EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE BUSINESS DEGREE PROGRAMS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By

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To my Mom – guiding me from above
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EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE BUSINESS DEGREE PROGRAMS
IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By

Amy Valente

August 2017

Chair: Swapna Kumar
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Many community colleges face difficult challenges these days such as declining enrollment, increased competition, state mandates, and reduced government funding. Yet, online education remains an area of growth for many community colleges. The unique characteristics and organizational culture of community colleges make them well-suited for online education. As leaders in community colleges contemplate how to increase overall student enrollment, many have considered the implementation of new online degree programs. However, as community colleges expand their online programs, it becomes important to critically evaluate how new online degree programs are implemented. Factors to consider include leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic planning and faculty support that may influence online program implementations.

This study explored how new online degree programs have been implemented within community colleges, clarified the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and examined factors either supporting or hindering the implementation. The study was guided by a conceptual framework that assimilated established change theories (DoI, Ely’s Conditions of Change), business models (STAR\textsuperscript{TM}, New Product Development
Process) and literature to examine the online program implementation process. A qualitative multiple case study research design was utilized to collect data from six participants at three community college campuses. Data from semi-structured interviews, websites and document review revealed that community colleges encourage growth in online programs, but do not methodically plan and manage online program implementations. Despite these challenges, community colleges have implemented online degree programs if champions were persistent, faculty were motivated, and the college provided support.

Yet, several factors were perceived as hindering the implementation. Thus there is an opportunity to improve the implementation process. Findings demonstrated several implications for online education in the professional context and online education for community colleges overall which will be used to guide the improvement of online program implementations for the future.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Community colleges offer more online degree programs than all other Carnegie classifications of higher education institutions in the United States, with student enrollment comprising over 50% of all undergraduate online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2008; Lokken, 2016). Further, community college online enrollments continue to grow more rapidly than those at four-year institutions (Lokken & Mullins, 2015). Given challenging local economic conditions, community colleges often consider implementing new online degree programs as a way to increase enrollment (Jaggars, 2013). Implementation of new online degree programs provides a unique opportunity for community colleges to attract students outside of their service area while improving program offerings (Capra, 2014); this situation is evident in locations experiencing a declining population of high school graduates. In fact, for many community colleges, continued growth in online programs is of utmost importance to the institution’s future sustainability (Allen & Seaman, 2013; Jaggars, 2013).

Public community colleges are frequently part of statewide university systems, such as the State University of New York (SUNY), and they offer both traditional and online programs. In many statewide systems, online programs were added on top of the existing portfolio of degree offerings (Moore & Kearsley, 2012), without full consideration of the ideal structure and resources necessary to support these new programs. For SUNY, this has led to a situation in which each college decides what online programs they will offer using their own process and approach to implementing the new programs. Given the expansion and importance of online programs, SUNY
leaders now seek improved efficiency and effectiveness of online program implementations (Cartwright, 2016).

Community colleges face many challenges today that are well documented: growing competition, resource constraints, limited funding, declining enrollment and government mandates (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Cohen, Brawe, & Kisker, 2014; Mullin, 2010; Phelan, 2014). Despite these challenges, online education remains an area of growth for community colleges, and students are attracted to the flexibility and affordability of these programs (Allen & Seaman, 2016; Lokken & Mullins, 2015).

Recent trends in online education, such as the growth of exclusively online students and declining enrollment in for-profit online institutions, provide community colleges with a sizeable opportunity to expand their online programs and grow student enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2016). However, the implementation of successful online programs requires effective leadership, strategic planning, resources and process across the institution (Kearsley, 2013; Watkins, Kaufman, & Odunlami, 2013). While community colleges were early adopters of online education, these institutions must support additional growth in online education with the resources, planning, and process necessary to remain competitive and experience continued success in online programs (Moloney & Oakley, 2010).

Although online education is often the only area of growth for many community colleges, Lokken (2016) found that community college mission statements do not reflect this, and strategic planning related to online education is lacking. Even today, many small to medium sized community colleges rely on individual faculty to implement new online programs, and this requires faculty to take on new roles and responsibilities than
those they have traditionally been responsible for (Barefield & Meyer, 2013). A recent study of community college administrators identified the greatest barrier to online education growth as engaging faculty to develop the courses and programs (Finkel, 2015).

How can community colleges within a statewide system such as SUNY overcome the challenges and excel in the implementation of new online programs to increase student enrollment? A content analysis of journals from 2009-2013 (Bozkurt et al., 2015) indicates that the majority of distance education research is focused at the undergraduate level. Yet less than one percent of all studies explored community colleges. Further, the research conducted at the community college level tends to focus on three areas: student success (Jaggars, 2013), resistance to online education (Kern, 2010), and how to initially implement distance education in the institution (Barak, 2012; Beaudoin, 2015; Levy & Beaulieu, 2003; Sachs, 1999). Thus, there is a gap in research focused on online degree program development and implementation in community colleges within an existing online education system.

**Professional Context**

To better understand how online programs are implemented within community colleges, this dissertation focused on SUNY, one of the largest public statewide university systems in the United States, specifically the community colleges within the system. This study was particularly relevant for SUNY given that over half of all student enrollment in this statewide system originates from its community colleges. In the SUNY system, online degrees are approved through the state’s review process and enabled through a centralized platform and structure that provides colleges with access to the learning management system, a web-based portal consolidating all online programs and
courses offered by individual colleges, faculty training, and a help desk for faculty and students. Although community colleges benefit from the centralization provided through this platform, each college within SUNY is responsible for the development and implementation of new degree programs at their unique college, thus creating a variety of challenges for the state university.

**Challenges for the State University**

SUNY’s strategic plan identifies significant growth in student enrollment in online programs as a goal (“SUNY Strategic Plan,” 2010). One way to achieve this goal is to better serve the growing population of students who complete their entire degree program online (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Given that the percentage of students enrolled in exclusively online programs in SUNY is well below the national average, growth is desirable and certainly attainable (*Enrollment in Distance Education Courses, by State: Fall 2012, 2014*). While for-profit institutions have historically served this student population, student enrollment is declining for these institutions (Juszkiewicz, 2015). As a result, there is a significant opportunity to grow online enrollment for SUNY.

However, the implementation process for new degree programs has created a situation in which colleges often compete with each other for student enrollment in identical and duplicate online degree programs that are offered by individual institutions through the state university’s online learning portal, OpenSUNY. From a student perspective, the university may appear fragmented as each college works independently, and this can impact the quality and consistency of online education. Recently, SUNY’s Provost discussed these issues and sought innovative ideas and solutions from faculty, administrators, and staff involved in online education. Specifically, the Provost requested that all colleges think differently about how to work
more efficiently as a statewide university using a collaborative approach across colleges (Cartwright, 2016). Given the organizational structure and current individualized approach by college, any change in how online programs are implemented will prove challenging.

**Challenges for the Community College**

Within SUNY, I work at a medium-sized community college, according to Carnegie size classifications (“The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education,” 2015). The college is located in a county that has experienced a steady population decline, similar to surrounding counties (Deffenbaugh, 2015). Due to declining student enrollment and decreased government funding, the college declared financial exigency in 2013 which is similar to bankruptcy in the private sector.

Although the college is experiencing financial difficulties and year after year of declining student enrollment, online education is the only segment that is growing, with 30% of all students learning online. The college currently offers ten fully online programs and is considered an early adopter, since they have provided online programs from 1998. Given the college’s success in online education and its financial position, the college identified the implementation of new online degree programs as a strategic goal. However, no specific plans or budget were created to achieve this goal. College leaders continue to focus on campus-based initiatives such as enhancing the physical campus rather than on online education. Thus, the process and organizational structure necessary to support the implementation of new online programs at the college where I am employed has not been thoroughly considered.
Problem of Practice

Both SUNY and the community college that I work for have identified growth in online education as a significant opportunity. Yet the approach for the implementation of new online programs is still evolving. In my role as a business professor and coordinator of business programs, I have implemented three new online degree programs on my campus. Throughout the process, I discovered that the faculty are responsible for developing new online degree proposals and managing the implementation. Unfortunately, this approach may set the new program up for failure since implementing a new online program requires a significantly different skill set than teaching (Lloyd, Byrne, & McCoy, 2012).

As a business professor, I teach commonly accepted business models, principles, and frameworks in areas such as strategic planning, organizational structure, management, and marketing. To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of online program implementations across SUNY and specifically within community colleges, the application of business principles may be beneficial (Roe, Toma, & Yallapragada, 2015). Colleges experiencing growing student enrollment and success in their online programs emphasize a disciplined approach to scaling their online education through the use of business and financial models (Moloney & Oakley, 2010). The present study explored how other community colleges within SUNY implemented new online degree programs, by examining how the college is organized, who championed new online programs, who played what roles, who managed the program through implementation, and what factors either supported or hindered implementation. The findings were analyzed to explore the extent to which business principles are applied to determine whether there are gaps between the current state and an ideal state.
Before embarking on substantive improvement in online program development and implementation across all colleges, it is important to describe the current situation in more detail. The research conducted in this dissertation provides in-depth insight into how new online degree programs are envisioned, championed and implemented across multiple statewide community colleges through the lens of the online faculty and staff. This research will better inform my college, other community colleges and SUNY as they consider how to improve online program implementations. The ultimate goal is to use the findings of this research to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and success of new online program implementations so that community colleges can gain the online student enrollment that they require to be sustainable.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore how new online degree programs are implemented in community colleges, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those involved, and to reveal perceived factors that support or hinder the implementation of these new programs. The findings from this study will provide community college leaders with information to evaluate the current situation, recognize strengths and weaknesses, address gaps and develop recommendations to improve new online degree implementations.

**Research Questions**

The central research question for this study was, “How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?” The following sub-questions reinforced the central research question:

1. Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?
2. What factors were perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?
3. What factors were perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?
Research Design

This research was conducted at three community colleges within SUNY. A case study approach involving an in-depth examination of an issue in a real-life context served as the research design for this qualitative study. Given that the study involved multiple campuses, a multiple case study design was used to incorporate the perspectives from each campus to inform the research question (Creswell, 2013). The study was limited to online business degree programs given that this is my discipline and business degree programs comprise the highest portion (35%) of all fully online programs within SUNY.

Purposeful sampling was used to establish the community colleges involved in the study (Creswell, 2013). At the time of the study, there were 57 business-related, fully online associates degree programs offered across the university at 22 community colleges. The criteria for inclusion in the study was that the community college had previously implemented an online business degree program between 2009 and 2015, the degree of similarity to my institution’s size, number of online sections offered and population of the county it serves. Four colleges met this criterion, but due to time constraints, three campuses were studied.

For each campus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key faculty, faculty chairs and online learning staff involved in previous online business degree program implementations. The purpose of these interviews was to develop an in-depth understanding of each participant’s context and how new online business programs have been implemented on their campus. Factors examined were derived from the theoretical models in my conceptual framework: leadership, organizational culture,
organizational structure, strategic planning, process, and faculty support. The interviews were conducted by phone and were recorded.

Coding was conducted to determine patterns and themes from both the researcher and from participant data. The coding approach utilized was categorical aggregation using within-case and cross-case theme analysis to compare and contrast themes across the community colleges (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995).

**Limitations**

The qualitative research design for this study produced limited transferability to other colleges or academic settings because the study was conducted with three community colleges in one statewide university system. To minimize this limitation and provide readers with confidence in the credibility of the study, a holistic account incorporating in-depth description and detail was given on the subjects and data was then collected. Another limitation of this research design is that as the researcher, I am the primary data collection and analysis instrument; thus my biases were reflexively clarified. Additionally, the quality of the research was reliant on me as the interviewer (Patton, 1990). While I have conducted interviews in many work-related situations, I have limited experience in conducting interviews for research purposes. Thus, the use of an interview guide was helpful to focus the interviews.

**Significance**

Personally, the research findings provided me with a better understanding of the process of new online program implementations at colleges similar to mine. I will share the findings with my campus leaders and make recommendations for improvement. Given my active involvement in online education across SUNY, I can share the results of this research with all community colleges across the system and extend the
communication of the research findings to other statewide public college systems. Ultimately, I would like to be perceived both within and outside of my institution as a change agent for online education improvement in community college settings.

In my community college, online programs will help maintain the school as a viable institution in an environment of extensive financial challenges due to declining face-to-face enrollment, decreased funding and increased competition. The findings can be used by the institution to improve the organization and their approach to new online program implementations. This is significant as one-third of my college's student enrollment comes from online education, and it is considered an area of growth. Further, SUNY’s strategic plan calls for dramatic expansion of online education while at the same time the institution seeks innovative approaches to streamline new academic program implementations across its campuses. The findings of this research can be used to assist SUNY leaders in gaining a perspective on the current situation. This is significant as SUNY representatives consider how to improve online education within their system.

Lastly, this study has significance in the field of online education for community colleges as leaders consider how to structure their organizations and develop appropriate processes to best support new online degree program implementations on their campus (Davis, Little & Stewart, 2008). For many community colleges, the implementation of new online degree programs is essential to the institution's ongoing growth and viability, yet, online learning is often treated peripherally. Although online students can choose to attend colleges across the country, students often select colleges that are affordable and geographically close to them (Allen & Seaman, 2016;
These are clear advantages for community colleges, provided that their online programs are marketed effectively and meet student expectations (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2015; Lokken, 2016). Community colleges have a unique opportunity to grow their online education through the implementation of new online programs and this study can provide important insights into that process.

**Definition of Terms**

**Community College.** “Any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 5).

**Distance Education.** This term is defined as educational experiences in which teaching and learning are held at different times or places through the use of technology.

**Exclusively Online Student.** This term defines a student who takes all of their classes online (Allen & Seaman, 2016).

**For-Profit Institution.** These institutions are primarily large publicly traded corporations that are managed by a Board of Directors and are in the business of education to make a profit (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2013).

**Online Education.** This term is defined as a form of distance education that is delivered through the Internet (Mbuva, 2014).

**Online Program.** An online program is one in which students complete the entire degree program through fully online courses without any face-to-face requirements (Mayadas, Miller, & Sener, 2015).
Private Nonprofit Institution. These nonprofit institutions are independently operated and governed by a board of trustees (“Quick facts about independent colleges,” 2014).

Program Implementation. This term is defined as the process of the college moving from planning and designing the curriculum to actually offering a new degree program to students.

Public Institution. These institutions are regulated by federal and state government and funded by a combination of state and local funding and tuition.

Traditional Institution. These institutions provide a physical campus that students attend and include face-to-face classroom teaching (Pathak, 2016).

Overview

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study including my professional context, the problem of practice, purpose, and significance. Chapter 2 includes a review of relevant literature, theoretical frameworks to ground the study, and the conceptual framework used to inform the study. The research methodology is described in Chapter 3 with Chapter 4 reporting the results. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings, implications for professional practice, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE EXAMINATION

Community colleges serve half of the students in the United States and have flourished throughout their 100-plus year history (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016; Cohen & Brawer, 1994). But, recent challenges threaten the survival of many community colleges. Initially, community colleges were public institutions envisioned to be funded equally by the state, local county, and students (Phelan, 2014). Due to the gradual and steadily decreasing state and local funding, many community colleges now rely more heavily on student enrollment to meet their budget projections (Mullin, 2010). Coupled with recent declining student enrollment, increased competition, and the opportunity to gain students outside of their service areas, many community college leaders seek to expand their online program offerings (Levin, 2005). Yet, it is questionable whether community colleges have the appropriate organizational structure, planning processes, and necessary resources to do so (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003; Lokken, 2016).

The purpose of this study was to explore how new online business degree programs have been implemented within community colleges. Gaining an understanding of the roles that people play in the implementation and factors that supported or hindered the implementation can inform other institutions. This chapter begins with an overview of the types of higher education institutions in the United States. Following this, the terminology of online education, history of online education, organizational models, curriculum development, and research conducted on factors that enable or hinder online education is synthesized. Theoretical frameworks and models were incorporated to provide perspective on factors such as leadership, culture, people,
process, organizational strategy, program implementation and planning that may influence the innovation and change involved in a program implementation within an organization. Finally, literature related to community colleges was examined to uncover research gaps – the history, importance of community colleges and current challenges, particularly related to online program implementations.

**Types of Higher Education Institutions**

Before moving into the literature, it is important to gain an understanding of the different types of colleges in the United States.

**Traditional Institution**

These institutions provide on-ground, face-to-face higher education to students in a classroom on a physical campus (Cook & Sonnenberg, 2014; Pathak, 2016).

**For-Profit Institution**

Originally known as *proprietary* institutions, today for-profit institutions are primarily large publicly traded corporations that are managed by a Board of Directors (Deming et al., 2013). These businesses are scalable, highly profitable and generate profit through the selling of education (Bessolo, 2011; Moloney & Oakley, 2010). However, these institutions face increased scrutiny by the government due to their high tuition, stigma of low quality, and low graduation rates (Deming et al., 2013; Driscoll, Comm, & Mathaisel, 2013; Roe et al., 2015).

**Private Nonprofit Institution**

Independently operated and governed by a board of trustees, these institutions are not businesses and do not generate a profit. In the United States, these institutions account for approximately 36% of all colleges (“Quick facts about independent colleges,” 2014).
Public Institution

These institutions are regulated by federal and state government and funded by a combination of state and local funding and tuition. Similar to private nonprofit institutions, public institutions are nonprofit. Many public institutions are operated through a statewide university system. Approximately 37% of all institutions in the United States are public (“Quick facts about independent colleges,” 2014).

Community College

A community college is a type of public institution. Community colleges originated in the United States in the 1920’s as junior colleges, initially defined as institutions providing the first two years of college (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). This definition was later expanded to include the concept that junior colleges should continuously evolve their programs based on the needs of their community. In the mid-20th century, the term community college was used to describe comprehensive, publicly supported institutions. The terms and definitions used to describe community colleges have been debated and redefined over the years. More recently, the term associate’s college is defined as “institutions at which the highest level degree awarded is an associate’s degree” (“The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education,” 2015). Given the terminology most frequently used, the term community college is defined as “any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 5).

Online Education in Higher Education Institutions in the United States

Given the significant growth of online education in higher education in the United States, exploring its history can provide context to the current situation. This section includes an overview of the terminology of online education, common organizational
models as online education is offered at an institution, and the program implementation process. Theoretical frameworks provide perspective on factors that support or hinder online program implementation.

**The Terminology of Online Education**

The focus of this literature review specifically relates to online education in the community college setting. Thus it is important to consider related terms that are often used interchangeably, but have slightly different meanings: distance education, online education, and e-learning. Moore, Dickson-Deane and Galyen (2011) conducted a study to explore these definitions and found a lack of consistency in the terminology in both the literature and the research findings. While most participants in their study recognized a difference between the terms, the definitions were not uniform across the participants. Moore and Kearsley (2012) also examined the various definitions and advocated for the term *distance education* as an overarching term that incorporates both e-learning and online learning.

For this dissertation, the term *distance education* is defined as educational experiences in which teaching and learning are held at different times or places through the use of technology (Moore et al., 2011; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Further, the term *online education* is defined as a form of distance education that is delivered through the Internet (Mbuva, 2014). The term *e-learning* has been purposefully excluded due to the uncertainty of the meaning and conflicting definitions based on the technological tools and media included in the definition (Moore et al., 2011). Additionally, the focus of this study is on the entirety of online education, not just the learning aspects.
Online program

In education, a program is defined as a collection of many courses (Moore et al., 2011; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The Instructional Technology Council defines an online program as one in which 70% of the courses are taken online (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2013). To facilitate commonality and avoid confusion, the Online Learning Consortium recently developed a set of updated definitions for online programs which have been adopted for this dissertation. An online program is one in which students complete the entire program through fully online courses without any face-to-face requirements (Mayadas et al., 2015). An online program could be a face-to-face program adapted for the online environment or one that was developed as an online program originally.

