participants expressed mixed thoughts about performance funding. They consistently described the focus on graduation and the accountability engendered by performance funding as beneficial to their institutions. Each suggested the college benefited from the increased use of data they associate with responses to performance funding. However, each also expressed concerns about potential negative effects of performance funding.

These concerns included the possibility that the community college mission could be negatively affected by performance funding. Participants from each college suggested that the community college mission includes serving the community in more ways than producing graduates and they thought the emphasis on graduation might detract from those aspects of the mission. They also questioned the definition of student success as degree completion. They suggested that some students come to a community college with goals other than degree completion and for those students success is the

accomplishment of their individual goals. They also indicated that the open access mission of community colleges disadvantages the colleges in relationship to performance funding.

Participants expressed concern that the emphasis on degree completion could affect teaching and learning in their institution. They reported that academic quality was not diminished at their respective institutions. However, they thought changes to academic requirements could eventually be made that would lower academic quality. They suggested that students' opportunities to explore areas beyond their degree could be lost as a consequence of the emphasis of performance funding on timely graduation. They also expressed concern that some academic programs could be discontinued due to low graduation rates.

Study participants from each of the colleges observed that the focus of their college shifted from access to degree completion. They commented that the college efforts are focused on addressing barriers to completion rather than addressing barriers to access. At one college, a participant described shifts in recruiting practices to recruit students who perform at higher academic levels.

Discussion

According to Oklahoma Governor Mary Fallin (Fallin, 2015) and Chancellor Glenn Johnson (Johnson, 2013), performance funding of Oklahoma public higher education is intended to increase the degree attainment rate in Oklahoma to provide a better educated workforce by holding colleges and universities accountable for producing graduates. The results of this study suggest that performance funding is effective in influencing community colleges to prioritize degree and certificate completion and to

respond with initiatives intended to increase degree and certification completions. Community colleges in Oklahoma have made changes intended to increase the number of graduates. However, the changes made in response to performance funding also have contributed to unintended consequences that may negatively affect the long-term goal of increased degree attainment and a better educated-work force. Colleges are using reverse transfer, certificates and other processes that may increase the number of graduates in the short-term but ultimately do not contribute to the long-term goal of workforce education. Shifts in institutional missions and recruiting practices emphasize completion over access. These changes are likely to result in limiting access to higher education as colleges focus on students they consider likely to complete and limit access for those students at higher risk of non-completion. Defining student success as graduation may contribute to weakening of academic standards. These unintended effects ultimately limit success on the stated goal of increased degree attainment that provides a well-educated workforce.

The principal-agent theory as applied by Tandberg and associates (Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015; Hillman, Tandberg, & Gross, 2014; Lahr, et al., 2014; Tandberg & Hillman, 2014; Tandberg, Hillman, & Barakat, 2014) suggests colleges respond to performance funding in ways intended to increase degree completion because doing so serves their self-interests. According to this theory when the interest of the state and the interest of the college align performance funding is successful in achieving the desired goals. Tandberg and associates suggest performance funding may not result in improved performance if the agent is unclear about the state's priorities, the agent does not have the resources necessary to achieve the desired goals, or the agent and the

principal have conflicting goals. Community colleges in Oklahoma appear to understand the state's priority for increasing degree completions. Participants in this study strongly associated performance funding with efforts to increase degree completions. The availability of resources to achieve the desired completion goals varies among Oklahoma community colleges. Financial resources, human resources, and community resources are all necessary to achieve the completion goals. Colleges vary in the availability of these resources and many do not have adequate resources for initiatives that effectively respond to the demands of performance funding. The broad mission of the community college also presents competing goals. Community college students may have personal goals that differ from the state's priority of degree completion. The college may provide services and programs for the community that do not directly contribute to the goal of increased degree attainment. With differing goals, success is different for the student, college, and the state. Each student comes to college with personal goals and may be successful in achieving those goals without earning a degree or certificate. For some students simply going to college accomplishes a personal goal. For the college success is defined by the institutional mission and vision and, for most community college, includes aspects other than degree completion. From the perspective of the principal-agent theory although Oklahoma community colleges understand the state's priority for degree completions, they may not respond in ways that produce the desired outcome because of inadequate resources and competing goals.