Exclusively online students

The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) conducts a national census and collects data on postsecondary online student enrollments (“National center for education statistics: International comparisons of achievement,” 2016). They have recently started using the term exclusively distance education to define a student who takes all of their classes online (Allen & Seaman, 2016). This study will use the term exclusively online students to represent students who complete their entire program online (Allen & Seaman, 2016).

Program implementation

The term implementation is used both narrowly or broadly, depending on the context. From an instructional design perspective, implementation refers to students interacting with newly developed instructional materials (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). In a broader definition, Rogers (2003) views implementation from the viewpoint of innovative
change. An innovation is defined as a new idea that offers value (Gosper & Ifenthaler, 2014) and implementation is the stage within the innovation-decision process in which the innovation is put into practice (Rogers, 2003). Peters, Adam, and Alonge (2014) define implementation as “the act of carrying an intention into effect” (p. 731) through programs, policies, or practices. In the context of an academic program, the term implementation involves the process of the college moving from planning and designing the curriculum to actually offering a new degree program to students.

**Online Education History and Context**

Distance education was initially developed to provide education to those students who lived in remote areas and were unable to travel to college. Over the years, the media of distance education has evolved from mail, television, and video to the Internet technologies that are used today (Barak, 2012; Kern, 2010). As online education expanded, several studies occurred to determine whether student learning outcomes were equal between online and traditional education. While Wright (2014) identifies hesitations about online education, most research studies indicate that there is no significant difference in student learning outcomes between online education and traditional programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, online education is equivalent to traditional education (Lokken, 2016).

Student demand for online education in the United States continues to grow, with student enrollment increasing by 7% between 2012 and 2014 (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Public institutions represent the majority of all online student enrollment (72%), and this has grown by 9% during this same time period (Allen & Seaman, 2016). Developing and implementing innovative online programs is one strategy for public institutions to remain competitive in the thriving online education industry. When organizations initially
consider offering online education, institutional leaders must determine how to structure the organization to support online education. Organizational structure fundamentally drives how an institution manages online education, but how should an organization evolve to accommodate online education? The next section reviews the literature on organizational models for online education.

Online Education Organizational Models

Not all colleges that offer online education are organized in the same manner. Moore and Kearsley (2012) discuss different approaches to organizational structures in online education: single-mode, dual-mode or consortium. A single-mode institution is one in which the organization is dedicated to and structured to support only online education. Large for-profit entirely online institutions fall into this category. Dual-mode institutions are those that have supplemented their traditional face-to-face education with online education (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Although these institutions originated as brick-and-mortar, they have made a significant investment in online education through learning management systems and typically provide dedicated online staff who work with faculty to develop online courses and programs. Pennsylvania State University is an example of a dual-mode institution that offers online education through a unit called the World Campus (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The State University of New York is also a dual mode institution that has a centralized unit called OpenSUNY. However, SUNY has not centralized the development and implementation of new online programs; this is the responsibility of its individual colleges.

A consortium is a group of institutions that collaborate to offer online education in varying arrangements. Given the limited resources of public statewide universities, consortia can centralize online education, reduce duplicate resources on each campus
and therefore better serve its students (Fishman, 2014). One type of consortia is loosely structured and simply provides an online portal to deliver a consolidated view for students of courses and programs offered by the institutions. Another type of consortia is organized using a centralized approach to the administration and operation of online education. Western Governor’s University is an example of a consortium using a centralized approach to online education.

Traditional institutions must evolve and consider the necessary changes in organizational structure to effectively manage online education (Barak, 2012; Kern, 2010; O’Neill, Singh, & O’Donoghue, 2004). Statewide public college systems vary widely from highly centralized to highly decentralized online education (Cohen & Brawer, 1994). Advocates of a centralized system stress efficiency and control over online education to avoid duplicate efforts and ensure uniformity of online instruction (Cohen et al., 2014; Davis et al, 2008; Eskey, 2010). Opponents contend that a decentralized model offers more flexibility and freedom based on campus needs. However, each campus must have adequate resources to develop and implement new online courses and programs (Cohen et al., 2014). The University of Maryland University College (UMUC) is a public university that serves as an example of an institution embracing organizational changes to best support online education. UMUC has offered distance education programs since 1940 and has gained a reputation as a leader in online education, currently serving 85,000 online students worldwide (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006). Recently, UMUC centralized its online education, citing standardization as a significant advantage. Despite their centralized structure, the organization espouses an innovative institutional culture that sets them apart from their
competition (Proposed University of Maryland University College academic governance model, 2015).

While the purpose of this study is to explore online degree program implementations within existing online platforms, reviewing the literature related to institutions initially offering online education for the first time is also beneficial and applicable.

Initially Offering Online Education as an Institution

Research concerned with institutions initially offering online education in higher education institutions is copious and viewed from a variety of angles. Prior to an institution contemplating online education, Simonson and Schlosser (2013) advocate for a systematic plan and thoughtful consideration of the mission, vision, planning and policy development. When offering online education for the first time, Delaney (2009) identified several specific policy issues for consideration – faculty compensation, faculty support, recruiting, marketing, intellectual property of courses, innovation adoption and acceptance of online education, organizational values, technical infrastructure, and student support. Online education impacts the entire educational system – learning, teaching, communication, design and management (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Kearsley (2013) further clarifies that online education requires management in five main areas: 1) curriculum, 2) staffing, 3) faculty effectiveness, 4) assessment of program outcomes, 5) technology and institutional aspects. In light of the research discussed thus far, it is clear that offering online education has significant impacts across the entire institution.

To better understand the organizational changes that occur when online education is initially offered at an institution, Barak (2012) conducted qualitative studies at graduate institutions. The researchers concluded that this initiative requires an
integrated and collaborative effort across the campus. A roadmap for new online education initiatives such as the Online Resources and eLearning Implementation (OREI) framework can guide the planning, implementation and evaluation phases (Kihoza, Zlotnikova, Bada, & Kalegele, 2016). Organizational components impacted by online education include infrastructure, technology, training, policies, stakeholder involvement, and resources (Kihoza et al., 2016).

According to Saba (2013), coordination among subsystems such as hardware, software, telecommunications, instructional, educational, social, and global is necessary. Similarly, Basak, Wotto, & Bélanger (2016) identified eight critical success factors that affect online education implementation – technological, institutional, pedagogical, management, ethical, evaluation, resources and social interaction. Online education systems must also be flexible to accommodate ongoing changes in curriculum, technology and approaches (Davis et al., 2008).

Given the importance of growing online education for many institutions, the present study aims to better understand how online degree programs are implemented within an existing online education system and the roles and responsibilities necessary. The next section provides insight into what has been found in the literature regarding implementations.

**Implementation of Online Degree Programs**

The implementation process for online degree programs requires careful planning, organization, people and management (Burke, 2005; Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989). Institutions that are successful in growing their online programs utilize a methodical approach to program development based on market demand, capacity to
deliver the programs, and fit with the institution’s mission and vision (Moloney & Oakley, 2010).

The program implementation process involves a number of activities that move an online program from the planning phase to an online program offered to students (Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989). These activities include planning, budgeting, curriculum development, and marketing, which involve faculty, administration and other staff members (Williams, 2003). Online program development initiatives are typically led by a champion or change agent; faculty often serve in this capacity (Owen & Demb, 2004; Williams, 2003). Administrative responsibilities normally performed by program directors, coordinators or academic deans include deciding what courses to offer, overseeing the process of designing and implementing the courses, recruiting students, instituting policies, and monitoring the quality of the program (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

According to Khan and Law (2015), defining, developing and implementing the curriculum is the most important step in the program implementation process. Staffing for curriculum development is highly dependent on the organizational structure of online education at the institution. In a face-to-face classroom setting, individual faculty are responsible for content development, and developing and maintaining courses and curriculum (Kern, 2010; Neely & Tucker, 2010). In online curriculum development, conventional faculty responsibilities may shift.

Pizziferro and Shelton (2008) offer a process for online curriculum development, defining the roles and responsibilities necessary throughout the process. While faculty provide the content knowledge as subject matter experts, roles such as a curriculum writer to develop courses and an instructional designer to design instruction using
interactive technology have emerged (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Neely & Tucker, 2010; Williams, 2003). A camera operator, video editor and captioning staff can also support faculty in content development for online courses (McPherson & Bacow, 2015). Thus, an instructional design team may form to develop the curriculum collaboratively as a group. Single-mode institutions develop curriculum using a team approach, typically led by an administrator and guided by a senior faculty member (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Puzziferro and Shelton (2008) agree that faculty should lead the instructional design team and the curriculum development process, but do not discuss the need for an administrator to oversee the process. In other situations, faculty develop curriculum without the use of a team and may not develop videos or interactive technology at all (Austin, 2010; Barefield & Meyer, 2013; Lokken, 2016).

After the new courses are developed, scheduled and assigned to faculty, the college promotes the program to prospective students through various media to drive student enrollment. Morrison, Ross, Kemp, and Kalman (2013) identify the need for promotion to advertise and publicize the new online program, which can be handled through a marketing specialist (Kearsley, 2013). In other scenarios, faculty develop, implement and promote their own programs (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Neely & Tucker, 2010). While Moloney and Oakley (2010) acknowledge the importance of marketing online programs to reach targeted student enrollment, they also point out that this is often ignored in many institutions, especially those with limited resources (Lokken, 2016). Successful program implementations follow a specific process outlining the necessary stages (Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989).
The following sections review the literature related to curriculum development models relative to the implementation of online degree programs, and specifically to business online degree programs.

**Curriculum Development Models and Online Program Development**

Curriculum is defined in different ways in the literature. For this dissertation, curriculum involves the learning activities and composition of educational programs that are offered to students (Khan & Law, 2015). Curriculum is the foundation of education; thus it is crucial for colleges to continuously evolve curriculum in response to changes in their environment through the implementation of new academic programs (Khan & Law, 2015). Curriculum development necessitates defining, proposing and preparing the courses that comprise a particular academic program (Null, 2011). Curriculum development models provide guidance to those who lead curriculum development initiatives (O’Neill, 2010). The selection of a curriculum development model is dependent on the conditions and requirements of the instruction, the teachers, and the learners (Lowyck, 2014; Morrison et al., 2013).

O’Neill (2010) developed a resource guide that identifies predominant curriculum development models, distinguishing two main categories – product-focused or process-focused. Other approaches to categorizing curriculum development are centered on either the subject, learner or problem (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017). Product-focused, also referred to as objectivist or subject-focused, curriculum development models emphasize content and teacher control, and are considered subject-centered (Elander & Cronje, 2016; O’Neill, 2010). The original product-based model, the Four Basic Principles model, contends that defining the purpose, prescribing the learning activities, and how students will be evaluated is the basis of curriculum development (Tyler, 1949). Another
prominent product-based model is the Backward Design Model that advocates for designing curriculum based on outcomes and evidence-based assessments (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Task-analysis models focus on determining the tasks necessary to develop essential content and skills, often concerned with subject-matter analysis and learning analysis (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2017).

In contrast, process-focused, or constructivist curriculum development models focus on student control and choice. Thus they are learner-centered (Elander & Cronje, 2016; O’Neill, 2010). A leading process-focused model is the Deliberation Model whereby faculty select the focus of the learning, but give students freedom to plan their own learning (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004). Post-positivism models contend that curriculum emerges and evolves through an uncertain process without structure (O’Neill, 2010). Toohey (1999) further elaborates on post-positivism models through the inclusion of experiential models that incorporate learning by experience and social critical models that include collaborative group projects focused on solving current social problems. The Four-Component Instructional Design (4C/ID) model includes both objectivist and constructivist elements and advocates for both in curriculum development (Elander & Cronje, 2016).

The question is, which curriculum development models are the best fit for online programs? O’Neill (2010) stresses that curriculum development is often informed by multiple models, and this is true of online education. Many organizations utilize a structured approach to online curriculum development, incorporating instructional system design planning through a framework such as ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implement and Evaluate) to guide the process (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).
These models incorporate principles such as clear objectives, planned participation, small structured units, synthesis, simulation and variety in the curriculum design. According to Porter (2004), an effective online curriculum must be well structured, interesting, innovative, with usable and appropriate course content. Puzziferro and Shelton (2008) suggest a team-based, systems-oriented model called Active Mastery Learning that incorporates content mastery, active application, and interaction, grounded in both objectivist and constructivist paradigms.

A Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) curriculum model is one where faculty create experiences for students based on the Scaffolded Knowledge Integration Framework – incorporating active learning, tools for reflection, authentic learning, and social collaboration (Quinton & Allen, 2014). Radical approaches such as the rhizomatic model propose that curriculum is constructed in real-time by the community of learners, not experts; curriculum is flexible and shaped as a result of the environment and community (Cormier, 2008). Many online curriculum models incorporate an experienced curriculum, which "expands attention to thoughts, meanings, and feelings of students as they encounter it" (Schubert, 2009, p. 209) through collaborative, interactive, reflective, and authentic learning experiences. This type of experiential online curriculum development model is particularly relevant for business degree programs, which is the topic of the next section.

**Business curriculum development.** The purpose of this study is to explore online business degree program implementations within community colleges. In graduate institutions, online business degree programs have demonstrated strong, sustained enrollment, and high quality coursework (Popovich & Neel, 2005; Terry,
Among undergraduate students, business is the most popular field of online study (Behara & Davis, 2015; Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2015) and student demand for new programs remains strong (McFarlane, 2014). Thus, a significant opportunity exists for institutions to offer undergraduate online business degree programs to tap into new market segments (Wright, 2014).

Characteristics of excellence in business curriculum include innovation, currency and relevancy, and the demonstration of a strong connection with employers and businesses (McFarlane, 2014). In their study of Illinois community colleges, Tovar and Query (2005) examined the extent to which the business entrepreneurship curriculum met student needs and found gaps in what students expected to learn and what they actually learned. Further, a disconnect between what employers want from new hires and what colleges teach in their business degrees, coupled with a lack of innovation, can threaten the ability for business programs to gain a competitive advantage (David & David, 2011; McFarlane, 2014). Thus, institutions need to be cognizant of these risks when considering new online business programs. Behara and Davis (2015) describe the curriculum for business programs as pragmatic and creative, incorporating internship experiences, service learning, and undergraduate research (Behara & Davis, 2015). Further, Collins, Weber, and Zambrano (2013) suggest that business programs include authentic assessments such as problem-based learning, simulations and portfolio-based projects which are particularly conducive for online learning (Atchley, Wingenbach, & Akers, 2013; Gaytan, 2013).

Given the importance of developing and implementing effective new online business programs, the review will now explore theoretical frameworks that support the
research questions and those factors that may be considered enablers or barriers to online education implementation.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

This section includes theoretical frameworks and models that provide perspective on factors such as leadership, culture, people, process, organizational strategy, program implementation and planning that may influence the innovation and change involved in an online program implementation within an institution. Upon initial review of theoretical frameworks related to online education, many frameworks were considered, but some were not included as they did not clearly inform the study. For example, the instructional design process using the ADDIE model (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Morrison et al., 2013) was considered but not included because an online program implementation is larger than instructional design and broader factors must be considered. As institutions continue to focus on growing online education in their institutions, it is important to include models that inform how an organization handles change. Of the many change models that exist, the Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003) and Ely’s Eight Conditions (Ellsworth, 2000) best inform this research at the organizational level. Ultimately, the research will provide information that can be used to determine recommended changes for my institution. A review of each framework follows.

**Diffusion of Innovations**

The Diffusion of Innovations model provides insight into innovation in organizations and factors that can best support innovativeness. An innovation is defined as an idea that is perceived as new by the individual or unit of adoption (Rogers, 2003). In the present study, the innovation is a new online degree program. Rogers (2003)
advocates that certain structural characteristics are related to innovativeness, such as the institutional leader espousing a positive attitude toward change. Thus, institutions who desire new online degree programs should embrace change in an effort to stimulate organizational innovativeness.

A champion is defined as a “charismatic individual who throws his or her weight behind an innovation, thus overcoming indifference or resistance that the new idea may provoke in an organization” (Rogers, 2003, p. 414). Rogers (2003) maintains that the presence of a champion is often the difference between a successful innovation and failure. In the community college setting, champions are often faculty; therefore campus leaders can support faculty who champion new online education programs by fostering an institutional culture of innovation and collaboration (Owen & Demb, 2004).

The Diffusion of Innovations theory also proposes an innovation process consisting of two broad activities – initiation and implementation (Rogers, 2003) that can inform this study. The initiation process consists of the identification of a need, matching an innovation to meet the need, and planning for the adoption of the innovation (Rogers, 2003). In this study, the need is identified as growth in online programs and the innovation is the new online degree program. Implementation involves the “events, actions, and decisions involved in putting the innovation into use” (Rogers, 2003, p. 421). In the context of this research, implementation is the entire process of developing and implementing an online degree program.

**Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change**

Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change (Appendix A) focuses on those factors that promote change (Ellsworth, 2000). Applying this model to the research at hand, the challenges that community colleges face as described previously necessitate the need
to develop online programs (as a result of dissatisfaction with the status quo). The faculty and staff must know how to implement online programs (sufficient knowledge and skills). The college must allocate the resources necessary to implement the online programs (availability of resources), but also must provide appropriate time (availability of time) and motivation (rewards or incentives). Key stakeholders must have a voice in the change (participation), while leaders must express continuing support (commitment) and encouragement (leadership).

**New product development process**

Given that this study examined business degree programs, two frameworks from the business world were incorporated. The first framework was used to inform the actual process of implementing new degree programs. Booz, Allen, and Hamilton (1982) created a new product development process that outlines the steps that should be taken when implementing a successful new product or service. New product development is defined as the transformation of a market opportunity into a product available for sale (Krishnan & Ulrich, 2001). The steps in the new product development process include 1) new product strategy development, 2) idea generation, 3) screening and evaluation, 4) business analysis, 5) development, 6) testing, and 7) commercialization. As it relates to this study, the product that was developed and offered was an online business degree program.

The new product development process was originally created to assist non-profit organizations as they developed new product offerings to minimize risk, maximize success and ensure long-term prosperity (Booz et al., 1982). This model was selected for this study because it is highly regarded in business disciplines, taught in most introductory marketing and business classes, and serves as the basis for subsequent
models (Scheuing & Johnson, 1989). Additionally, this framework was originally developed to inform nonprofit organizations, which makes it ideally applicable to this research (Booz et al., 1982).

**The STAR model™**

The STAR Model™ (Kates & Galbraith, 2007) is a management framework for organizational design. Online education is complex and global expansion, competition, changing business models, innovation, and efficiency pressures have been introduced that must be accommodated by the university (Kessler & Kates, 2010). The STAR Model™ proposes a “deliberate process of configuring structures, processes, reward systems, and people practices to create an effective organization capable of achieving the business strategy” (Kates & Galbraith, 2007, p. 3). The model considers how organizations can differentiate themselves from competitors to achieve their strategic goals through an appropriate organizational structure, talent, and management processes. In this study, the model will be used to identify which of these organizational design elements support or hinder online education implementations.

The theoretical frameworks provide a basis for understanding how institutions leverage a centralized distance education platform to implement new online degree programs on their campuses. The interview guide questions will be formulated based on the foundation of these theoretical frameworks. The review will now explore those factors that may be considered enablers or barriers to online education implementation.

**Factors that Support or Hinder Online Program Implementations**

The barriers to successfully implementing online education have been studied extensively. Traditional institutions that introduce online education often experience barriers such as resistance to change, inadequate funding, limited resources, retraining...
of existing personnel, and reinvention of policies, practices, and processes (Davis et al., 2008; Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009). In an effort to consolidate the literature, Muilenburg and Berge (2001) conducted an exploratory factor analysis and found ten categories of barriers to distance education: (1) administrative structure, (2) organizational change, (3) technical expertise, (4) social interaction and quality, (5) faculty compensation and time, (6) threat of technology, (7) legal issues, (8) evaluation/effectiveness, (9) access, and (10) student-support services.

The findings from a survey of 2504 faculty, staff and administrators indicate that the top barriers to online education included increased time commitment, lack of funding, organizational resistance to change, lack of shared vision, lack of support staff, and lack of strategic planning for online education (Berge & Muilenburg, 2000). Khan and Law (2015) assert that colleges lack the innovative culture to grow online programs and attribute this deficiency to a lack of strategic planning, limited resources, and lack of leadership support.

Beaudoin (2015) summarizes the challenges that all higher education institutions should consider when embarking in online education including: 1) managing change, not technology, 2) maintaining a meaningful role for faculty, and 3) maximizing innovation while minimizing disruption. In a survey of faculty in one university, Lloyd, Byrne, and McCoy (2012) found the greatest barriers in online education to be increased workload, time commitment, lack of personal relationships with students, frequent technology failures, and inadequate compensation for instruction. However, faculty-perceived barriers varied based on faculty gender, experience and rank (Lloyd et al., 2012). Moloney and Oakley (2010) maintain that the greatest impediments to
growing online education at nonprofit higher education institutions include lack of a mission for online education, faculty focused on research but not teaching, cost of program development, cuts in funding, faculty resistance to change, and use of adjuncts. For the purposes of this study, the factors that will be explored include leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic planning and faculty support. Each of these factors will now be examined in more depth.

**Leadership**

The first factor to consider is the importance of leadership and the types of leaders that best support online program implementations. “Effective leadership, meaning the ability to communicate the institution’s goals, wisely taking action to achieve these goals, and communicating successes to the student body and faculty, while continually planning for the future, is the vehicle driving a sustainable institution” (Driscoll et al., 2013, p. 260). To effectively manage the ongoing change inherent in online education, institutions require leaders who envision the strategic importance of online education and empower faculty and staff to realize this vision (Beaudoin, 2013). In a study examining factors related to the success of implementing online programs, Abel (2005) found that executive leadership support and commitment of online education development were the most important factors. In a recent literature review, Beaudoin (2013) found a large body of research related to leadership, yet very little concerning leadership specifically related to online education. To address a literature gap in leadership models specifically related to “how to implement and sustain online programs” (p. 1), Barefield and Meyer (2013) developed the Administrative Support Matrix for leaders to employ as online programs are implemented.
McCleskey (2014) examined leadership literature throughout its history and identified three seminal leadership theories – transformational, situational, and transactional. It is useful to define each of these leadership types and consider those that may be best suited for online education. A transactional leader is one who focuses on organizational efficiency, accomplishing objectives, avoiding risks, and maintaining the status quo (McCleskey, 2014). A transformational leader is one who embraces change by evaluating current situations, considering innovative approaches, overcoming obstacles, minimizing risks, inspiring others and taking action (Austin, 2010; Davis et al., 2008; Sinek, 2009; Torres, 2013). Beaudoin (2013) contends that transformational leaders are particularly effective in online education because they are instrumental in collaborating, motivating others and advocating for the necessary changes in their institution to be successful in online education.

Situational leaders are those who evaluate the situation, determine who is involved, and adjust their style accordingly (Beaudoin, 2013; McCleskey, 2014). There are many criticisms of situational leadership, most notably, the ambiguity and lack of consistency in the leadership approach (McCleskey, 2014). Yet, given the unique situation for each college, a combination of transformational and situational leadership is often most effective in online education (Beaudoin, 2013). The competencies necessary for distance education leaders are identified in the Distance Learning Leader Pyramid of Competencies model. They include knowing, designing, managing, leading and visioning distance education (Simonson, Smaldino, & Zvacek, 2015). A distance education leader is characterized as an inspirational leader who guides the organization
and motivates its people towards the future vision through a shared mission, goals and objectives (Simonson et al., 2015).

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is defined as the shared assumptions, values, and beliefs that develop in an organization, and which shape and guide the behavior of its members (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Schermerhorn & Bachrach, 2016). Moore and Kearsley (2012) contend that a culture that embraces innovation and change is necessary to grow online education in an increasingly competitive market. Rogers (2003) discusses organizational characteristics that facilitate the initiation of innovative ideas: decentralized structure, less bureaucratic, and with a high degree of interconnectedness. Kern (2010) found that an organizational culture that values online education is a significant factor influencing an institution’s growth of online education.

Organizational Structure

Online education requires substantial organizational change, many resources, and cross-departmental collaboration (Austin, 2010; Boddy et al., 2013; Slimp, 2014). As stated previously, organizations can be structured in various ways to support online education. This section describes the literature that examines which organizational models are most effective to support new online program implementations. Moore and Kearsley (2012) assert that institutions that fundamentally change how they organize and manage online education will be the most successful in sustaining and growing online education programs. In their literature review, Khan and Law (2015) found that institutions that were less traditional, less bureaucratic, less centralized, and more receptive to change were more likely to encourage a culture of new curriculum development. Further, Moloney & Oakley (2010) contend that those statewide
universities that offer dedicated online education units can support each college through technology infrastructure, yet provide flexibility for colleges to implement new online programs that best meet their market demand and institutional needs.

**Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning involves assessing trends, developing a vision for an institution’s future and setting priorities (Kearsley, 2013). Moore and Kearsley (2012) advocate for defining a vision, mission, goals, and objectives for online education in the organization. Prioritizing online programs in an institution’s strategic plan has been shown to influence the success of the program (Barefield & Meyer, 2013). Likewise, Moloney and Oakley (2010) contend that successful online programs are characterized by the incorporation of online programs into the institution’s mission and strategic plan. A governance body or advisory board for online education that conducts strategic planning, monitors emerging trends, formulates the overall strategy and determines how the institution will achieve its vision is recommended (Boddy et al., 2013; Davis et al., 2008).

Interestingly, Allen and Seaman (2016) report that after ten years of steady increases, “the proportion of chief academic leaders that say online learning is critical to their long-term strategy fell from 70.8% in 2014 to 63.3% this year” (p. 5). While this percentage is still fairly high, it is not clear whether the perception of importance translates into the prominent inclusion of online education in strategic plans. In a study of 45 public institutions, Beaudoin (2013) concluded that few campus leaders recognize the strategic value of online education.
Faculty Support

Given the shift in responsibilities for faculty, a significant amount of research has been conducted on faculty resistance and concerns related to their role in online education (Barak, 2012; Ensminger, Surry, & Miller, 2002). Charles Wedemeyer who is considered by many as the “father of modern distance education” (Diehl, 2013, p. 38) predicted that distance education would result in radical shifts in the role of the instructor that would be “resisted vigorously” (Diehl, 2013, p. 45). This is consistent with researchers who have found that traditional faculty feel a loss of control, consider their role marginalized, and have a sense that their craft is being threatened by online education (Beaudoin, 2015; Berge & Muilenburg, 2000; Kern, 2010). Moore and Kearsley (2012) contend that “the biggest challenge facing education today is for legislatures and university senates to adopt policies that help organizations move from a craft approach to a systems approach, for administrators to redistribute the human and capital resources in their charge into a total system, and for teachers to be trained to work as specialists within such a system” (p. 13).

In traditional institutions, faculty support is critical for the development and implementation of new online programs (Kern, 2010). Ensminger, Surry, and Miller (2002) surveyed faculty to gain insight into their perceptions of conditions that facilitate the successful implementation of online education. Their findings suggest that institutions must gain faculty buy-in and provide resources, training and support to be successful in online education (Ensminger et al., 2002). Professional development programs for online faculty are crucial to building a community of faculty engaged in online education (Moloney & Oakley, 2010).
Owen and Demb (2004) interviewed college administrators and found that faculty who are provided with funding and the freedom to explore often lead new online program implementations. Similarly, institutions that have been successful in online program growth provide incentives to faculty to develop new programs (Moloney & Oakley, 2010). While it is recommended that institutions offer release time, stipends or recognition for faculty efforts on new online education initiatives, the reality is that additional compensation is highly dependent on the institution (Baran & Correia, 2014; Neely & Tucker, 2010). In some colleges, online program development is viewed as part of the faculty member’s regular responsibilities.

The review will now move specifically to the focus of the study – community colleges and online education.

**Community Colleges in the United States**

To gain an understanding of the context of this study, the literature related to the history, mission, and characteristics of community colleges in the United States will be reviewed. From their early conception as junior colleges, community colleges have a rich history and serve a unique role in the United States. However, the challenges facing community colleges today are numerous and may be difficult to overcome unless dramatic changes occur.

**History of Community Colleges**

The earliest records show the first junior colleges originated in the United States in 1901 (Jurgens, 2010). According to Cohen et al. (2014), much debate exists surrounding the particular reason why junior colleges originated. In the mid-19th century, several university leaders proposed that junior colleges be created to prepare first and second-year students so that universities could emphasize research rather than
teaching adolescents (Cohen et al., 2014). This viewpoint is supported by those who advocated that universities should be responsible for research and scholarship, while junior colleges would focus on vocational and technical training (Jurgens, 2010). Alternatively, some scholars believe that, due to rising populations which increased student demand for education, junior colleges served as an extension of secondary schools (Diener, 1986). Cohen et al. (2014) point out that those who believe in capitalist conspiracies have even contended that community colleges were created to limit low-income people to low-paying jobs. Pedersen (2000) challenged many of these assumptions and attributed the development of the early public community colleges as a response to local community interests.

From just 20 colleges in 1909, junior colleges expanded rapidly to 207 colleges in 1922 with a total enrollment of 20,000 (Koos, 1924). In the early to mid-20th century, community colleges grew significantly, at the rate of one new institution per week (Phelan, 2014). This era was a transformational time that significantly impacted education. The population was growing, particularly as a result of immigrants, many of whom could not travel to the university or afford the tuition (Rury, 2016). The economy was expanding, and new professions emerged that required a skilled labor force. To respond to this need and gain the respect and pride that went along with hosting a local college, community leaders enthusiastically promoted the growth of community colleges (Cohen et al., 2014). The educational programs offered at community colleges during this time varied based on the needs of the local community. The G.I. Bill of Rights, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the Truman Commission Report of 1947
all contributed to the growth and shaped the mission of community colleges as we know them today (Hussain, 2015).

In the latter part of the 20th century, growth in the number of community colleges and student enrollment rose rapidly. In 1965, student enrollment was approximately one million, which increased to 4.3 million by 1980. By 1990, there were 1106 community colleges (Jurgens, 2010). Initially, this growth was attributed to greater demand for college due to the rising number of Baby Boomers (people born between 1943 and 1960) seeking to attend college, and parents who wanted their children to attend college (Jurgens, 2010). Later, community colleges expanded through partnerships with business and industry to offer new programs and services.

Today, 1108 community colleges serve 12.3 million students, roughly 50% of all U.S. undergraduate students (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016; Jurgens, 2010). Community colleges are open access, affordable, and attract a diverse array of students (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016; Fishman, 2014; Gentry, Lawrence, & Richards, 2016). Tuition at community colleges is typically one-third of the tuition of a four-year school, and for every dollar of tuition, the return on that investment for students is $3.80 (Where value meets values: The economic impact of community colleges, 2014). Thus, community colleges provide an unparalleled value that clearly attracts students (Jurgens, 2010).

Mission of Community Colleges

An organization’s mission defines the purpose of the organization and serves as a guide for everything the organization does (Lorenzo, 2010). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016), the community college’s mission is to provide education for individuals, many of
whom are adults, in its service region. Community colleges generally have three main purposes: (1) to prepare students for employment through completion of a certificate or two-year degree, (2) to provide students with the first two years of courses in preparation for transfer to a four-year institution, and (3) to train students through vocational programs or community education (Gentry et al., 2016; Jurgens, 2010; Phelan, 2014).

“Curriculum is considered the heart and soul of all educational institutions” (Khan & Law, 2015, p. 66), and this is particularly true for community colleges. Whereas four-year colleges often concentrate on research initiatives, community colleges emphasize teaching through the concentration on curriculum and instructional programs (Cohen & Brawer, 1994). Community colleges develop programs in a wide range of industries to provide a skilled labor force and make businesses more productive (Where value meets values: The economic impact of community colleges, 2014).

The mission statements of individual institutions typically vary based on the needs of the institution and its stakeholders but are usually focused on the values of opportunity, equity and academic excellence (“Empowering community colleges to build the nation’s future,” 2014). The American Association for Community Colleges (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016) suggests that most community college mission statements include commitments to open access, equal treatment for all students, comprehensive education, serving its community, teaching, and lifelong learning. Throughout history, a primary role of community colleges in the United States has been to increase student access to a diverse student population – traditional students, adult
learners, at-risk learners, multicultural learners and learners requiring accommodation (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2015).

In recent years, the traditional mission of community colleges has been adapted to external trends and increasing competition (Levin, 2005). A study of community colleges throughout the U.S. found that mission statements have changed over the previous ten years to emphasize degree completion, student success, accountability and sustainability (Ayers, 2015). This shift in the focal point of community college mission statements appears reflective of trends such as performance-based funding and a change in the future role of community colleges. With too few students completing college, community colleges have been challenged to refocus their mission to meet the needs of 21st century education and employment by focusing on student success and innovative programs (“2016 community college fast facts,” 2016, “Empowering community colleges to build the nation’s future,” 2014).

Challenges for Community Colleges

For many years, the funding model has made budget planning difficult for community colleges; it is based on student enrollment, which is unstable and unpredictable (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Phelan, 2014). Further, the reduced contribution from state and local governments has caused community colleges to rely more heavily on tuition and fees to cover their expenses (Phelan, 2014). On average, the state proportion of funding for community colleges in 1980 was 60%; today, it is less than 30% (Levin, 2005). Consequently, in some states, student tuition and fees fund up to 50% of the college’s operating budget, thus causing community colleges to rely heavily on student enrollment to continue operations (Jurgens, 2010; Levin, 2005; Phelan, 2014). Nationwide, enrollments in community colleges are falling, following the sizable
spike in enrollment during the recession from 2008-2009 (Juszkiewicz, 2015), particularly in communities with declining populations. To make matters worse, funding is increasingly based on performance measurements such as degree completion and job placement rates, rather than enrollment alone (Cohen et al., 2014; Jurgens, 2010; Lokken, 2016; “Performance-based funding for higher education,” 2015; Phelan, 2014). Due to the reduced funding, increased competition, limited resources, rising costs, increased scrutiny, and declining enrollment, many community colleges are struggling (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Phelan, 2014).

In stark contrast, the Obama administration proposed the American Graduation Initiative in 2009 to reinforce the central role of community colleges in the U.S (Bowles, 2014). “Just as the colleges gained national recognition for their contributions to student progress and workforce education, their state appropriations declined by one-fourth” (Cohen et al., 2014, p. 451). Thus, in the United States, state and local governments appear confused about the mission of community colleges. On one end of the spectrum, community colleges are viewed as a crucial part of our educational system, providing open access to many students. In contrast to this view, community colleges are being held to new standards, expected to deliver more than ever before in a cost-effective manner without additional funding (Levin, 2005). Given this situation, student enrollment is critical and this has stimulated the development of new programs at community colleges and new delivery modes for these programs (Levin, 2005). But the question is, how are community colleges doing this with limited resources, and is it sustainable? The next section explores the importance of online education in community colleges and the focus of existing research on this topic.
Online Education in Community Colleges

This section provides a depiction of online education in the community college – the context and importance, the role of faculty, and past research related to online education factors that will be examined in this study.

Context and Importance of Online Education in Community Colleges

The roots of online learning in community colleges stem from distance education programs such as tele-courses and live interactive television offered in the 1970s (Jaggars, 2013). Due to the flexible nature of community colleges and their innate ability to adapt quickly to change, community colleges were considered early adopters as they began offering online education in the 1990’s (Austin, 2010; Jaggars, 2013). Online student enrollment has increased rapidly at community colleges, growing from 9 to 22 percent each year between 2006 and 2010 (Cohen et al., 2014). Further, the majority of online courses in the United States are taken at community colleges (Austin, 2010). Recent studies indicate that 50% of community college students compared to 28% of all students are enrolled in at least one online course and this percentage has grown steadily over time (Allen & Seaman, 2016; Jaggars, 2013). Thus, “the biggest growth in online education in the past decade has occurred in the public two-year college” (Fishman, 2014, p. 6).

Online education provides a perfect alignment with the community college mission to increase student access to education while serving the needs of its student population (Fishman, 2014; Slimp, 2014). Given the demographics of the community college student as older, employed and juggling many responsibilities, community colleges have responded enthusiastically to online education opportunities (Fishman, 2014; Jaggars, 2013). In fact, nearly 100% of community colleges offer online courses.
and growth in online enrollments accounts for all of the growth at community colleges in the last eleven years (Capra, 2014; Lokken, 2016).

As evidenced by the growth in online education in community colleges, online learning is appealing to students because it eliminates the barriers that typically prevent students from attending face-to-face (Capra, 2014; Jaggars, 2013; Stumpf, McCrimon, & Davis, 2005). Lokken and Mullins (2015) confirm that there is room for growth of online programs in community colleges, but one of the current challenges is the increased level of competition (Lokken, 2016).

While students are clearly attracted to online education, researchers were initially interested in finding out whether students were as successful in community college online classes as they were in traditional classes. Two prominent research studies were conducted between 2004-2008 in the Virginia and Washington State Community College systems (Crawford & Persaud, 2013) to explore student success in online courses. These comprehensive studies concluded that the completion rate for online courses was 11-15% lower than that of traditional classroom-based courses (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

However, a recent research study found that community college students who took online courses “early in their college careers were more likely to attain a degree than students who had not done so” (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014, p. 110). This study concludes that it is advantageous to take early online courses as it can result in a higher percentage of degree program completion. In a follow-up study, the researchers concluded that community college students who take online courses have a significantly higher six-year degree completion rate, and no significant differences in dropout rates
compared with classroom-only students (Shea & Bidjerano, 2016). While these studies do not directly relate to the research questions of this dissertation, recent studies provide support for online program implementations in community colleges through enhanced student degree completion.

**Analysis of Factors Affecting Community College Online Program Implementation**

As discussed previously, many factors can support or hinder online program implementation in higher education institutions. This section will present the research related to these factors in the context of the community college.

**Leadership**

The literature suggests that leaders in online education must be inspirational, guiding the organization and its people towards the future vision through a shared mission, goals and objectives (Simonson et al., 2015). Similarly, Cohen and Brawer (1994) discuss the necessity for leaders in community colleges to be transformational to stimulate innovation. Online education leaders must believe in what they are doing, inspire others, and surround themselves with those who fully believe in the goal (Sinek, 2009). Unfortunately, a recent survey of community colleges reported that online education is not yet integrated into the mission of most colleges, and the perception is that college leaders do not value it, even with the increased reliance on online education to compensate for declining traditional enrollment (Lokken, 2016).

**Organizational culture**

An institution’s culture must be flexible, open to change, and innovative to encourage growth in online education (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). The literature describes the community college culture as innovative, nimble, flexible, participatory, empowering, and one that encourages creativity, thus aligning with an organizational
culture that fosters online education (Cohen et al., 2014; Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Jurgens, 2010; Levin, 2005). As early adopters, Lokken (2016) acknowledges that online education is deeply engrained in the culture of most community colleges.