Complexity theory offers an alternative framework for understanding the responses of community colleges to performance funding. Viewed through a complexity theory lens, community colleges are complex systems interacting in a web of complex

systems including the state, the local community, accreditors, staff, faculty, and students. Responses to performance funding emerge through the multiple non-linear interactions of these systems and others in the unique environment of each community college. Those responses may result in the desired consequence of increased degree completions and are also likely to result in other unintended consequences.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter I discuss the findings of this study in relationship to previous research and the complexity theoretical framework of the study. I also discuss the implications of the study for practice. I present limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

Relationship of the Findings to Previous Research

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that found colleges and universities make changes intended to improve performance on outcome indicators in reaction to the implementation of performance funding. Intermediate institutional impacts are defined as the changes made by an organization in response to the implementation of performance funding (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). The intermediate institutional impacts of performance funding previously identified include modifications related to academics and student services (Banta & Fisher,1984; Banta & Moffett, 1987; Dougherty, et al., 2014), changes in developmental services (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013), increased awareness of state priorities and the institutions' performance relative to those goals (Dougherty & Hong, 2006) and greater use of data (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

As stated above in the summary of findings, participants in this study described performance funding as a pervasive influence in their respective colleges and reported a range of responses that could be categorized as intermediate institutional impacts as

defined by Dougherty and Reddy (2013). Responses in these community colleges are similar to those found in earlier studies with changes in developmental education, student services, and academics. They also reported increased awareness of the outcome measures related to graduation and retention and increased use of data relevant to those measures. As suggested by previous research, these Oklahoma community colleges responded to performance funding in ways intended to improve performance on the outcome indicators of graduation and retention.

Previous research described unintended effects of performance funding on institution missions, including restriction of the institutional mission to de-emphasize areas not rewarded by performance funding (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013), changes in admissions practices that reduce access (Dougherty & Hong, 2006; Fryar, 2011; Fryar, Rabovsky, & Moynihan, 2012; Lahr, et al., 2014), and diminished academic quality (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Lahr, et al., 2014). The unintended effects observed in this study are consistent with unintended effects of performance funding previously reported in the literature. This study found that colleges in the study adjusted their stated missions following the implementation of the performance funding formula to emphasize degree completion. One college in the study reported being more selective in recruiting practices. Participants at each college in the study reported concerns that the focus on degree completion was negatively affecting other areas of the mission at their respective colleges. All expressed concerns that the emphasis on degree completion associated with performance funding could lead to loss of academic quality. To address these concerns, administrators should maintain awareness of the potential for these unintended effects

and build into policy and practice safeguards that protect academic quality and the access mission of the community college.

This study did not address the effectiveness of those responses for improving performance on the outcome indicators defined by the Oklahoma performance funding formula; however, the research literature suggests that performance funding does not reliably produce improvement in performance relative to the ultimate outcomes (Connor & Rabovsky, 2011; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Friedel, et al, 2013; Zumeta, 2011). In the absence of reliable evidence that the intermediate institutional impacts of performance result in performance improvements, it is important that the effects of those intermediate institutional responses be considered independently. The stakeholders for each college must consider how these intermediate changes affect the community, the students, and the college.

Relationship of the Findings to Theory

Complexity theory provides an analytical lens that encourages looking beyond simple linear relationships. Hillier (2010) argues that "Complexity theory provides a different lens on higher education research, by anticipating change and seeking evidence on how organisations and individuals have adapted to the constant barrage of initiatives, policies and requirements." This study extended the use of complexity theory to apply it to community colleges and the specific policy of performance funding in higher education.

Viewed through complexity theory, the community college is a complex system that is "intertwingled" in dynamic relationships with a web of complex systems that interact in multiple nonlinear feedback loops. Each college operates within a distinctive

environment of complex systems. Responses to influences emerge through the interactions of the community college system with other complex systems in the environment. From this perspective, unique and unintended results are expected.

Each college in this study operates in a web of complex systems that differs from other colleges. Although there are similarities in the environments in which they operate they also face influences peculiar to their own communities, regions, and situations. As an urban school, GCC has a broader population of potential students than colleges in rural regions. With that difference in their environment, GCC targeted recruiting practices to attract students more likely to graduate in a timely fashion as one strategy for improving performance. RCC functions in a rural environment with a declining population and is strongly affected by economic factors and competition with the labor market for potential students. They responded to performance funding with intensified efforts to retain existing students. Different responses to performance funding can be expected to emerge in the unique complex system of each community college and the effects of those responses will be influenced by multiple nonlinear feedback loops in the interactions of that college and complex systems in the environment.

Not only are different responses expected to emerge within each unique complex system, but similar responses that emerge can be expected to have differing consequences. Retention efforts that focus on building relationships among faculty and students -- like the ones described at MCC, which has a residential campus-- would be expected to develop differently in an urban college like GCC. The uniqueness of each community college and the web of complex systems in which they operate should be

considered as critical domains for responding to performance funding. Similarly, the uniqueness of each college should be addressed to evaluate its performance.

Participant concerns about factors beyond their control reflect the complexity of the community college and the environments in which the colleges operate. They discussed the influence of environmental conditions such as declining population and economic factors. They talked about the conditions faced by students and how those factors influence student success. As one participant said, "life gets in the way big time." Neither the student nor the college can control all of the factors that affect a student's success.

Complexity theory suggests that the complex environment in which the community college operates affects the organization's responses to the influence of the performance funding policy and that new and potentially unanticipated behaviors will emerge. Viewing the community college response to the implementation of performance funding through a complexity lens leads to questioning what the unintended effects are and how they might emerge within the complex system of the community college. The findings in this study indicate those emergent responses may diverge from the intent of the policy. The intent of the framers of the policy may be to increase the overall educational attainment within Oklahoma, but emergent responses may limit educational opportunities for some individuals. Shifts in recruitment and changes to academic programs may restrict educational opportunities in ways not intended by the framers of the policy.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

Performance funding was described by participants as a pervasive influence within their respective community colleges. They indicated that performance funding affects processes and policies throughout the institution. Consequently, mid-level administrators and community college faculty and staff should understand the performance funding policy as implemented in Oklahoma. Other implications for practice include how student success is defined within the institution and the influences of responses to performance funding on the community college mission.

Knowledge of performance funding. Participants indicated they were unsure about their understanding of performance funding. In some cases the participant's understanding of performance funding was inconsistent with the OSRHE description of the policy. One participant suggested performance funding would be more fairly applied if an institution was compared only to itself with rewards for improved performance. He seemed unaware that the performance funding criteria specified by the OSRHE are applied in a manner that compares the institution's performance to its previous performance on that measure. Participants expressed fears that their community college is particularly disadvantaged by performance funding and cannot compete with the performance of other colleges and universities. A better understanding of Oklahoma's formula-based performance funding could help to assuage some of the fears expressed by participants in this study. Greater transparency regarding how the performance funding formula applies to each institution would address some concerns about the process. Leadership from the OSRHE and senior administrators at each college, to provide specific information about the metrics included in the performance funding formula and

the college's performance on those measures, is important. With that information mid-level administrators, faculty, and staff are better able to participate in consideration of the effects of performance funding and responses within the college.

Study participants described senior-level administrators as the leaders for responding to performance funding at their respective colleges. In that role it is not enough for presidents and vice-presidents to simply give the message, "Our funding depends on it" that one participant reported, or even the message "it's the right thing to do" reported by another participant. Senior administrators need to take the lead to provide more complete information about the formula for performance funding and how it affects their respective college.

Student success. The shift in the understanding of student success as observed in the changes of institutional missions and in the comments of study participants has important implications for practice. Under the influence of performance funding student success is closely associated with the completion of a degree or certificate credential. The emphasis on student success as graduation potentially limits student opportunities and negatively influences student learning. Although degree completion may be intended as a proxy measure for student learning, counting degree completions without corresponding measures of student learning potentially leads to responses that limit student learning opportunities. In this study participants pointed to institutional responses to performance funding that prioritize degree completion and risk limiting student learning opportunities. Advising a student to complete a general studies degree rather than a more specific degree will change that student's learning experience and potentially deny him an important learning opportunity. Similarly, the student who is encouraged to

complete a certificate may not be exposed to the learning opportunities that would be afforded to her in the range of courses in the associate degree. Efforts to "remove barriers to completion" could contribute to pressure for faculty to make an individual course easier to complete, or lead to changes in degree programs that make the degree easier to complete and shortcut the educational process to the detriment of the student.