Community colleges are recognized for their ability to meet the needs of the communities they serve. They are often portrayed as entrepreneurial as they continuously envision new degree programs to align with future workforce demand (Bers, 2013; Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Cohen et al., 2014; Jurgens, 2010; Khan & Law, 2015; Levin, 2005). Although community colleges are part of a bureaucratic statewide system, they nonetheless embrace change and implement new and innovative high-quality degree programs in response to community stakeholder needs (Bers, 2013; Cohen et al., 2014; Lane, 2015). Based on this analysis, the community college organizational culture appears to reinforce the growth of online education programs.

Organizational structure

Given that teaching is the primary focus for faculty in community colleges, faculty have long been considered the “epicenter” of education in community colleges, autonomously responsible for both content and delivery of instruction (Beaudoin, 2015). The organizational structure of most community colleges is flat, with few lines of authority, particularly as it relates to faculty, who are considered colleagues of administrators, not subordinates (Cohen et al., 2014). This structure aligns with organizations that have been found to support innovation and new program development – less bureaucratic and less centralized (Khan & Law, 2015).

The literature suggests that online education requires fundamental and substantial changes to the organizational structure (Boddy et al., 2013; Moore & Kearsley, 2012), yet this is not always the case with community colleges. In a recent
survey of community colleges, 68% had only one or two dedicated staff to support online education and 20% had no dedicated staff or only used part-time temporary staff to support online education (Lokken, 2016). Community colleges utilize existing faculty for online education and may hire an online education administrator who typically reports through academic channels to support faculty (Austin, 2010; Lokken, 2016).

Additionally, the literature demonstrates that institutions with dedicated online education units that provide centralized technology infrastructure best support the growth of programs on multiple campuses in a decentralized, flexible, and market-driven approach (Moloney & Oakley, 2010). Community colleges align well with this model as the technology to support online education is often provided by a centralized statewide unit. Yet the implementation of new online programs is decentralized and typically driven by faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Walsh, 2002). Larger community colleges may utilize full-time faculty to develop programs and a consistent course curriculum with assistance from instructional designers, yet many community colleges do not follow this model (Cohen et al., 2014; Fishman, 2014).

**Strategic planning**

Every year, more community colleges are launching new online programs and the competition for online students is increasing (Clinefelter & Aslanian, 2015). Thus, it is critical that community college administrators proactively understand trends that could affect them, create goals and develop strategic plans for online education to compete effectively for students (Kern, 2010; Torres, 2013; Zaleznik, 2004). Slimp (2014) advocates for the development of a strategic plan specifically for online education that outlines the goals, priorities, and funding necessary to ensure success. Lorenzo (2010) promotes strategic plans that clarify the importance of online education to the
community college, the markets they want to serve, and consider specialized or niche online programs.

According to Austin (2010), development of new online programs is becoming a part of strategic planning for community colleges. In contrast, recent studies have found that although community colleges are innovative and creative, online education is not yet incorporated into the planning process and goals are often open-ended (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Cohen et al., 2014; Lokken, 2016). A quantitative study of 267 community college strategic plans in California found that online education goals were vague and lacked specific details related to resources, procedures and management (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003). This study also considered whether community colleges strategically planned for new online degree programs and concluded that most community colleges do not conduct a college-wide planning process, surmising that online courses are being developed based on faculty interest (Levy & Beaulieu, 2003). While the literature suggests what is necessary, research findings show that community colleges have not yet embraced strategic planning to support online education in their institutions.

Faculty support

The literature proposes that institutions that provide faculty with freedom and incentives are most successful in implementing new online programs (Moloney & Oakley, 2010; Owen & Demb, 2004). While faculty acceptance remains an issue for many institutions (Allen & Seaman, 2016), community college faculty have become considerably more accepting of online education over the past ten years (Lokken, 2016). However, faculty acceptance of online education and faculty taking the initiative to lead a new online program implementation are not analogous. In a recent survey of
community college administrators, the top faculty-related issue was difficulty in engaging faculty in new online course and program development (Finkel, 2015). Xu and Jaggars (2013) discovered that most community college faculty feel a lack of institutional support, are often over-extended, and work in isolation.

How can community colleges best support faculty in developing new online programs? Community college full-time faculty members develop new online programs, yet are not provided with adequate compensation or ongoing professional development opportunities (Jaggars, 2013). In a recent survey of community colleges, one of the core challenges facing online education was the lack of faculty training; 22% of survey participants indicated that their campus did not require mandatory training to teach online (Lokken, 2017). The Professional Development Framework offers a holistic framework that identifies reward systems, faculty development opportunities and institutional policies that support online faculty through implementation of online education (Baran & Correia, 2014). It is recommended that community colleges offer rewards such as release time, stipends or public recognition for their efforts in online program development (Baran & Correia, 2014). When faculty members are prepared, rewarded, and compensated, they will be encouraged to take more ownership for the success of online programs that they implement (Kearsley, 2013).

Additional studies at the community college level have examined policy issues that may be viewed as unsupportive by online faculty. Ensminger et al. (2002) identified concerns by faculty related to ownership of online courses since most community college faculty consider course content their personal intellectual property (Lokken, 2016). Lorenzo (2010) suggests that traditional policies such as on-campus office hours
need to be re-examined and changed to support growth in online education. It appears that community colleges have some improvements to make to best support faculty in online program implementations. The next section provides an overview of the conceptual framework used to guide the research.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework (Figure 2-1) for this study is based on the various models, theories, and frameworks reviewed in this chapter that will serve as a guide to answer the research questions. The literature review revealed a gap in the research relative to the qualitative exploration of new online degree program implementations within an existing online education system, specifically for community college business degree programs. The aim of this study was aligned with future research recommendations to explore implementation practices – how community colleges plan, develop and deliver online programs and to consider the roles, interactions, and institutional structure of online education (Khan & Law, 2015; Singh & Hardaker, 2014).

The conceptual framework draws from established change theories (Diffusion of Innovation, Ely’s Conditions of Change), business models (STAR™, New Product Development Process), and the relevant literature to examine the entire online program implementation process and to identify factors that may influence online program implementations, including leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic planning, and faculty support. The conceptual framework provided a starting point for the research and served as a guide throughout the duration of the study.

**Summary**

This literature review examined the historical context, importance, and role of community colleges in the United States. Community colleges face numerous
challenges today such as declining enrollment, increased competition, state mandates, and declining government funding that make growth and development difficult. Despite these challenges, online education remains an area of growth for community colleges. The unique characteristics and organizational culture of community colleges make them well-suited for online education. As leaders in community colleges contemplate how to increase overall student enrollment, many have considered the implementation of new online degree programs. However, as community colleges expand their online programs, it becomes important to critically evaluate how these new online degree programs are implemented. Factors to consider include leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic planning and faculty support that may influence online program implementations. The conceptual framework identifies the areas that were explored, thus providing a basis for the study.
Figure 2-1. Conceptual Framework

(Booz et al., 1982)
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how new online degree programs were implemented, to uncover new roles and responsibilities that faculty, administrators and staff played, and to reveal perceived factors that supported or hindered the implementation of new online degree programs. The findings from this study provide community college leaders with information to appreciate the current situation, recognize strengths and weaknesses, address gaps, and develop recommendations to improve new online degree implementations. This chapter provides details on the research methodology and procedures used for this study including the research design, data collection and analysis, my role as a researcher, rigor and limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The central research question for this study was, “How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?” The following sub-questions reinforced the central research question:

1) Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?
2) What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?
3) What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?

Research Design

Qualitative research is used to develop an understanding of human systems and is frequently utilized in educational technology studies (Savenye & Robinson, 1996). Qualitative designs employ an interpretive and naturalistic approach to study research problems aimed at developing meaning (Creswell, 2013). Dooley (2001) identifies
qualitative research that begins without a hypothesis as exploratory. By its very nature, qualitative research is employed when a problem or issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2013). The present study was considered an exploratory study intended to answer the research questions.

Stake (1995) defines a case as the people or programs that the researcher seeks to understand. Case study research is an approach used to explore a case or cases to gain understanding and report on findings (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) recommends a case study approach when the research focus is on “developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases” (p. 104). Stake (1995) distinguishes between an intrinsic case study where the goal is to learn about a case without a particular problem to address. On the other hand, an instrumental case study starts with a research question used to address a problem that can be answered by studying a case. The present study was considered an instrumental case study given that the research purpose is focused on a problem of practice (Creswell, 2013).

A multiple case study is an instrumental case study that explores multiple cases to answer the research question (Stake, 1995). Utilizing multiple cases deepens understanding through the “examination of similarities and differences across cases” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 101). In this study, a multiple case study design was used to incorporate the perspectives from each community college to inform the research question (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). The multiple case study design can provide an understanding of the uniqueness of each case but also the commonality across cases (Stake, 1995). Khan & VanWynsberghe (2008) discuss the importance of preserving the uniqueness and context of each individual case. As long as researchers
provide rich contextual details of each case, researchers can achieve this goal while learning from the collection of cases.

Case study research designs possess unique characteristics that closely align with this study. First, the researcher’s role is of primary importance in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Stake, 1995). Due to my experience in online business program implementations and my relevant management experience, I have the capability to understand and interpret the data collected in the study. Second, in a case study, the initial research questions evolve throughout the course of the study via what Stakes (1995) calls “progressive focusing” (p. 9). Throughout the case study, the researcher’s questions may bring about new issues that must then be considered (Stake, 1995). Given the exploratory nature of the research questions, new issues emerged as I conducted this study. Finally, the case study sets clear boundaries about what is researched (Creswell, 2013). In the present study, the community colleges that were similar to mine within the university system and that previously implemented online business degree programs formed the boundary of what was studied.

Research Context

I work at a medium-sized community college within SUNY that offers five fully online degree programs, two of which are business programs. Thirty percent of all students at my college are enrolled in online coursework. The purpose of this study was to explore how other community colleges within SUNY implemented new online degree programs. Thus, the research was conducted at three SUNY community colleges. The study was limited to online business degree programs given that this is my discipline and business degree programs comprise the highest portion (35%) of all fully online programs within SUNY.
Sampling and Participants

In a multiple case study, the selection of cases must be related to the overall research purpose (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). Institutions included in this study were purposefully selected based on several criteria. First, the institutions were public two-year community colleges within SUNY that had previously implemented online business degree programs between 2009-2015. Most recent years were preferred to strengthen the findings. Initially, data was collected about the community colleges within SUNY to determine which schools fit the criteria for the study. College websites and the OpenSUNY portal were examined to determine which community colleges offer online business degree programs. Online program implementation dates were collected from SUNY’s business intelligence dashboard. Once these institutions were identified, second-level criteria were used to select the cases most similar to my college using the following criteria in order of importance: 1) student enrollment data, 2) number of online sections offered, 3) number of online degree programs, and 4) county population. The second-level data were collected from the SUNY’s business intelligence dashboard, college websites and census data.

At the time of the study, there were 162 fully online associates degree programs offered across the university (“OpenSUNY,” 2016). Of these, 57 were business-related, representing 35% of all online associates programs. These programs were taught at 22 community colleges throughout the university. Table 3-1 identifies the community colleges within the university that offered fully online business-related associates degree programs (SUNY, 2015). A full time equivalent (FTE) student is defined as “a hypothetical student taking 30 credit hours or credit hour equivalents of academic
course work” (SUNY, 2015, p. 22). FTE was used to enable accurate comparisons across institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College + My College</th>
<th>Most Recent Online Business-related Degree Program Implemented</th>
<th>Approximate student FTE rounded (2015-2016)</th>
<th>Online Course Sections Offered (Spring 2017)</th>
<th>Online Programs Offered (Spring 2017)</th>
<th>% Bus. Programs (Spring 2017)</th>
<th>Total Population Served (Census, 2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A * 2015</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>81,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B ** 2015</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>109,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C * 2014</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>206,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 2002</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>126,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E ** 2014</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>196,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 2002</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>202,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 2013</td>
<td>10,900</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>922,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H * 2012</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>109,561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ** 2013</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>103,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J 2003</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>63,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K ** 2014</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>160,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L * 2013</td>
<td>3,100</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>208,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 2002</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>116,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N 2007</td>
<td>4,900</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>234,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O 2012</td>
<td>12,700</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>749,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2003</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>212,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q 2002</td>
<td>7,900</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>468,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 2002</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>326,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S 2002</td>
<td>19,400</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>1,501,587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T ** 2013</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>74,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U 2002</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>153,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained from the University of Florida prior to the start of the study. The sampling was conducted using a phased approach. In the first phase, those community colleges were identified that met the institutional criteria for inclusion in the study – whether they had previously implemented an online business degree program between 2009-2015, and the degree of similarity to my institution’s size, online sections offered, and population of the county it serves. Four
colleges met this criterion as indicated as primary in Table 3-1. An additional five schools were selected as alternate colleges to address the situation in which less than three colleges responded to the request for participation. While Miles et al. (2014) recommend five cases at a minimum in multiple case study sampling, they also suggest that two to four cases can produce outstanding research findings as long as generalizability is not asserted.

The second phase involved the identification of the person overseeing the program. College websites and SUNY’s new program proposal archive and business intelligence dashboard were reviewed to identify the person responsible for the program. An email was sent to this person from each of the four selected community colleges providing background information on the study and asking them to provide the names and contact information for those faculty, staff and administrators who were involved in the implementation of the program. A copy of this email is included in Appendix B. Email responses were received from two colleges willing to provide further contact information. Given an initially low response rate from these four colleges, the same email was sent to the person overseeing the program at four of the alternate colleges. I received a response from one of these college contacts who provided information on people involved in the program implementation. Thus, the three participating colleges were defined as those that best matched the criteria outlined above and who were willing to provide information.

The third phase involved contacting the key people involved in the implementation – faculty members, staff or administrators who were identified by the person responsible for the program. In many cases, the person who was initially
contacted self-identified as a candidate for the study in addition to recommending other participants, including online education coordinators, faculty or department chairs. Once the key people involved in the implementation were clearly identified from each community college, they were sent an email inviting them to participate in the study, as shown in Appendix C, and provided a copy of the informed consent form as shown in Appendix D. Ultimately, I interviewed two participants from each of the three community colleges selected who were involved in a previous online business program implementation.

Data Collection

The data collection process began with an analysis of college websites to find information related to the factors being examined in the study, including organizational charts, mission, vision, strategic planning, organizational culture, administrative leadership, and institutional processes related to new online business degree program development. The SUNY and OpenSUNY websites were reviewed to gather additional data on policies and planning documents related to online program implementations. The documents reviewed for this study provided insight into the characteristics of each college, as well as information on enrollment and population trends. Table 3-2 provides a summary of the documents studied and the information that was gathered.

Once data was gathered through a review of artifacts, interviews were conducted. Miles et al. (2014) contend that multiple case studies require some level of standardization and preparation prior to data collection to allow for enhanced cross-case analysis. The development of a topical outline or interview guide of common topics and questions can facilitate the cross-case analysis process (Stake, 1995). Semi-structured interviews utilize an interview guide that organizes questions or topics that
will be asked of participants during the interview process, but provide flexibility to the researcher in the sequence and wording of questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Patton, 1990).

Table 3-2. Document Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Reviewed</th>
<th>Information Gathered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• SUNY Business Intelligence Dashboard:</td>
<td>• SUNY program data and processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o SUNY Academic Program Developments</td>
<td>o Dates when new programs were implemented by campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o SUNY Campus Enrollment by Program</td>
<td>o Enrollment in programs by campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o SUNY New Community College Business Officer’s Manual (2015)</td>
<td>o Overall college enrollment trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o SUNY Distance Education Programs and Sections</td>
<td>o Distance education programs and sections by campus by term/year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OpenSUNY Website</td>
<td>• SUNY Business Online Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• College Websites</td>
<td>• Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategic Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Enrollment Management Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Campus Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organizational Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Online Programs Offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Online Course sections offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Business faculty contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Online learning coordinator contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Department Chair contact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Advantages to semi-structured interviews include the conversational tone of the interview and the ability for researchers to probe deeper as necessary to fully understand topics (Patton, 1990). Colleagues at my college who have been involved in previous online program implementations were asked to review the interview guide questions prior to data collection utilizing a “think-aloud procedure” (van Someren,
Barnard, & Sandberg, 1994). This procedure ensured that the interview questions aligned with the research questions to enhance the credibility of the study.

For each college in this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted by phone with the faculty and other key people involved in previous online business degree program implementations. The interview guide used in this study is found in Appendix E. The questions sought to develop an in-depth understanding of each participant’s context and how new online business programs were implemented within their college. Additional questions related to the roles that participants play in the implementation and factors that either hinder or support implementation for each college. The factors examined were derived from the theoretical models in my conceptual framework: leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic planning, faculty support, and the implementation process. Data recorded from interviews was transcribed, reviewed, commented on and highlighted. Throughout the study, a research journal was updated regularly to keep track of my beliefs, feelings, and interpretations of the data. Table 3-3 outlines the alignment between the conceptual framework, the research questions and the interview questions.

Data Analysis

Concurrent data collection and analysis was used to foster improved interpretation and meaning of the data (Miles et al., 2014; Stake, 1995). Data was analyzed within each case first, and then across all cases. Cross-case analysis provided the researcher with the ability to compare cases, learn from the cases, and gather evidence that was used to address the purpose of the research (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). Inductive analysis was employed to explore the data (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Theoretical Model</th>
<th>Elements/Factors</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?</td>
<td>Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo</td>
<td>What was the primary impetus behind the creation and implementation of this new online business degree program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?</td>
<td>Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Sufficient knowledge to implement change</td>
<td>Who championed the implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Product Development Process</td>
<td>Idea Generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?</td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td>Structure &amp; People</td>
<td>What role did people play in the implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Sufficient Knowledge and Skills</td>
<td>Did the people involved have the appropriate knowledge and skills for the implementation? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td>People (Skills &amp; Talent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Availability of Time</td>
<td>Did the people involved have enough time allocated for the implementation? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Rewards or Incentives</td>
<td>What motivated participants to be involved in the new program’s development and implementation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Rewards/Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question(s)</td>
<td>Theoretical Model</td>
<td>Elements/Factors</td>
<td>Interview Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely's Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Availability of Resources</td>
<td>Did the college allocate the necessary people for this implementation? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did the college allocate the necessary resources for this implementation? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?</td>
<td>The Star Model™ Process</td>
<td>Processes (Mechanism for Collaboration)</td>
<td>To what extent did you collaborate with other community colleges on this implementation? Please describe the collaboration process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?</td>
<td>The Star Model™ Process</td>
<td>Process (Work Flow, decision-making, collaboration)</td>
<td>How would you describe the process used to implement the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?</td>
<td>New Product Development Process</td>
<td>8-step process</td>
<td>Please review the new product development process by Booz and Allen (provide copy). New product development is defined as the transformation of a market opportunity into a product available for sale (Krishnan &amp; Ulrich, 2001). In your opinion, to what extent did this program implementation align with this process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?</td>
<td>New Product Development Process</td>
<td>Program Development and Implementation</td>
<td>Specifically explain the curriculum development and implementation process for this new program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Diffusion of Innovation</td>
<td>Leader Characteristics (Attitude to change)</td>
<td>How would you describe the administrative leader(s) who were involved in the implementation? Please explain how each administrative leader influenced the implementation (positively and/or negatively)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Chang</td>
<td>Commitment and Leadership inspiration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3-3. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Theoretical Model</th>
<th>Elements/Factors</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Ely’s Conditions of Change</td>
<td>Participatory Culture</td>
<td>How would you describe your institution’s organizational culture? Please describe how organizational culture influenced the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td>Strategy and Capabilities to differentiate</td>
<td>How would you describe strategic planning of online education at your institution? Please describe how strategic planning of online education influenced the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?</td>
<td>Diffusion of Innovations</td>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
<td>How would you describe the organizational structure at your institution? Please describe how organizational structure influenced the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?</td>
<td>The Star Model™</td>
<td>Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) distinguish between two types of cross-case analysis: 1) variable-oriented approach, or 2) case-oriented approach. A variable-oriented approach studies a large number of cases and considers a set of variables to explain the variability across cases (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). In contrast, case-oriented approaches are typically limited to a small number of cases, comparing similarities and differences of the cases to answer the research questions (Miles et al., 2014). The present study utilized a case-oriented approach, and employed a
visualization strategy to present a matrix for cross-case comparison (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008; Miles et al., 2014).

The coding approach utilized a categorical aggregation using within-case and cross-case theme analysis to compare and contrast themes across SUNY community colleges (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). For each case, a college description, context and an analysis of themes was provided. Upon completion of the within-case analysis, a cross-case analysis was conducted to identify the similarities and differences across all three cases.

For the participants in each case, I transcribed the interviews by hand. After transcription, I re-read the interview transcripts several times to ensure accuracy and familiarize myself with the data. Once I was confident that the interviews were transcribed accurately, I deleted the original recordings. To capture my experience, I recorded my observations, feelings and perceptions in a research journal. I conferred with research participants to clarify the data as appropriate.

After I was comfortable with the data, I utilized NVivo, a qualitative research software tool to facilitate the coding process. Each case was set up in NVivo with a folder to house all data including interview transcripts and other research documents. I used an inductive process to attribute codes to the blocks of text for each transcript, considering each data item fully and equally. Peer reviews were conducted for the coding of one interview and a review of initial codes. As a result, suggestions to consolidate or modify codes were incorporated. Throughout the data analysis process, codes were modified, grouped and changed to better reflect the data. Once the coding
was finalized, themes emerged for each case. Through an iterative analysis process, the themes were organized into research areas and summarized for each case.

After each case was analyzed individually, a cross-case analysis was conducted to consider similarities and differences across the cases. Patton (2015) clarifies the definition of inductive analysis in cross-case analysis as the process of “searching the qualitative data for patterns and themes without entering the analysis with pre-conceived analytical categories to generate general patterns and discover common themes” (p. 551). Initially, each case was plotted in a table to show areas of similarity and differences in themes that emerged from the individual case analysis. These themes were reviewed with a peer and my advisor, and were continuously refined to best represent the data. The result was a summary of cross-case findings with themes corresponding to the research questions.

Rigor

The study incorporated several strategies to enhance the credibility and dependability of the research, (Tracy, 2010). Triangulation was performed within each case to clarify meaning by identifying different perceptions (Stake, 2006). Member checking was used to ensure that data was interpreted correctly. Participants were asked to review the findings and interpretations to get their perspective on the accuracy of my analysis (Creswell, 2013). Rich, thick description was used when describing the setting and participants to assist readers in the transferability of the findings (Creswell, 2013). Detailed field notes and the use of a recording device provided further means to enhance the dependability of the data.

Peer coding of a transcript, discussion, and reviews were also performed to enhance the dependability of the study by obtaining an external viewpoint on the coding
process (Creswell, 2013). Peers in my cohort and my advisor were asked to critically review the findings and question my meaning and interpretations as appropriate (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation was conducted across cases through multiple data sources, methods and theories to corroborate findings. My research bias was clarified given that I am a faculty member who implements online business degree programs.

**Limitations**

The qualitative research design produces limited transferability to other colleges or academic settings because the study was conducted only with community colleges in one statewide university system. To minimize this limitation and provide readers with confidence in the credibility of the study, a holistic account incorporating in-depth description and detail was given on the subjects and data collected. Further, the use of cross-case analysis enhanced the transferability of the study to other contexts (Miles et al., 2014).

Another limitation of this research design is that as the researcher, I was the primary data collector and analysis instrument. Credibility of the researcher were concerns as the quality of the research was reliant on me as the interviewer (Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 1990). Miles et al. (2014) provide researcher-as-instrument characteristics that address this concern. The researcher should 1) be familiar with the case and setting, 2) utilize a multi-disciplinary approach, 3) have good investigative skills, 4) be comfortable with the participants, and 5) balance empathy with objectivity. Given my experience in conducting interviews in various work settings, I was confident that I shared these characteristics despite my limited experience in conducting interviews for research purposes. The use of an interview guide was helpful to guide the interviews. Additionally, multiple code reviewers assisted in reducing this limitation.
Subjectivity Statement

As the primary data collection and analysis instrument for this study, my personal biases had the potential to influence the study. To minimize this risk, I clarified my role upfront and reflexively considered my biases throughout the study (Creswell, 2013). In my role as faculty and business program coordinator at a community college within SUNY, I lead new program development in my discipline. Given my focus in online education, I am keenly interested in growing online programs. As such, in the past year, I have implemented two new online one-year certificate programs and I am also in the process of implementing a new business online associate’s degree program. Having personally implemented new online programs, I became familiar with the process at my college where faculty develop the initial proposal and manage the entire implementation through ongoing evaluation. Being a change management advocate, I am focused on improving the implementation process for new online programs. While my role and beliefs provide me with a full understanding of the implementation process of new online business degree programs at my college and ideas on how to improve the process, it is possible that my views can impact the research. The use of open-ended questions in the interviews helped to alleviate my biases from entering into the research process.

In my role as a business professor, I teach commonly accepted business models, principles, and frameworks in areas such as strategic planning, organizational structure, management, and marketing. As a certified Project Management Professional (PMP), I view a new online program implementation as a project that must be managed appropriately to achieve objectives based on the organization’s strategic plan. I believe that if community colleges used the tools that businesses utilize to plan, manage and implement new online programs, they would be more successful. I also believe that
SUNY can become more efficient and effective if they applied business principles to online education as a whole. My opinions on this are fairly strong. Thus I ensured that I reflected on my biases throughout the study. A research journal was a valuable tool for me to consider how my biases could have influenced the study. The acknowledgement of my predispositions is helpful to enumerate so readers may realize the biases that might be found in the study (Stake, 2006).
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore how new online business degree programs were implemented, to uncover roles and responsibilities that faculty, administrators and staff played, and to reveal perceived factors that supported or hindered the implementation. To facilitate understanding, a multiple case study qualitative design was utilized to answer the research questions within and across three community colleges. This chapter presents the results of this study organized by an in-depth exploration of each case, followed by the results of the cross-case analysis.

Before sharing the results of each case, the following section provides the context of SUNY’s online programs, the community colleges and participants who were involved in the study.

**SUNY and Online Programs**

SUNY utilizes a dual-mode online education organizational model since individual colleges offer both face-to-face and online programs. While the development and implementation of new online degree programs are decentralized at the college level, the approval of programs is centralized at the SUNY level. SUNY administration would like to gain efficiencies in online education, but no effort has been made to consolidate similar programs across colleges. Thus, at the time of this study, 57 business-related online associates programs were offered by 22 community colleges, many of which were identical degree programs (“OpenSUNY,” 2016).

SUNY provides guidelines for academic program planning that must be followed by each college. The approval of a new degree program within SUNY is the same general process regardless of whether the degree is online or traditional. A program
The primary research question guiding this study was: How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges? This question is answered through an exploration of the impetus for the program, the
planning process, curriculum development process, program implementation process and program evaluation process. The sub-questions that reinforced the central research question were answered through an analysis of program implementation roles and those factors that either supported or hindered the program implementation. The results from this study are reported first by each individual case, followed by a cross-case theme analysis of similarities and differences.

**Community College A**

Community College A is the smallest of the three colleges participating in the study with a student enrollment of approximately 1,100 FTE. The college is considered a small two-year college according to Carnegie classifications (“The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education,” 2015) serving a population of approximately 81,000 in three rural counties (“Community college A enrollment management 2016-2017,” 2017).

The college’s mission and vision are focused on providing education to improve the economy and quality of life in their local geographical area with a future focus of meeting global challenges (“Community college A mission, vision and values,” 2016). Strategic goals of the college reflect the mission and vision – embracing diversity, emphasizing institutional effectiveness, increased educational access, improved retention and success to develop a bright future for the economy and quality of life in their geographical region (“Community college A mission, vision and values,” 2016).

The college has experienced a sharp and steady decline in overall student enrollment in the last six years. Figure 4-1 indicates a nearly 30% decline in student enrollment from 2011-2016 (“Community college A enrollment management 2016-
An overwhelming majority (84%) of students attending the college originate from the college’s service area and nearly 71% of students are considered traditional (defined by the college as less than 24 years old). To exacerbate the college’s enrollment issues, the traditionally-aged segment of the population in the college’s service area is projected to decline by 13% from 2015 through 2025 ("Community college A enrollment management 2016-2017," 2017).

![Community College A Student FTE](image)

Figure 4-1. Overall Student Full-time Enrollment (FTE) Trends


Two people were interviewed at this college. Andy is an Associate Professor in Business and Chair of the Business Department and Betsy is a Professor of English who also plays the role of Online Learning Coordinator for the college. Both Andy and Betsy are proponents of online education and worked collaboratively to champion the implementation of the online business degree program.
Online Education at the College

The college began offering online education in 2003. When the college initially offered online courses, student enrollment increased. As stated by Betsy, “Our enrollment went straight up as soon as we put business classes online.” She reflected, “Many of our students got into online by saying ‘oh my schedule is really crazy, and I can only come to campus four days a week,’ and so we say ‘oh, well we have this online option that keeps your on-campus time down and so here, try this.’” Given the flexibility of online education for students, online enrollment continues to grow at the college.

At the time of the study, the college offered 35 online course sections and three degree programs that could be completed 100% online (“Community College A Online Degree Programs,” 2017). The college was also in the process of developing a new online degree program in Health Services Management that will be implemented in Fall 2017. While overall enrollment at the college is declining, student enrollment in fully online programs is increasing (see Figure 4-2).

![Exclusively Online FTE](image)

Figure 4-2. Exclusively Online Student Enrollment Trends
Enrollment in online programs accounts for approximately 10% of overall student enrollment but is growing, as shown in Figure 4-3. Additionally, students enrolled in business programs account for 41% of enrollment in online programs.

Figure 4-3. Online Enrollment compared to Overall Enrollment Trends

Of all online students, 83% reside in the college’s immediate service area, as shown in Figure 4-4. Thus, there is an opportunity for the college to gain additional student enrollment outside of their service area through online programs.

Figure 4-4. Community College A: Distance Learning Student Origins, Fall 2015
Influence of strategic planning

In a recent strategic plan, the college identified a broad strategic goal to improve and support student access and success. To achieve this goal, the college’s enrollment management plan identified online education as “essential to the long-term health of the institution” and recommended expanding online offerings and increasing enrollment in online programs ("Community college A enrollment management 2016-2017," 2017). Further, this plan acknowledged the threat of increased competition from other community colleges within the SUNY online system, and the impact this has on the college’s ability to attain student enrollment in online programs.

While the college encourages online education, budgets do not reflect this support. Betsy indicated that the Strategic Planning Group considers online learning positive for the college’s student enrollment but often demonstrates verbal support without financial backing. Fortunately, the college’s recent enrollment management plan acknowledged that the current level of staffing is inadequate to meet OpenSUNY standards for online education, so this situation may improve as a result. As described in the next section, the institution’s organizational structure was explored to better understand how it influenced online education at the college.

Influence of organizational structure

The organizational structure of the college provides a basic framework to support online learning through administrators, department chairs like Andy, various faculty, and Betsy, the online learning coordinator. According to Andy, in the past year, the faculty and staff have experienced some uncertainty regarding the future of online learning at the institution due to top administrative changes at the presidential level. Yet, Andy is
hopeful that online learning will remain a focus for the institution including the development of innovative new programs.

Due to the small size of the college, faculty and staff often play multiple roles and take on additional responsibilities as described by Betsy. “The support staff is very thin… everyone is wearing many hats.” The college does not have a dedicated full-time online learning coordinator; Betsy performs the online learning coordination for the campus on a part-time basis in addition to her faculty position. A year ago, the role became too demanding, and an instructional designer was added to assist faculty with online course design. Betsy explained that at the time, the online courses were growing significantly; she was attempting to juggle teaching, course shell creation, instructional design, and course quality reviews for approximately 70 courses. While the instructional designer has been a helpful addition, it is unclear whether the college will continue the investment in this position given that the position was only funded for two years. Betsy clarified: “It was very difficult to get the instructional designer that we needed, and the college has not decided if they are going to keep the position…they have not given us any assurance at all that that will be continued after two years.”

Following is a description of the organizational culture’s influence on online education at the college.

**Influence of organizational culture**

The organizational culture is characterized by the college’s core values: access and success, students, community, excellence and integrity (“Community college A mission, vision and values,” 2016). The culture is very supportive, open to change, and team-oriented which makes it conducive to the implementation of new online degree programs. When asked about the influence of the college’s culture on online learning, Betsy explained, “When we took the original [online] courses to the Curriculum
Committee, people were almost cheering because they thought it was such a great idea. And they asked some really good questions but it was all very positive…the Academic Vice President [was] very supportive and behind us.” The next section describes the findings related to the overall research question.

**New Online Business Degree Program Planning & Implementation**

The primary research question for this study was, “How have online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?” The following sections provide the results of the study to answer this question for this college: impetus for the program, planning process, curriculum development process, program implementation, and program evaluation.

**Impetus for program**

The college initially began offering online degree programs to keep up with the competition. Betsy stated: “Well, it seemed like a good idea to get out in front of it. People were planning degree programs all over the country and so we thought we wanted to.” The business degree program was one of the first programs to be offered online due to the nature of the coursework. She described the reason for this decision in the following manner, “I think the reason that business was chosen first is that it didn’t have lab sciences, hands-on skills type courses, or a physical education requirement. These were things that we weren’t really sure how to do online yet. So, we looked at this degree and we said, hey, this one looks like something that we could put entirely asynchronously online.” Additionally, an online business degree program had a great deal of buy-in from the business faculty.

More recently, new online degree programs are being developed to attract students given the college’s declining student enrollment, particularly from their local
service area. Andy shared that the college administration is pushing for more online programs due to the enrollment challenges. Once the college determined that the business degree would be offered online, planning occurred.

**Planning process**

The planning process for earlier online programs was characterized as a “free-for-all.” As Betsy explained, “…we just did whatever. We didn’t have any process…We didn’t have any restrictions at all. The Vice President said ‘Go for it, whatever you have to do.’” For some online degree programs, the college was required to go back and provide additional information, such as letters of support from employers on previously implemented programs.

Recent implementations followed a standard process as stated by Betsy. “We have a very process-based way of bringing about new programs… Now, everybody wants to know everything before you get started.” This is partially due to required documentation that campuses must submit for new program proposal approval through SUNY and the state education department. Betsy indicated that employment trends are considered to ensure that the new degree programs will assist in filling the demand for particular jobs.

When considering new online degree programs, Betsy believes that the college ensures the fit with the college’s mission. Given that the college does not allocate additional faculty to build new online programs, both participants agreed that the feasibility of offering a new program with existing resources is a major consideration. As Betsy clarified, “One of the other issues is that we want new degree programs, but we aren’t going to hire any new full-time faculty. So, it has to be something that you can kind of create with things you already have.” Andy elaborated that the college often
develops new online programs after many required courses are already online, thus simplifying the implementation process. Betsy characterized the process as follows: “It’s sort of like having a split personality. Over here, it’s like ‘New programs, new programs!’ And then it’s like ‘No money for anything!’”

Once the concept of a program is developed, the college does not perform concept testing by obtaining feedback from stakeholders such as advisory boards, employers or students. Although the department has a business advisory board, input was not sought on the new online degree program primarily because the college faculty only meet once a year with the board. Similarly, when asked about planning for marketing of the new program, Andy indicated that this was not planned for. After planning and obtaining approval to offer the degree, the curriculum development is often the next step.

**Curriculum development process**

Curriculum development for the online business program was a matter of bundling courses that were already taught online. For newer programs, the college has collaborated with another college that offers four of the core courses for the program that Community College A did not offer. As shared by Betsy, “[the students] will take [the courses] at [the other community college] online, but the course credit and grade will come from us…It’s a brand new thing.”

When asked whether the college provided the necessary resources for the implementation, Betsy stated:

I think that the “necessary” resources were allocated, but nothing extra. So, if you could you use free software, they wouldn’t provide anything… So just to use an example, I’m not sure that I can explain it without an example, we had five licenses for Camtasia, and there are better capture devices …software out there, but because we had those five, we were told
we needed to kind of pass them around and use them. Voicethread is great but if you don’t pay for the actual license and just use the freeware, it’s not as useful as it could be. So yeah, we could always have more. I don’t want to be greedy, but we could always have better software if you pay for it.

Overall, the college took a unique approach in partnering with another college to offer courses in the new program that they did not currently offer, while the remaining courses were already developed for online delivery.

**Implementation process**

Because the college was already offering the courses online, the new online program was not perceived as being much different than what was already being offered at the college. Andy indicated that the implementation did not bring about much change.

**Program evaluation process**

Program evaluations are conducted on a cycle as part of the accreditation process. Betsy stated:” Yes, we do quite extensive … we have a cycle where programs are reviewed …. " The same process is used for any program, regardless of whether it is online or traditional.

**Program implementation roles**

A sub-question of the study was “Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?” This section provides the results to answer this question. At Community College A, Betsy performed the preliminary research on possible new online programs, and brought ideas to Andy: “So, she would do the research and then she came to me as the business department saying, I have a degree that could fit into your program. What do you think about it?” Both Betsy and Andy jointly played the role of the champion throughout the program implementation. When
asked about this, Betsy stated: “Both of us did [play the role of the champion]. It came out of the business department. They looked it over, they carefully scrutinized it, approved it, and both of us physically went to the Curriculum Committee with it…it flew through there, everything was very positive.” Ultimately, Betsy developed the new degree proposal with the assistance of the Academic Vice President.

Faculty develop the online courses independently for inclusion in the program. For the most recent program, cross-campus collaboration occurred, which was a new approach for the college. Betsy shared her thoughts on the collaboration, “It’s something that SUNY wants colleges to do but no one has actually tried it, so it is kind of brand new.” Betsy explained that students would complete a few required courses at another institution within the state university, but would receive college credit from Community College A. The other college provided course syllabi, outlines and course materials used. Betsy created the program proposal to obtain approval to add the courses into the Community College A online program.

Factors supporting implementation

The second sub-question for the study was “What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

Faculty support by institution

Both participants indicated that there was broad support for the online business programs throughout the college from the administration, particularly from the Academic Vice President, the Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Council. Betsy further expressed the collaboration that took place: “It takes a lot of energy and a lot of working
together and supporting each other.” The college-wide cooperation was perceived as instrumental in the implementation of the online program.

At this college, the participants perceived that faculty were supported in the online program implementation through training opportunities and extrinsic rewards. Betsy introduced the faculty to online learning and trained them, which, according to her, assisted in the acceptance of online learning at the institution. Faculty were sent for formal online training to OpenSUNY’s training center. Betsy indicated that faculty who teach online offer a great deal of support to each other. Furthermore, this college provides extrinsic motivation for faculty teaching online through course load reductions for new online courses that are developed, in addition to a semester-based online teaching stipend. Faculty also receive a course load reduction for program reviews. The course load reductions and stipends are part of the faculty contract at this college.