Participants expressed fears about the potential for the emphasis on degree completion to diminish academic quality. Similar concerns were found in other studies documented in the research literature. Consequently, community colleges need to intensify efforts to build into policy and practice safeguards that protect academic quality and protect the access mission of the community college. One study participant called for increased use of "authentic assessment" to measure student learning. Incorporating strong systems for assessment of student learning in conjunction with efforts to increase degree completion would help to ensure student who complete degrees have a quality academic experience as well. Strong systems for assessment of student learning provide balance between academic quality and the demand for increased degree production. Faculty must take the lead to define student learning outcomes for courses and academic programs and to measure student success in accomplishing those outcomes. For example, Tennessee is cited as an example of successful performance funding for public higher education (Bogue, 2002; Bogue & Johnson, 2010). When Tennessee implemented performance funding in 1979 the performance criteria included measures related to the assessment of student learning outcomes and accreditation. Performance funding was credited with fostering the development of assessment of student learning in Tennessee (Banta & Fisher, 1984; Banta & Moffett, 1987, Bogue & Johnson, 2010). Advocates for

performance funding argue that the economic success of the state and the nation depend on increasing the knowledge and skills of the labor force. They assert that increasing the number of degree holders is essential to provide that labor force. Implementing strong programs of assessment of student learning along with institutional responses to performance funding that remove barriers to graduation and encourage degree completion is important to ensure that students who complete degrees have the necessary knowledge and skills.

Mission. Concerns about how responses to performance funding affect the mission of the community college were expressed by participants in the study and reported in the research literature. Two of the colleges in the study changed their institutional mission statements to emphasize degree completion. Changes in recruiting practices and developmental education have implications for the mission of the community college. Potential shifts in priority must be discussed openly among the stakeholders of the community college in each community. Each college and community should consider carefully who the stakeholders are for their college. Typical stakeholders include but are not limited to the administration, faculty, staff, students and potential students, accrediting bodies, and other community members**.** Other stakeholders present within each college's unique environment should also be identified and included in the process. Potential stakeholders include area business and industry leaders, political leaders, public school educators, tribal representatives, and other community leaders. That discussion should include conversations about the role of the individual community college in the community it serves, the functions important for the college in its unique environment, and how prioritizing efforts that increase graduation affect the other

functions of the community college. Discussing these concerns in an intentional and transparent manner allows for consideration of possible unintended effects, contributes to minimizing undesirable results, and enables the college to meet the needs of the community while improving performance on the desired metrics.

Voices of Mid-level Administrators. Mid-level administrators were chosen as the participants in this study because of their role in implementing responses to performance funding. Each of the participants in this study expressed eagerness to discuss their thoughts and concerns about how performance funding affects their community college. They all expressed opinions and concerns about the impact of performance funding on their college and the responses to performance funding within the college. Their comments reflected deep concern for the open access mission of the community college and the success of their students. As community colleges move forward with initiatives in response to performance funding mid-level administrators like those who participated in this study should be actively involved in shaping and implementing those initiatives. When Oklahoma policy makers consider changes to the performance funding policy and when policy makers in other states consider implementing performance funding policies, they should actively seek input into these processes from similar mid-level administrators. Including their voices will not only facilitate the development of initiatives that contribute to the success of students but also enable community colleges to better address the needs of their communities.

Study Limitations

This study was defined as an exploration of responses to the implementation of formula-based performance funding in Oklahoma. The study specifically did not address

questions related to the actual implementation of the policy or the efficacy of the policy in effecting desired changes in the outcome measures. As a qualitative study with a small number of participants, this study is limited to the participant's perceptions and the researcher's interpretations. Although I attempted to reflect the diversity of Oklahoma community colleges in the selection of participants, complexity theory would suggest that the responses in each of those colleges are unique to that college in a specific environment.