**Business faculty motivation for an online program**

One of the main factors that supported the implementation was that the majority of business faculty were motivated to teach online. According to Betsy: “Some of them really, really wanted to be there with the technology. They enjoyed working online, they enjoyed the computer technology emphasis…for example, one person who was teaching and still does teach our Introduction to computer applications course has been like a pioneer actually in the whole process and is still doing innovative things even today.” The motivation for online programs by business faculty was considered a distinct advantage for the implementation.

**Persistence of champions**

Both Betsy and Andy remained persistent champions throughout the implementation. Betsy shared: “Andy has been wonderful; it’s just been great working
with him. It’s because he’s willing…But you know you have to find people with enthusiasm and willing to try new things and go out on a limb and all of that so I guess if you have at least one other person to share all that with, it really helps a lot.” The presence of two champions – one from the online learning area and the business faculty chair - was perceived as a key factor in maintaining progress towards implementation.

**Factors hindering implementation**

The third sub-question for the study was “What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

**Inadequate staffing and budget to support**

As stated earlier, the college encourages new online programs, yet is not willing to provide the budget to invest in new online programs. Betsy shared: “So, I’d say for about six years, there were not enough people….” Andy clarified: “I think her budget is very limited in the number of new courses that we can develop. So, that’s a little bit of a sticking point, that maybe we want to grow more with the online but we are limited to the number of slots she has.” This limitation is due to the stipends that are provided for new online course development. While the college administration desires new online programs, existing staff are utilized, thus limiting the growth.

**Lack of marketing**

Although the administration at the college advocates for the implementation of new online programs, marketing plans are not proactively developed and implemented to market the new programs to prospective students. Andy indicated that while the program was designed to bring in new students, surprisingly, it has not been advertised effectively. Furthermore, the college’s enrollment management plan clearly identifies
this shortfall: “[online learning] offers the college recruitment and retention opportunities that are not currently being realized to their fullest extent. The strategic value of online learning to the College’s stakeholders should be more clearly defined and then marketed to realize maximum potential to our community and can contribute to the financial stability of the College” (“Community college A enrollment management 2016-2017,” 2017, pp. 36–37). Thus, while marketing is not strong for online programs, the college recognizes the importance of marketing and has a plan to improve it.

**Summary of Themes for Community College A**

A consolidation of themes for Community College A organized by research area is shown in Figure 4-5 below. The next portion of this chapter shares the results for Community College B.

![Figure 4-5. Summary of Themes for Community College A](image-url)
Community College B

Community College B’s student enrollment is approximately 1,300 FTE, just slightly higher than Community College A. The college is also considered a small two-year college according to Carnegie classifications (“The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education,” 2015), serving a population of approximately 110,000 in two rural counties.

The college’s mission and vision highlight the importance of providing high quality educational opportunities to a geographically and culturally diverse student population. Additional emphasis is placed on consideration of various learning goals, responsiveness to changes in the community, and a personally attentive and caring environment for students (“Community College B Catalog,” 2017).

The college has experienced a steady decline in student enrollment in the last six years – from approximately 1420 in 2011 to 1330 in 2016 at an overall rate of 6.4% (Figure 4-6), although the decline is not as pronounced as Community College A.

![Community College B Student FTE Trends](image_url)

Figure 4-6. Community College B Student Full-time Enrollment (FTE) Trends
The majority (79.6%) of students reside in the college’s local service area. Of these, 66.2% are less than 23 years old. The college’s percentage of part-time students is 58.7%, but this includes high school students taking courses for college credit. The college serves two counties whose overall populations are forecasted to decline by 20% and 3% respectively between 2010-2040. Most challenging for the college are the population trends for 15- to 24-year-olds in the service area, forecasted to decline by 37% and 12% respectively as shown in Figure 4-7.

Two people were interviewed at this college. Carl is a full professor and department chair who plays multiple roles at the college: advising business students, chair of the curriculum committee, and assisting the online learning committee. Carl was clearly a change agent when it came to assisting the college in moving forward on the implementation of the online business degree program. Carl enjoyed helping with the online business program implementation, but he admits that online teaching is time-consuming.

![College B Service Area Population Trend](image)

Figure 4-7. Community College B Population Forecasts for 15 to 24-year-old people in counties served by college

("Cornell Program on Applied Demographics," 2017)
Dave is a full-time professor who plays the part-time role of the Online Learning Coordinator for the college, which he receives release time for. He established and currently chairs the Distance Learning Committee. Dave is the only person on the campus supporting the online systems, including learning management system support, technical support, training and instructional design assistance. Carl described Dave as dedicated to assisting colleagues with online education and extremely responsive. Dave belongs to a cross-campus online education networking group that has been helpful to him in gaining knowledge and information to bring back to his campus. The next section discusses the history and current state of online education at the college.

Online Education at the College

The college offered its first online course in 1996 ("Community College B Institutional Effectiveness Report Card," 2015). Online coursework slowly evolved over time. As Dave recalled, “Teachers would sign up to teach…we had no organization for online programs here…someone would say, ‘Hey, I want to teach an online course’ and it was like, ‘OK, go ahead’ [laughing]…you were on your own at that time.”

At the time of the study, the college offered 32 online course sections in Spring 2017 (“OpenSUNY Navigator,” 2017). While online learning is flexible for students, Carl perceived that not all students can be successful in online courses. “The thing that I hear all of the time is that [online learning] is unbelievably convenient, but still a lot of traditional students…online just is not for them. Whether they don’t have the discipline for it…and they are better off in a classroom for many students, but the ones who are good at it, it’s fantastic.” Carl believes that the students who are not successful at online learning are not motivated and after procrastinating, “all of a sudden, the roof caves in on them with the online course because they can’t catch up.”
The college has been slow in the implementation of online degree programs relative to other community colleges in the state university system. Dave recalled that in 2005, a Distance Learning Committee was formed to consider online degree programs based on an objective in the college’s strategic plan. From 2005, it took the college 10 years to offer its first fully online program in 2015. Carl reflected: “It’s a miracle we even got this online delivery system.” The following section considers how strategic planning may have influenced online education at the college.

Influence of strategic planning

The college’s most recent five-year strategic plan was developed in 2016 and addresses six overarching goals and associated objectives (“Community College B Strategic Plan,” 2016): 1) quality education, 2) student accessibility, 3) excellent facilities, 4) sound management, 5) student-centered, and 6) service to the community. Although the strategic plan includes student accessibility, it does not specifically address online education. In fact, many of the goals and objectives are focused on the college’s local service area. Further, budgets are not specifically allocated to online education. As Dave explained, “and part of that is budget, or lack of. We do as much online as we can.” Carl conveyed that the college does not segregate online education from traditional education; the same faculty teach courses in both modalities. The following section describes the organizational structure in more detail and how it may influence online education at the college.

Influence of organizational structure

The organizational structure at Community College B is flat with few management layers, reflective of the small size of the college. Both interviewees characterized the structure as having a chain of command, yet explained that
democratic-based decision-making occurred at lower levels in the organization. This structure was conducive to the college accepting ideas from faculty. As Carl reflected: “The nice thing is that there is an awful lot of freedom that we all have as faculty members.”

The institution’s structure did not change when online education was introduced. Thus online education was added to the existing responsibilities of faculty and staff. When asked about staffing, Carl clarified, “You can only have the people you have, so it’s not like we were willing to hire a consulting team,” and Dave agreed that no additional resources were provided to assist in the implementation. The college does not have a dedicated online learning coordinator; Dave is a full-time faculty member from another discipline who plays this role for the college. Additionally, the college does not have an instructional designer. Instead, faculty design and develop online courses. As Dave explained “…we don’t have [an instructional designer] and I’m not trained to be one, but by default, I knew enough about Blackboard and stuff to help people.” Thus, the faculty and staff do what they can to grow online education given the current resources at the college.

Influence of organizational culture

The organizational culture at the college is change-oriented, yet slow to embrace change. At the same time, the college makes changes that do not put the college at risk. As Carl recalled, “Well, at one point, our college president said in terms of change, that we move at the speed of a glacier… I think we do a good job in terms of our culture… blending change and continuity together because we aren’t doing any radical things.”
While the organizational culture has helped to foster innovative programs, this varies throughout the college and is highly dependent on the level of faculty dedication and commitment to their program. As Dave shared, “As far as organizational culture, we have our islands or silos – or whatever you want to call them – of divisions, and everybody does their own thing. And so, you know, it’s hard to get …you know, someone from somewhere else to …you know, have input if it’s not going to affect them, or if it’s going to give them more work, forget it.”

In this college, the business faculty are resistant to change and described as lacking innovation and commitment. This negatively influences the ability to grow online business educational courses and programs. Carl characterized the business faculty as having a long tenure at the college and not being open to new approaches. Yet, as Carl elaborated, faculty in other disciplines at the college are developing innovative educational opportunities:

Other areas, like our criminal justice, they’re doing changes like you wouldn’t believe. There are new courses…where they go into a correctional facility…and bring our students there with their incarcerated students. What an eye opener…so there are all kinds of neat things. That’s where marketing, change because in businesses, you better be change skilled because if not, you die. So, it’s like the antithesis of what it should be. And our education program, our psych program … those people, unbelievable what they do. They teach day and night, weekends, you name it, they’ll do it. Science people … our nursing program is unbelievably top-notch.

Both interviewees reflected that one would assume that business faculty would be one of the more innovative departments, but they are not characterized this way at Community College B. The next section explores the planning and implementation process for the new online business degree program.
New Online Degree Program Planning and Implementation

The primary research question for this study is, “How have online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?” The following sections provide the results of the study to answer this question: program characteristics, impetus for the program, planning process, curriculum development process, program implementation, and program evaluation.

Program characteristics

Initially, the online program was implemented as an Individual Studies degree with a Business concentration in 2015. A year later, it transformed into an online Business Administration A.A.S. degree that was implemented in the Fall of 2016. Enrollment in the new online business program is very low at two student FTE for the 2015-2016 years and three student FTE in the 2016-2017 academic years, although this equates to 11 students, many of which are part-time. Given that this is the only online program offered at the college, students enrolled in business programs account for 100% of enrollment in online programs, with 67% of the students attending outside of the college’s service area (Student FTE by program by permanent residence, 2017).

The next section explains the primary driver of the program.

Impetus for the program

Given the situation of declining student enrollment, both participants viewed the online business program as a mechanism to attract new students outside the local area. Carl emphasized that the declining enrollment is extremely concerning for the future of the college. Additionally, residents who may have moved outside of the service area could continue as students as Carl explains: “The impetus was to market what we could do for students and have students who would never have considered us in different
locales, if they were initially in this area, move to different places and because they were fond of Community College B, still thought of us as an educational opportunity for them.”

The college leaders also felt pressure from the competition. The college was slow in the implementation of online degree programs relative to other community colleges in the state university system. Carl stated, “We need to diversify. Everybody’s online, where are we? Well, basically, to stay contemporary as an institution, we better have online degrees. [Another community college] had like 30 online courses just over the intercession. We have none.” Dave corroborated this point. “The whole competitive thing probably came in at that point too… um hey, we are the only ones not doing this.”

The following section describes the planning process that was used to plan the new degree program at Community College B.

**Planning process**

The college has a standardized process for degree program proposals and approvals. According to Carl, the process is structured; faculty develop proposals for new programs which go through a rigorous approval process by the division, the curriculum committee, the assessment committee, the faculty council, and the President, prior to submission to SUNY for approval.

The planning process for this program started in 2005 when the college identified a goal to implement a new online degree program. During this time, Dave started the distance learning committee. Initially, the committee was working to determine which degree program was the best fit for online delivery. Dave shared that input was sought from various college stakeholders. “We had a meeting with people here on campus…and we were trying to figure out what degree program we could offer…we
actually started with an AAS in Individual Studies with a Business Concentration…and that was based on the trends." Yet, the committee did not consider fully whether the program fit with the mission and vision of the college or whether it was feasible. As Dave admits: “[We] went with the quickest program that we could get across the finish line with the least amount of work. So, we kind of skipped the [new product development steps]. It was just practicality that I guess we went for.”

Even so, it took 10 years to implement the online degree due to several planning issues. First, the college had never implemented an online degree before, and did not have experience with the process. In fact, the college did not have a process to approve new programs. As Carl stated, “We’d always have all of these real formal procedures for course design but never had one for program, which is kind of crazy, so we did that like a year ago.”

Second, the online degree program initially did not have a champion to lead the planning process. Carl conveyed that the distance learning committee was “going in circles and they would meet once in a while, but nothing much got accomplished.” He felt that the committee and the planning process suffered from the lack of a champion, particularly from the business faculty.

Third, not only did the faculty not champion the implementation, they actually resisted the online degree program, providing little to no input in the planning phase. As Dave shared:

I mean this is a business degree, so obviously, your business faculty members, you would think would be the most involved in such an implementation. So, I’m spearheading this process along with [the Academic Dean] and trying to get input from the people who really should be doing it, and getting nowhere. So, that was frustrating…what courses do you want to teach? And, nothing...time after time, there was nothing
coming out of them. No input from the business people themselves, which wasn’t helpful.

Both Carl and Dave perceived that there were many roadblocks to planning the online degree program, even though it should have been a matter of packaging courses that the college already offered.

Ultimately, Dave sought assistance from Carl who is known for getting things done. Carl immediately observed that “the committee was going in circles…belaboring every single detail.” His recommendation was to move forward and propose the degree without everyone’s input. Dave shared that Carl said, “Just do it! File the papers, have [the Academic Dean] just sign them and submit them…they’ll come on board afterwards.” Dave conveyed that “It was probably the only way it got done because he did that…which sounds like not a great way to do things, but it’s the only way sometimes.” Once the decision was made to move forward, the online learning director and Carl worked with the Dean’s office to complete the proposal, obtain approvals through the college channels, and submit for state education approvals.

In the past, the college had sought input from local businesses to build programs needed in the community. Both participants shared that business advisory boards and roundtable meetings with local businesses provided valuable input on future programs for the college to consider, particularly for A.A.S. programs. Unfortunately, actions were not always taken based on input from the board members.

The college did not collaborate with other community colleges on the program planning, but research was conducted to understand what other community colleges were offering. Carl did not feel that collaboration was necessary. “So we didn’t have to do a lot of collaboration or anything like that because we already have the program, and
Curriculum development process

Curriculum development process for the online business program did not involve new course development, thus the implementation was perceived as easy by Carl. “There were no new courses, so how easy is that?” Dave shared this view. “And sure enough, we did not have to create even one new online course. We just repackaged what we already offered and put it into a new degree.” The one limitation was that the college did not offer a lab science course online, so this course requirement was fulfilled through another campus within OpenSUNY.

The interviewees perceived that the college already had the necessary people, tools and software resources to support the program implementation. Both participants explained that the learning management system was already in place, with faculty already teaching the courses online. Carl shared: “We didn’t have to go find new faculty, develop new courses, we just had the structure from our Business Administration AAS degree, just package it, and put the courses online.” Dave agreed: “We didn’t really have to spend any money to get this going, really. We didn’t have to buy any software, we didn’t have to do anything above and beyond what we already had.” The next section depicts the implementation process for the new degree program.

Implementation process

The implementation process did not involve significant change for the college given that the courses were already being offered and just bundled into a degree
program. As Carl perceived this process, “It was just a way to market what we had…we already had all the mechanisms in place. We just had to structure it and put it online and there it goes.” Dave concurred, “It didn’t change anything for anybody really. Um, they are still teaching the same courses they were teaching online before. They couldn’t tell you if that student was in the new program or not. Since they were already teaching the classes, they are still doing it. We didn’t even have to offer new sections because we didn’t see an influx of students or anything.”

Once students enroll in the online business degree program, other options can emerge that may provide them with more flexibility to maximize their transfer credits. As Carl explained, “They might start out in business but then they might shift and we can still give them an online degree through our Individual Studies degree which has a business option, but it gives more flexibility. So, what I like about having the official degree is that we’ve actually had students sign up for it, but once we get into the advising, and we talk about what their goals are, we can then shift direction…. [maximizing] credits through Individual study and then still had a business concentration.” The following section explains the evaluation process used for the new online degree program.

**Program evaluation process**

Community College B does not differentiate between online programs and traditional programs relative to evaluation. According to Carl, online programs are held to the same standards as traditional programs. When asked about program evaluation, Carl perceived that program evaluation relates only to the regional accreditation process, “Our strategic planning and Middle States is really strong. In terms of online programming, again it is relatively new, but we do a masterful job of course assessment
and program assessment.” He also admitted that while he believes the college is strong in assessment, some people may take shortcuts given the amount of work. “We do a really good job of assessment [but] sometimes we just make it up because the work to really assess is a lot. You could have it as your job and not do anything else because you wouldn’t have any time.” Dave would like to see the college do more with online program evaluations. “I’ve been trying to push that …saying what percent of our students are actually taking online and we don’t really address it.” The following section explores the people involved and roles they played when implementing a new online degree program.

**Program implementation roles**

A sub-question of the study was, “Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?” This section provides the results to answer this question. At Community College B, a group effort across the campus was coordinated by the Distance Learning Committee, chaired by Dave to implement the online program. As he recalled, “My role was to make sure that we could get there. Um, so I would schedule meetings, keep bringing the topic up, get people involved, trying to get people to actually do something.” Carl felt that the distance learning committee “actually glued it together” but Dave considered Carl “a big help when it came down to, you know, putting the coursework together, and packaging it.” Other departments were brought in as well, such as registration, records, information technology, and “we had a lot of people involved over all those years…some kept coming and going…a lot of change-over of staff because it was such a long duration. There was a lot of involvement on a small scale from a lot of people.” Unfortunately, the business faculty did not play a key role in the program implementation and were perceived as a roadblock.
Once the committee finalized the details, the Academic Dean developed the new online degree program proposal with the assistance of the institutional research person and the online learning coordinator. Carl explained the value of the institutional research person for new programs by saying, “With SUNY you have to justify, well, why is this program of value and benefit…I think he was probably instrumental in providing a lot of the data as to why we should have a program like that implemented at the college.” At this college, the Academic Dean submitted the program proposal to SUNY for approval.

The next section characterizes those factors that were perceived by participants as supporting the implementation.

**Factors supporting implementation**

The second sub-question for the study was, “What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

**Persistence of champions.** Although the business faculty were not champions for the online degree program, Dave and Carl kept the planning going with the support of the Academic Dean. As Dave explained, “I just kind of made sure that we kept revisiting it and we kept it going.”

After Carl was brought in to assist the committee, he shared his advice with them. “So that’s why I think they saw my advice as ‘let’s just get the thing done! This is how you do it and go do it!’ Dave and Carl persevered under difficult circumstances to make progress towards the program implementation.

The Administration, particularly the Academic Dean, was supportive of online learning programs and in fact served as the administrative champion of the program. She was persistent in assisting the distance learning committee, given the lack of
support from faculty. As Carl explained: “I think our Dean did a masterful job just getting this done…which isn’t where you want your champion to come from. They are the support people… Usually it doesn’t happen that way. Usually you have a faculty do it and then the Dean just would oversee it.” In this college, the Academic Dean, Dave and Carl played the role of champions for this program implementation in absence of a faculty champion.

**Factors hindering implementation**

The third sub-question for the study was “What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

**Lack of institutional goal**

While the college encouraged new online programs based on the strategic goal from 2005 to implement an online degree program, no specific measurable goal or budget was developed to support the planning and implementation process. Dave recalled that administration did not direct the distance learning committee to develop new online programs. Rather, “it kind of grew on its own.” Given that there was no goal, there were also no due dates given to people working on the team and this delayed the implementation. Dave explained that the lack of a deadline coupled with the perception that this was extra work for people meant that the committee was often waiting for people to complete their tasks, thus elongating the implementation.