Interviewees in this study all described performance funding as closely associated with efforts to increase graduation rates and the overall number of graduates. Due to the association they make between performance funding and completion, this study has included the efforts to improve graduation and retention as responses to performance funding. However, it is likely that the college efforts to improve graduation and retention are also influenced by other forces. The advancement of the college attainment agenda is likely to exert influence on the emphasis placed on degree completion in these colleges. This study does not separate the influences of performance funding from other influences related to degree completion goals.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study is an initial exploratory study and as such raises a number of questions for further research. Expanding the study to include more colleges would provide additional data and provide understanding of responses in environments beyond the three colleges in this study. Expanding the study to include a wider range of participants with senior administrators, faculty, and staff would provide varying perspectives to deepen understanding of responses to performance funding in Oklahoma community colleges.

Including faculty participants in a study would allow for exploration of how performance funding affects faculty governance and the faculty role. A similar study conducted with participants from four-year colleges and universities would provide a different perspective and perhaps differing findings.

Performance funding is only one aspect of the overall emphasis on degree completion in higher education. Complete College America (CCA, 2013), the National Governors Association Complete to Compete (Hoffman & Reindl, 2011; NGA, n.d.; Reindl & Reyna, 2011), and President Obama's White House Completion Agenda (Friedel, et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2011) are high profile initiatives seeking to increase degree attainment in the United States. Complexity theory suggests that new patterns emerge in a web of multiple non-linear feedback loops. This study isolated performance funding as one strand in the web of influences on community colleges. Further study applying the complexity theory framework is needed to identify and articulate factors and influences within the system that affect performance on the desired outcome measures. Identifying these factors and influences could contribute to designing initiatives that minimize unintentional effects on the community college mission.

Additional study is needed to explore the extent to which concerns about the unintended effects of performance funding are realized in practice. Studies are needed to follow changes in academic quality that may result from responses to the implementation of performance funding. Similarly, research is needed to monitor shifts in recruiting practices and the effects of performance funding on the open access mission of the community college. Studies are also needed to identify more fully the broader

community functions of Oklahoma community colleges and to track how those functions are affected by performance funding.

Another potential area of unintended consequences relates to the internal allocation of resources. Although this study did not directly address questions of shifts in the allocation of internal resources, participants expressed concerns that academic programs with fewer graduates might lose resources or be discontinued. Further research is needed to explore how performance funding influences the internal allocation of resources.

Finally, questions remain about the effectiveness of formula-based performance funding in achieving the desired outcomes. Current research suggests that although colleges and universities change in response to performance funding, those changes may not result in increased performance on the desired outcomes. Research is needed to examine how effective Oklahoma's formula-based funding is in accomplishing the outcomes defined in the performance funding formula.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the findings presented in Chapter V in the context of previous research, theory, and practice. Recommendations for future research were also provided. The results of this study indicate that Oklahoma public community colleges are responding to the initiation of a performance funding formula in ways intended to increase the number of certificates and degrees completed at those colleges. Participants accepted performance funding as providing necessary accountability but expressed concerns regarding how responses to performance funding may affect academic quality and the broader mission of the community college. Applying the theoretical framework

of complexity theory suggested that potential unintended effects of college responses to performance funding may exist. Those unintended effects may include restriction in opportunities for students and lowered academic quality. Implications for practice include the need for improved understanding of the performance funding policy, implementation of assessment of student learning programs to balance the demand for degree completion, and discussion among all community college stakeholders regarding the effects of performance funding on the community college mission. Future studies are recommended to expand the range of participants and institutions, to examine the complexity in which community colleges operate, and to examine the efficacy of performance funding in improving performance on the desired outcome measures.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

I. Position and experience at this community college and in higher education.

- What is your position at _____ college? How long have you held that position? What other positions have you held in higher education?
    - What are the responsibilities of your position at ____ college?
    - What is your perspective on the purpose of a college education?
    - In general, what is your approach to administration?

II. Description of the college and community

- Please describe the community that your college serves.
- What is the overall mission of your college?
- Who are the typical students at your college? Who are the typical students in your department/division?

III. Awareness of performance funding

- What is your understanding of how performance funding in Oklahoma higher education relates to your college**?**
- How did you learn about performance funding in Oklahoma higher education**?**

- Who at your college has been the primary leader for responses to performance funding?
- What have been your responsibilities in responding to performance funding**?**

III. Perceived Influences

A. Institution-wide

- What changes have been made in your institution since the performance funding formula was implemented in 2012?
    - What changes have affected student recruitment and admissions?
    - What changes have affected advisement of students?
    - What changes have affected course delivery?
    - What changes have affected degree requirements?
    - What changes are implemented that encourage graduation?
    - What changes are implemented that promote retention?
    - What changes relate to degree completion efforts?
    - What changes relate to the overall mission of the college?
- In your opinion, how has performance funding contributed to these responses?
- What areas of your college are affected most by the performance funding policy?
- Please describe an example of how performance funding might have affected an individual student or students at your institution.

B. Department/Division

- How has your division/department been affected by the performance funding formula?

- What changes have been made in your division or program since the performance funding formula was implemented in 2012?
    - What changes have affected student recruitment and admissions?
    - What changes have affected advisement of students?
    - What changes have affected course delivery?
    - What changes have affected degree requirements?
    - What changes are implemented that encourage graduation?
    - What changes are implemented that promote retention?
    - What changes relate to degree completion efforts?
- In your opinion, how has performance funding contributed to these responses?
- Please describe an example of how responses to performance funding have affected your program.
- Please describe an example of how responses to performance funding have affected an individual student within your program.

IV. Overall perception of performance funding effects

- What benefits of performance funding have you observed? How do these responses benefit the students, college, or community?
- What draw-backs of performance funding have you observed? How do these responses affect the students, college, or community?
- What other forms of accountability could be more useful for your institution?
- Is there any question that I did not ask that you think I should have asked? What is that question? How would you answer it?
- What other comments would you like to add?

APPENDIX B

ADULT CONSENT FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: The Ones That Count: An Exploration of Responses to Performance Funding in Oklahoma Community Colleges

INVESTIGATORS:
Pat Reaves, MS, Oklahoma State University
Advised by: Stephen Wanger, Oklahoma State University

PURPOSE:
This study will explore institutional and administrative responses to the newly implemented performance funding formula in Oklahoma public community colleges.

PROCEDURES
You will complete one interview of less than two hours in which you will be asked to discuss institution and administrative responses to performance funding of Oklahoma public community colleges. Interview questions will ask you to reflect on your experience as a community college administrator. An audio recording will be made of your interview. The interview will be transcribed and you will be invited to review the transcript of the interview.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION:
There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:
You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study. If you are interested, I will send you a copy of the results of the study when it is finished.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. The recordings made of interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and destroyed when the transcript has been verified by the researcher. Data will be stored for up to one year in a locked cabinet in the PI's office (AD239, OSU-OKC). It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

COMPENSATION:
No compensation is provided to participants.

CONTACTS:
You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study.

Principal Investigator
Pat Reaves, MS
AD239
Oklahoma State University-Oklahoma City
900 N. Portland
Oklahoma City, OK 73107

pat.reaves@okstate.edu
(405)945-9166

Advisor
Dr. Stephen Wanger
309 Willard Hall
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078

steve.wanger@okstate.edu
(405)334-2966

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS:
I understand that my participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time, without penalty.

CONSENT DOCUMENTATION:
I have been fully informed about the procedures listed here. I am aware of what I will be asked to do and of the benefits of my participation. I also understand the following statements:

I affirm that I am 18 years of age or older.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form will be given to me. I hereby give permission for my participation in this study.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, May 15, 2014
IRB Application No	ED1476
Proposal Title:	A Comparative Case Study of Responses to State-Mandated Performance Funding in Three Oklahoma Community Colleges
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 5/14/2017

Principal Investigator(s):

Pat Reaves
900 N. Portland
Okla. City, OK 73107

Stephen P. Wanger
309 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

X The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1.Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2.Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3.Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4.Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Sheila Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Pat R. Reaves

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY OF RESPONSES TO STATE-MANDATED PERFORMANCE FUNDING IN THREE OKLAHOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Psychological Services at East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma in 1980

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude* in sociology at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Oklahoma in 1976.

Experience:

Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City

Director, Faculty Development	2012- Present
Associate Professor	2007- Present
Assistant Professor	2003 - 2007
Instructor	2000 - 2003