**Lack of faculty support by the institution**

At this community college, faculty are not trained to teach online. Carl perceived that most community colleges require faculty to complete an online training course before they are able to teach online, but Community College B does not. Carl views this
as a “flaw.” Dave agreed: “We really…didn’t have any formalized training or review or instructional design help or anything for getting online courses out there…not a good way to do things, we know. but [we have] limited resources.” The lack of training was viewed as a barrier to the program implementation since faculty did not have the support they needed to develop online courses and teach online.

Another factor that could be contributing to the lack of faculty motivation for developing new business online programs is that there are no financial incentives for faculty. Both participants explained that there were no extrinsic rewards such as stipends or release time to implement this online program. Dave conveyed that “nobody got any extra stipends for anything along the way or release time above and beyond what they were already doing.” While it is not clear whether the lack of financial incentives contributed to the faculty lack of motivation to build online programs, the absence of these rewards was perceived as benefiting the college, but not the faculty.

Lack of faculty champion

The faculty were not motivated to support or lead the implementation of the new online degree program. Carl described the situation as follows. “There wasn’t a lot of departmental cooperation from the business people…if you want this to work, you better have business faculty championing the effort versus just being pushed through it…it was a lack of motivation.” The online degree program implementation suffered from the absence of a faculty champion from the initial stages. As Carl reflected, “And I think how things get done at a community college, my experience is you need a champion that stays with it through thick and thin. And I think it took so long to get this thing done because we didn’t really have the champion of it…and we have a lot of them, they are just not in the business division…the push came from the Dean’s office.” Dave agreed,
adding that he attempted to play the role of the champion, but without faculty support, it was difficult.

**Lack of marketing**

The college did a minimal amount of planning and budget allocation to market the program, and this has impacted their ability to gain enrollment in the program. Both participants felt that the new program was not marketed effectively. Carl viewed the marketing efforts as minimal and traditional with “no real generated excitement and pounding the press and doing a lot of innovative online type of things.” Both of the participants were frustrated by the lack of marketing and the impact this has had on the program’s success, demonstrated by the limited student enrollment in the program. Carl conveyed, “We got across the finish line, but [marketing] has been a big issue and it is still an issue, because we have this degree and still nobody knows about it a year later.” The lack of marketing appeared to be an issue that negatively impacted the online program implementation.

**Summary of Themes for Community College B**

A consolidation of themes for Community College B organized by research area is shown in Figure 4-8 below. The next portion of this chapter shares the results for Community College C.
Community College C

Community College C’s student enrollment is approximately 3,800 FTE; thus this was the largest of the institutions participating in the study. The college is considered a medium two-year college according to Carnegie classifications (“The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education,” 2015) serving a local population of approximately 200,000 in four rural counties through the main campus and six campus centers.

The college’s mission and vision emphasize educational excellence, innovation, and empowerment to students that foster growth, economic development, and global citizenship to meet the changing needs of the community and world. The college’s strategic goals are concerned with students (readiness, access, completion), faculty & staff, sustainability, culture, and economic impact, particularly in their service area (Community College C’s Strategic Plan 2013-2018, 2017).
The college’s student enrollment has been declining steadily over the last six years at an overall rate of 14% from approximately 4500 in 2011 to 3800 in 2016 as shown in Figure 4-9 (“Community College C Student FTE Report,” 2017).

![Community College C Student FTE](image)

Figure 4-9. Student Full-time Enrollment (FTE) Trends

Students who attend Community College C reside in nearby locations: 57.6% are from the college’s service area and 23.4% from adjacent counties as shown in Figure 4-10 (“Community college C FTE by residency 2015-2016,” 2017).

At the time of the study, 72% of all students were 21 years or younger. The college’s percentage of part-time students is 57% (Community College C’s Strategic Plan 2013-2018, 2017). The college serves four counties whose populations are
forecasted to shift over the next ten years – a declining young population will be

Community College C Student Residency 2015-2016

Figure 4-10. Community College C Student Residency 2015-2016

replaced by more seniors, but also decline slightly overall. Even worse for the college are the projections of 15-24 year-olds in the service area, which is expected to decline significantly in all counties (9%, 7%, 37% and 41% respectively) as shown in Figure 4-11 ("Cornell Program on Applied Demographics," 2017). This decline in 15 to 24-year-olds will negatively impact traditional student enrollment from the service area.
Figure 4-11. College C Population Forecasts for 15 to 24-year-olds in counties served by college

Two people were interviewed at this college. Andrea is a Business Professor who considers herself the lead faculty member for many required business courses. She was one of the first professors to implement online business courses at the college and perceives that she “put the vast majority in an online format.” While many of her colleagues are concerned about the safety of their employment at the college given the declining enrollment, Andrea sees the growth of online learning as positive for the college. She “feels strong job security” and isn’t nervous because she considers herself “a fan of and advocate for online learning.” She believes that you can put any course online. Andrea values networking with other online professionals and is actively involved in an international online learning professional group within the state university.
Barbara is a Business and Accounting Professor who teaches a variety of courses in traditional, hybrid and online formats. Barbara is cautious about online learning based on her perception that students are not as successful in an online setting compared to a traditional setting. She feels strongly that certain courses, such as accounting with technical content, should have a classroom component to help students succeed. “We do see a big difference in the performance of our accounting students in online classes versus in the traditional setting.” Thus, the accounting degree is only 75% online, and she does not envision this going fully online. Barbara is also concerned that online courses could be negatively impacting student retention, which is a metric used to measure college performance. Her experience is that “you lose the student connection in the online courses. And it’s somewhat concerning in terms of student retention and being able to make those personal connections.” The following section explores online education at Community College C.

**Online Education at the College**

The college’s online education offerings are robust. In Spring 2017, the college offered 191 online course sections, ten degree programs that can be completed 100% online, and an additional 17 degree programs that can be completed partially online (“OpenSUNY Navigator,” 2017). According to Andrea, the college offered its first online business course in 2000. Both of the Business Administration degrees were implemented as fully online programs in 2014. Of all course sections offered online, business-related courses make up 25% (“Community College C Course Sections Spring 2017,” 2017) as shown in Figure 4-12.
Interestingly, the college does not track student enrollment in online programs versus traditional programs. While many of their programs may be completed fully online, they do not collect data on how many students complete their programs fully online, partially online or in a traditional classroom.

Andrea perceives that online learning is a perfect fit given the college’s mission to “bring education to the people where they are.” Given the large geographical area that the college serves, the campus centers originally fulfilled this mission. Andrea believes that online learning makes sense for the college because “even with our campus centers, it’s at least an hour drive in good weather to come into the main campus; online was a natural for us.” Andrea shared that some students are taking her online courses from well outside the college’s service area.

While Andrea has a positive perspective, the introduction of online learning has caused tension within the institution. Student enrollment in online coursework has
surpassed student enrollment from all six campus centers combined. Both Andrea and Barbara agreed that online education had a “big impact on their class offerings.” Andrea shared: “It’s the reality; I mean honestly, our online numbers have surpassed our satellite campuses.” The number of class sections offered at the campus centers has decreased dramatically to one-third of the original class sections offered in peak years. As a result, the college consolidated and reduced the number of campus center deans from six to three with each dean managing two campus centers. Andrea clarified, “There is real evidence to prove that online learning is overtaking the campus center model and rendering them ineffective.” Andrea speculated about the future of the campus centers: “We are, especially this year, facing a hard reality…what does this mean to our campus centers? And that will be a discussion for the very near future.”

The number of course sections offered in Spring 2017 at the main campus, campus centers and online is depicted in Figure 4-13, demonstrating that online has exceeded the campus centers in the number of courses offered.

![Figure 4-13. Percentage of course sections offered by location, Spring 2017](image)
Both interviewees feel that student advisement is critical to online student success, yet the college considers it optional. Andrea believes that any course can be put online, but she perceives that “not every student is suited for the online environment.” Lack of advisement can be a real issue for online students as Barbara shared:

I think where we struggle is not always advising the traditional 18, 19-year old student who has not been in an online environment before and they see it as an option that doesn't require them to go to class. And those are the students that really struggle, and we can see it in our assessment results that without that proper advisement, there is an opportunity for them to fail pretty quickly.

Given the importance of online education at the college and the fact that advisement is not required for all students, the college is seeking alternatives to traditional advisement.

**Influence of strategic planning**

The college’s most recent five-year strategic plan was developed in 2013 and addresses six overarching goals and associated objectives (*Community College C’s Strategic Plan 2013-2018, 2017*). None of the goals specifically address online education at the college, but some of the goals address related areas such as reducing the geographical barriers to student access and completion. While not explicitly addressed in the strategic plan, Andrea perceived that online learning is a key strategy for the college, “Online learning was something that the college was going to do no matter what. It is a part of the strategic plan and mission statement of our institution to provide learning to our students where they are.” Barbara also felt that online learning “must be part of our strategy…looking at enrollment and numbers.”
Although growth in online programs is not clearly addressed in the strategic plan, both participants felt a strong push by the administration to get as many programs as possible 100% online. They both expressed concern for the future of the campus centers based on the shift in student enrollment from the campus centers to online coursework. Barbara shared that the college needed to make some hard decisions. “This is a consequence that’s going to have to be something that gets addressed because it is part of the strategic direction of the college. What happens to the campus centers and like I said, I do believe that the online has a strong proponent here, so it is going to continue on this path for sure.” Given the increase in online education at the college, the fate of the campus centers needs to be determined.

Influence of organizational structure

Community College C is organized into five main departments by function: Academic Affairs, Finance and Operations, Student and Enrollment Services, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, and Development and External Affairs. The online learning staff and the campus center deans are all housed within a Distributed Learning group under the Academic Affairs department. Faculty develop the curriculum for their individual courses, including online courses. Barbara described the organizational structure as a formal chain of command, yet one that is flexible. “We have a Business Director who reports to a Dean who reports to the Provost. In terms of how I’m managed, I feel that it is very flexible and informal. You know, I can take on as much as I want to or as little as I want to in terms of what I want my role to be in something such as an online implementation.”

Decisions on the overall direction of online learning are made at higher levels in the organization, while curriculum and content are determined by the faculty. Both
participants felt this approach was beneficial, specifically that their input was sought in the online course and program development stages. Andrea explained that faculty do not typically get involved in the initial planning and proposal of a new online degree program. “[This] happened without me or my input.” However, this was not perceived negatively by Andrea: “On the whole, I think that structure was very positive for implementing the program.”

Barbara was appreciative of the process, “I do [make decisions] in terms of the content and the way that courses are offered. But I think overall, implementation decisions are made much higher up in the organization. So, I see from a strategy standpoint, the decision-making process makes sense that you would want the support of your higher administration for it.” Overall, the participants perceived the organizational structure as supportive of online education at the college.

Influence of organizational culture

The college’s organizational culture is portrayed outwardly as collaborative and innovative, emphasizing partnerships, innovative academic programs, academic excellence, continuous improvement, and professional development. A clear focus on student success is apparent in written materials and stems from the mission of the college which is dedicated to meeting the changing needs of individuals through a student-centered approach.

Both participants characterized the organizational culture as frugal. Barbara stated that the organizational culture is, “Do more with less.” Due to the pressure of declining enrollment, she believes that this culture will persist. She perceived that the college hires faculty and staff who are willing to work in this environment. But the college’s frugal nature prevented the administration from bringing on the necessary staff
to support online education. Andrea explained: “All along, they have seen that we have been able to do it, so, there isn’t a whole lot of impetus for them to put a lot of money into it.” Overall, the organizational culture supports online education, but the administration is pragmatic about the financial investment in online programs. The following section explores the planning and implementation process of the online business degree program at Community College C.

**New Online Business Degree Program Planning & Implementation**

The primary research question guiding the study is: How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges? The following sections provide the results of the study to answer the question: program characteristics, impetus for the program, planning process, curriculum development process, program implementation and program evaluation.

**Program characteristics**

The Business Administration A.A.S. online degree program prepares students for entry-level management positions in business while the Business Administration A.S. degree program sets the ground work for students to transfer to a four-year school ("Community College C Business Administration Programs," 2017). Both degrees have been offered at the college for many years, but in 2014, they were offered as fully online programs, with no changes to the course requirements for the program. Student enrollment in the online programs was not available at the time of this study.

**Impetus for program**

Both respondents indicated that the new online degree program was implemented to attract students from outside of the service area. Given the declining student enrollment and population in the service area, it seemed like a logical program
for the college to pursue. Andrea added that “our unemployment has dropped, so we have…people who are able to get a job, working and not necessarily coming to school and…we’ve got to do these things to get the opportunity out to people who want to take advantage of it.”

Andrea perceived that the implementation of new online programs was a sensible approach to achieving the college’s mission and student-focused culture to “provide learning to our students where they are.” Barbara considered the online program as an opportunity to increase accessibility and “to offer our college and our courses to more people without the limitations of location.” After it was determined that the college would pursue offering the business program online, the planning process occurred.

Planning process

The planning for the online program followed SUNY’s standard process (“SUNY guide to academic program planning,” 2013), but occurred before faculty involvement. Andrea explained that the planning of the online degree was performed by the Dean of Online Learning and was “done without me being a part of it.” The online degree proposal was prepared and submitted for university approval by the Dean of Online Learning.

Andrea shared that the administration frequently communicated to faculty that “this is going to happen with or without you” which did not bother her because she is “100% on board with online learning.” While most faculty were positive about online learning, the Business Faculty Chair was not supportive of online education, thus causing delays in the planning process.
**Curriculum development process**

The college did not develop new curriculum for the program; the existing business program curriculum was used, and the current courses were put online. However, putting courses online was a bit challenging, as Andrea expressed:

We probably could have gotten it online a lot faster, but we spent a lot of time just trying to figure out how...it just took an awfully long time...but I guess the positive side of that is...we were able to work through it...through a lot of trial and error, and you know, patience, were able to figure out how to do it.

Andrea shared that she sought assistance from instructional designers at other colleges where she had worked in the past to discuss best practices for online courses. Andrea explained, “I had contacts there that I could discuss best practices with...I had access to their instructional design staff, and that helped me greatly.”

No additional software tools beyond the learning management system were perceived as necessary to develop online courses. As Barbara explained, “Our Blackboard is our main tool, our main system, and I think a lot of resources are allocated to that so that it runs as smoothly as possible.”

While not in place at the time of the curriculum development for this program, Andrea explained that the college has embarked on several initiatives intended to improve online courses: 1) Quality Matters to improve the quality of online offerings, 2) online course shells to standardize the navigation, look and feel, and 3) Video captioning to ensure accessibility for the visually impaired. However, at the time of the online degree implementation, these items were not available.

**Implementation process**

The college was already offering most of the courses online; thus the implementation of the online business degree program did not require significant
change. Both participants mentioned the importance of advisement for students in the online program. Barbara shared her concern that advisement is not a requirement for students and the negative impact this has on online student success:

There is some missing piece...in terms of advisement... [students need to make] better decisions in terms of how they approach their online classes. We will have a traditional 18 or 19-year old student sign up for five online classes. In no world should they be allowed to do that when they've never even taken one online class.

While the college is moving to a new model utilizing student success coaches, when Andrea was asked about whether the college would have success coaches specifically for exclusively online students, she said this was not part of the current plan. Barbara emphasized that while the student success coaches may be beneficial, the student connection to the professor is crucial for advisement on academic decisions. After the program was implemented, the college evaluated the program.

**Program evaluation process**

Consistent with other colleges within the state university system, Community College C completes program reviews every five years to fulfill accreditation requirements. Andrea shared that she is currently conducting the program review for the business degree programs. As she performs the evaluation, she is attempting to differentiate between online and traditional programs. However, this is challenging because when students enroll in the program, they do not designate whether they intend to complete the program fully online. Thus, a student can take all classes online, some classes online, or no classes online. Andrea explained that students enroll in the business administration program, but how students choose to take classes is up to them and this is not controlled by the college.
One of the key areas of concern is student retention. To assist in the program evaluation, the institutional assessment office provided course-level data on student retention in traditional, online and hybrid formats. Barbara explained that the findings indicate a poor success rate for online students in accounting which she feels is a “huge student retention issue.” Andrea conveyed that she is trying to determine if there is a significant difference in the retention numbers for exclusively online students versus partially online students:

We’re trying to see in the online …how many students are taking it strictly 100% online? How many students take part online classes and part in-class? How many just maybe take one or two because it doesn’t work for their schedule to do it any other way? And how is that impacting retention in the program in general?

Barbara also shared that early evaluation results indicate that if students are successful in completing introductory courses, overall retention improves substantially. Faculty at Community College C are attempting to differentiate between online and traditional programs, but find it difficult to obtain the data. The next section describes the people involved and the roles they played in the program implementation.

Program implementation roles

A sub-question of the study was, “Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?” This section provides the results to answer this question. At Community College C, both participants perceived that Andrea and the Dean of Online Learning jointly championed the effort to implement the business online degree program. Andrea explained that it was the Dean’s mission to offer the program fully online. He served as the driving force and led the upfront planning process, while Andrea was engaged in the development and implementation phases.
Andrea shared that the college brought in online learning technical consultants to assist faculty in the learning management system portion of the implementation. She felt that the consultants provided invaluable guidance; they trained online faculty, shared best practices, and provided one-on-one assistance for faculty. Both participants acknowledged that faculty would have benefited from an Instructional Designer and Accessibility Expert to assist in online course development. The Dean of Online Learning later advocated for these positions, but they were not in place at the time of the online business degree implementation. From here, the factors supporting the implementation will be explored.

**Factors supporting implementation**

The second sub-question for the study was “What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

**Faculty support by the institution**

The administration, particularly the Dean of Online Learning and the Academic Dean, were supportive of online learning programs. Barbara perceived that having a dedicated Dean of Online Learning made a positive impact on the implementation and reinforced the support from administration for online learning. The Dean is characterized as “always very positive...he’s open to compliments and constructive criticism.”

Through the Dean’s advocacy, an instructional designer and accessibility expert were hired to support faculty developing curriculum for online courses throughout the institution. Andrea shared that the Dean recently fostered the implementation of the standardized course shell to reduce student anxiety and frustration through consistency in navigation.
According to the participants, the college provides extensive training and support for faculty who teach online. The learning management consultants were identified as particularly instrumental to faculty involved in the online program implementation. The consultants provided training to faculty who were going to develop online courses. Both participants felt that the consultants were excellent and helpful to faculty who are trying to figure out what to do in a class, and how to approach it in the learning management system using the tools that are available. Barbara stated:

I will say from a faculty standpoint, we are offered a lot of training opportunities. [The consultants] offer a lot of support in terms of drop-in sessions and faculty can stop in and have questions answered. Or if you are having technical difficulty or just want to improve your course. So I do feel that we have those resources here and they’re very supportive. It’s important for faculty to have that.

Andrea explained that the Online Advisory Committee is another resource for faculty who teach online that “helps instructors to identify the areas in their courses as students work through their programs, where you run into roadblocks and students start disengaging in that online format.” Ultimately, the participants felt that they were provided with the training and support to successfully implement the online program.

**Business Faculty Motivation for Online Program**

The program implementation was supported by faculty similar to Andrea who embrace online learning. Even though faculty did not receive monetary compensation to develop new online programs, this was not a barrier to the program implementation. According to Andrea, faculty were motivated due to the declining enrollment and the expectation that online programs could help to alleviate this issue. Barbara added that teaching online provides flexibility for faculty that allows for a quality work-home life balance:
I like teaching online because of the flexibility that it offers. I like to be able to spread workload out over weekends, not having to report to campus like in a traditional setting. I love the online offerings for that reason because it does allow me to leave here earlier than I would have in the past and work at night so… I’ve seen more of the summer classes moving to that online setting. It also encourages more faculty to teach that way.

Thus, business faculty were perceived to be intrinsically motivated in differing ways to support the program implementation.

**Persistence of champions**

Both Andrea and the Dean of Online Learning were persistent champions throughout all phases, thus supporting the online program implementation. Andrea spoke about the Dean of Online Learning, “[he] was driven to do this…he wanted those degree programs to be 100% online… [he was] really the major force that made this happen…that’s what he was charged with when he came in, and that’s what he did…that was really his mission.” The presence of dedicated champions from both online education and faculty areas was perceived as supporting the implementation. The following section explores those factors that were perceived to hinder implementation.

**Factors hindering implementation**

The third sub-question for the study was, “What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?” The following sections provide the results to answer this question.

**Inadequate staffing and budget to support**

The college has a reputation for being frugal, and this has impacted online education. Andrea clarifies, “When I say that we are frugal, I am the only full-time business instructor, and we have almost…600 business students between the two
degree programs.” Andrea believes that the administration did not consider additional resources for online programs, such as an instructional designer, because the faculty were motivated to put their courses online and did this without asking for additional resources. Andrea communicated that an instructional designer was added to the organization in 2015 after the Dean of Online Learning advocated for the position. However, she feels that the person should have been hired sooner to help faculty design their courses. “We would have benefited from having an Instructional Designer sooner…we found a great variation in the quality of online classes across our institution. There are those that would tell you that we need more [instructional designers] than just one.” Thus, at the time of the study, the appropriate resources were not in place for the implementation, but the college has since added them.

**Faculty chair resistant to online education**

While the business faculty were committed to the implementation of the new online degree program, the Business Faculty Chair, whom Andrea and Barbara both report to, resisted online education. As Andrea explained, she was a roadblock to getting the degree online. “She is wonderful, but she is not a champion for online learning – [she] fought hard not to put [her courses] online,” and these courses were required for the degree. In her defense, Andrea perceived that she was concerned with student retention in online courses: “We try every semester to make it better, try to remove the roadblocks, figure out where students are getting jammed up and stop logging in, but I think that the [Business Faculty Chair] has real worries about our retention numbers and online learning.” The resistance to online education by the Business Faculty Chair was perceived as a barrier to the implementation.
Lack of marketing

The college performed a minimal amount of planning and budget allocation to market the program, and this has impacted the ability for the college to gain enrollment in the program from outside of their service area. When asked about marketing of the new program, both Andrea and Barbara agreed that marketing is not a strength of the college. While general marketing of the college occurs, marketing of specific programs is lacking. Given the declining enrollment, Andrea wonders, “Why aren’t we doing more to market our programs?... One of the selling points of it is that you can complete this degree 100% online.” Barbara agrees that the college should do more to market their programs: “the business team feels that’s a drawback to us because of the strength of our business program.” Overall, both Andrea and Barbara perceived that more marketing of the online business degree could improve student enrollment in the program. The following section provides a summary of themes for this college.

Summary of Themes for Community College C

A consolidation of themes for Community College C organized by research area is shown in Figure 4-14 below. The next portion of this chapter examines the findings across all cases in the study.

Cross-Case Findings

This study utilized a cross-case analysis to examine the findings through the perspectives of participants from multiple community colleges. This section begins with a holistic view of online education at all colleges in the study and concludes with an analysis of the similarities and differences of the research findings across each college based on themes that emerged from the within-case analysis.
Online Education at the Colleges

Each college participating in the study possessed varying degrees of experience with online education based on when the college first offered online courses and when they offered online degree programs. Further, information on the scope of online education for each institution, particularly business education, was found in this study.

Table 4-2 characterizes the findings related to online education at each college.

Table 4-2. Online Education at each College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Year Online Courses Initially Offered</th>
<th># Online Course Sections Offered Now (Spring 2017)</th>
<th>Online Programs Offered Now (Spring 2017)</th>
<th>Year Online Business Program Offered</th>
<th>% Of Online Programs that are Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All colleges in the study implemented online business degree programs between 2014 and 2015. Interestingly, Community College B offered online courses to students earlier than any colleges in the study, beginning in 1996. Yet they were the last to offer their first online program in 2015. Community College C offers the most online course sections and programs of all colleges in the study, while Community College A offers three online programs and a similar number of online course sections as Community College B. The next section discusses the research findings across all community colleges in the study.

Cross-Case Findings

Once themes emerged from each case, a cross-case analysis was conducted to consider similarities and differences of the cases as related to the research questions, guided by the conceptual framework. The themes corresponding to the research areas for each college are outlined in Table 4-3. Following this, the next section describes the similarities and differences across all colleges in the study.

Summary of Cross-Case Results

As stated previously, the central research question guiding the study was, “How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?” The first portion of the findings answered this primary research question within each case. This question will now be answered across all cases.

Online Program Implementation

The first consideration is how did the idea for the online program originate? Participants from all three colleges in the study cited declining enrollment as the main reason for expanding the online program offerings at their college. Coupled with declining population in their local geographical areas, it is logical to consider online
Table 4-3. Themes by College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes Based on Research Questions</th>
<th>College A</th>
<th>College B</th>
<th>College C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Program Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impetus for Program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Attract new students due to declining enrollment and population in service area</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Competition from other SUNY community colleges</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning for Program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Mission &amp; Vision focused on local geographical area</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Strategic plan mentions increasing student access</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Expanding online programs is a written goal in a plan</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum Development Process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Follows standard SUNY Proposal Approval Process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Existing program curriculum</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Existing courses put online</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Collaboration with other colleges</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Implementation Process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o No changes necessary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Program Evaluation Process</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Online programs are evaluated the same as traditional</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online Program Implementation Roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Champion(s)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Academic administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Online learning coordinator/dean</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Faculty chair</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Faculty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proposal Development/Management through Approval</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Academic administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Faculty chair</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Online learning coordinator/dean</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Online course design and development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Instructional designer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Accessibility specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty Training</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Learning management system expert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Online learning coordinator/dean</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o OpenSUNY trainer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors Supporting Implementation</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty support by institution</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business faculty motivation for online program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Persistence of champions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors Hindering Implementation</strong></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of institutional goal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faculty chair resistant to online education</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inadequate staffing and budget to support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of faculty support by institution</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of faculty champion</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of marketing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
offerings to attract students outside of the college service area. For Community College B, one participant described the situation as “a state of basically desperate,” highlighting the severity of the college’s enrollment challenges. Participants from the two smaller colleges (A and B), felt strongly that their college was implementing online programs to keep up with other SUNY community colleges, which were viewed as competition; this concern was not shared by Community College C.

Even though all colleges are experiencing a drastic decline in student enrollment, the mission and vision statements for all colleges in the study are primarily focused on the local service area. Further, upon a review of the three colleges’ strategic plan documents, increasing educational access for students was incorporated, yet online education was not recognized as a strategic goal. While all participants perceived that expanding online programs was a goal at their college, there was only written evidence of this at one college, Community College A, in an Enrollment Management Plan (“Community college A enrollment management 2016-2017,” 2017). Whereas all colleges in the study followed the required SUNY Program Proposal Approval process, the person who developed and managed the proposal, and others who were involved in the proposal, varied for each college.

For all colleges in the study, the curriculum development process entailed using the existing business program curriculum and putting existing courses online. This was not perceived as a large effort, given that most, if not all courses were already offered online. Community College A was the only one who collaborated with another college to offer courses in the online business program. Overall, for most colleges, the
implementation process was minimal because existing faculty were utilized to teach existing online courses.

The last stage in a program implementation is the evaluation process. At all colleges included in the study, evaluation was conducted through a program review on a cycle required by the accrediting body. Colleges A and B do not evaluate online programs any differently than traditional programs. On the other hand, College C is starting to consider variations in their program review for online programs, but they are finding it difficult to obtain the necessary data given that students do not designate themselves as fully online.

**Online program implementation roles**

The first sub-question was, “Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?” A key role in a successful implementation of an online degree program is the leader or champion. In each of the community colleges studied, there were multiple champions, but they were not consistent across all colleges. In Community College A, the online learning coordinator and the faculty chair were the primary champions, with support of the faculty. This arrangement worked well and supported the implementation. In Community College B, the faculty opposed online learning, so the academic dean, online learning coordinator and the faculty chair played the roles of the champion pushing the implementation through various phases. Due to the opposition from business faculty, the implementation of this online program took 10 years. In Community College C, the Dean of Online Learning and business faculty were the champions, focusing on different phases of the implementation.

Within each college, someone led the SUNY program proposal and managed it through state education approval. Each college in the study approached this differently.
In Community College A, the Faculty Chair and the Online Learning Coordinator worked collaboratively on the proposal and gained approval from SUNY to offer the program. In contrast, in Community College B, the Academic Dean, with the assistance of the Institutional Research person, completed the proposal and submitted for approval. This was in part due to lack of support from faculty in Community College B. In Community College C, the faculty did not get involved in the program proposal process at all. The Dean of Online Learning submitted and managed the proposal to SUNY.

In all colleges in the study, faculty are the people who design and develop the courses for online programs. A year ago, Community College A brought on a temporary instructional designer to assist faculty in designing and developing their online courses. However, the participants were concerned that the college would not make the instructional designer permanent since it was a grant-funded position. Community College B does not have a dedicated instructional designer, but the online learning coordinator will assist faculty with course design if necessary. Community College C hired an instructional designer and accessibility specialist to help faculty with online course design.

Faculty training to teach online is another important component of a successful online program implementation. Community colleges A and C provided supportive training to their faculty, but the people who conducted the training varied across institutions. Community College A provided extensive support through OpenSUNY training sessions, Learning Management System Training and in-house Online Learning Coordinator training sessions. Community College C hired learning management system consultants who provided extensive initial and ongoing training including drop-in
one-on-one sessions for faculty to review their online courses. Participants from
Community College B shared that the college does not provide training for online
teaching.

Factors supporting the implementation

The participants from each college in the study were similar in some ways, but
differed in some factors that supported the program implementation. The organizational
structure at all colleges was described as decentralized, with administration providing
faculty the freedom, flexibility and control to make decisions. Community Colleges A
and C participants shared that support from administration, online training for faculty,
and business faculty buy-in were key factors supporting the implementation. Community
College A also communicated that a sense of teamwork, in addition to stipends and
release time for faculty who developed online courses, reinforced the implementation.
Community College B had very few factors supporting the implementation other than
the persistence of the academic dean, online learning coordinator, and the faculty chair
as champions of the program. All college participants felt that the persistence of a
champion or multiple champions was crucial to a successful implementation. This was
particularly true for Community College B. Given the faculty resistance to online
education and lack of commitment at this college, the only thing that kept the new
program concept proceeding was the persistence of the champions in the
implementation.

Factors hindering the implementation

The findings related to the sub-question, “What factors are perceived by
participants as hindering the implementation?” were similar for certain factors, but
differed for others. Inadequate staffing and budget were shared as a concern by two
colleges (A and C). While community college administrators desired online education to gain student enrollment, they were not perceived as having allocated sufficient budget to hire faculty and staff to support it effectively. Interestingly, Community College B shared that no additional resources were hired to support online education, but the participants in the study did not perceive this as a barrier to program implementation. However, the lack of an institutional goal was considered a barrier to the program implementation for Community College B, but was not discussed by participants from the other colleges.

An issue for all colleges was the lack of marketing of the new online program. Despite the effort that was put forth to implement the online degree, minimal marketing was executed to communicate the new online degree to prospective students. According to the participants in all colleges, this was an area of frustration.

All colleges experienced a degree of faculty resistance to online education, but the most pronounced was in Community College B. According to the participants, faculty support is critical for a successful online program implementation, but this was absent from Community College B. Another challenge for Community Colleges B and C was the lack of experience in implementing new online degree programs. The faculty and staff struggled to determine how to effectively implement the new program and courses. Thus this was perceived as a barrier. The only college that did not support training for online faculty was Community College B, and this clearly impacted the ability for the college to be effective in online business program implementations.

**Cross-Case Summary**

In summary, the findings from this study provided an in-depth representation of how community colleges implement online business degree programs from the initial
planning stages through post-implementation evaluation. Participants provided detail on the people involved and the roles they played in the implementation. Those factors supporting online program implementation revealed important aspects for all community colleges to consider. Factors perceived by participants as hindering the implementation presented a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by community colleges. Overall, these findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the many aspects that must be considered as community colleges continue to develop and implement new online programs.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This chapter includes an examination and discussion of the findings from the study. It begins with a brief summary of the study, followed by a discussion of the findings in the context of the literature and the conceptual framework. The chapter concludes with implications for my professional practice and recommendations for further research.

Study Summary

This research was conducted to explore the implementation of online business degree programs within SUNY community colleges. SUNY is considered a dual-mode institution, offering both traditional and online education. While SUNY provides a platform, support and portal for online education through OpenSUNY, all new online courses and programs are proposed, developed and implemented by the individual community colleges. Thus, a multiple case study research design was selected, as it allowed for exploration of the implementation of online business programs at three SUNY community colleges similar to the one where I work. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the colleges considered for inclusion in the study. Participants included key faculty, faculty chairs and online learning staff who were involved in an online business program implementation during or after 2009.

The central research question guiding the study was, “How have new online business degree programs been implemented within community colleges?”

Three sub-questions reinforced the central research question:

1) Who was involved in the implementation and what role did each person play?

2) What factors are perceived by participants as supporting the implementation?
3) What factors are perceived by participants as hindering the implementation?

Data were collected through an examination of college websites, document reviews and semi-structured phone interviews. Document review was an important component of the study as it provided additional insight to answer the research questions. Overall, the findings from the study provided a clear portrait of how each institution implemented online business programs, including the people involved and their roles. Of particular interest were the factors that either supported or hindered the implementation. This information can be used to guide community colleges as they seek to grow their online programs. The next section provides an examination of the findings as they related to the literature, organized by research questions.

Findings Related to Literature

Online Program Implementation

The primary research question for this study explored how online business degree programs were implemented within community colleges. According to the literature, successful online program implementations require methodical planning and management to ensure alignment with the institution’s mission and vision, market demand, and capacity to deliver the programs (Burke, 2005; Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989; Moloney & Oakley, 2010). Further, Booz, Allen and Hamilton (1982) suggested a generic process consisting of specific phases and tasks that should be completed when implementing a successful new product or service, from idea generation through implementation and evaluation. New online program implementations in this study were explored to determine the extent that they followed this recommended process. The findings revealed that community colleges complete some of the phases, but not all.
The following sections discuss the specific findings, starting with the impetus for the program.

**Impetus for program**

Rogers (2003) contends that an innovation stems from the identification of a need. In addition, Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change clarifies that the need for change results from a dissatisfaction with the status quo (Ellsworth, 2000). In the present study, the need to innovate or change resulted from declining enrollment and population in the college’s service area. Capra (2014) and Jaggars (2013) found that many community colleges considered implementing new online degree programs as a unique opportunity to attract students outside of their service area to increase enrollment in challenging local conditions such as population decline.

Consistent with the literature, the participants in the present study communicated that the impetus for the new online business program was prompted by decreasing enrollment coupled with population decline in the college’s service area. Jaggars (2013) contends that for institutions experiencing drastic decline in local enrollment, growth in online programs is considered critical for the viability of the institution. This finding was demonstrated in all colleges in the study, but was most pronounced for Community College B.

While there is room for growth of online programs in community colleges, Lokken (2016) found that this situation has caused a dramatic increase in competition for online students. The participants from two colleges, A and B, each confirmed that the implementation of new online programs was viewed as an opportunity to effectively compete with other community colleges. In this study, though, the colleges are competing with other community colleges within the same state university. I have
observed competition across SUNY campuses first-hand and I believe that for SUNY, this situation is counterproductive to their goals for growth in online education.

Collectively, the colleges in the study demonstrated the need to implement new online programs, but the selection of a business degree was primarily driven by convenience; the majority of the courses that comprised the program were already online. The online business degree implementation was not viewed as an innovation by the participants in the study, but rather as an easy way to offer an online program by bundling existing courses. Once the need for the program was established, the next step involved planning for the online degree program.

**Planning for program**

The findings from this study corresponded to the results from Lokken’s (2016) survey of online education in community colleges. Although community colleges support online education in theory, it is not yet incorporated into the mission or strategic planning process of most community colleges, and goals for online education are nebulous (Cohen et al., 2014; Lokken, 2016). The findings demonstrated that the mission and vision of all colleges in the present study do not include online education; they are focused on serving their local community. In contrast, the literature suggests that shared mission, vision, goals and objectives are necessary to effectively support online education in colleges (Simonson & Schlosser, 2013). Thus, there is a disconnect between what college leaders would like to happen with online education and what they agree to in practice.

If community colleges are to grow their online education, the institution’s strategic plan must identify specific goals and plans for online education that are supported by an appropriate budget. The literature asserts that institutions should develop a strategic
plan specifically for online education to identify the goals, priorities, and funding necessary to ensure success (Lorenzo, 2010; Slimp, 2014). Unfortunately, the strategic plans of all colleges in the study merely included a vague strategy to “increase student access” without explicitly identifying growth in online education as a goal. Only one college (A) incorporated a specific goal in an enrollment management plan to expand online programs. Regardless, it is interesting to note that, even though the strategic plans did not specifically include goals for online education, all participants in the study perceived that expanding online programs is a definitive goal for their college.

**Curriculum development process**

The literature describes curriculum development as the foundation of education and the most important step in the program implementation process (Khan & Law, 2015; Null, 2011). Further, online curriculum design and development requires up-front planning utilizing a structured approach such as ADDIE to guide the process (Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Curriculum development models such as Active Mastery Learning, Virtual Collaborative Learning and Rhizomatic models have been created to guide effective online curriculum development (O’Neill, 2010). Yet, for all colleges in the present study, the participants considered the curriculum development effort as minimal since a preponderance of courses were already offered online, and the existing curriculum for the business degree program was used. Curriculum development was driven by individual faculty. Participants gave me the impression that the colleges involved in the study did not utilize a structured approach to curriculum design and development as recommended in the literature. Thus, the participants perceived the curriculum development as effortless.
Implementation process

Similarly, participants from all colleges in the present study indicated that the implementation process was minor because the courses were already being offered online and course schedules were already developed. However, the literature identifies a number of activities that must be performed to fully implement an online program and offer it to students (Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989). These activities include determining course schedules, recruiting students, and completing course development (Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Williams, 2003). Because the courses were already offered online, the participants perceived these activities as already being performed. I believe the colleges in the study could have benefited from the use of an implementation plan to ensure that all activities were identified and assigned to a specific person, team or department as responsible. The absence of an implementation plan in this study resulted in the clear lack of marketing to recruit new students. While the participants identified this as an issue, they viewed this as the sole responsibility of a marketing person or department. Yet, in cases such as my college, marketing for new programs is coordinated and driven by the faculty with assistance from the marketing department. After the new online program is implemented, program data is generally evaluated, as discussed in the following section.

Program evaluation process

The program evaluation process generally consists of three steps: 1) clarify what will be evaluated, 2) collect and analyze data, and 3) communicate evaluation results (Irele, 2013). All colleges in the study performed program evaluations on a regular cycle to meet accreditation needs. However, the online programs were not evaluated separately from the traditional version of the program, primarily because the colleges do
not collect data in this manner. Data was collected on the business degree program as a whole, but not segregated for exclusively online students. The participants in one college sought to evaluate online program data separately from traditional programs, but when I attempted to obtain numbers of students in the online business program from the college, it was not available. In corroboration, the college that I work for does not collect data specific to exclusively online programs either. Overall, it appears that SUNY community colleges do not consistently capture data on exclusively online students and programs. Thus, a full evaluation of an online program would prove challenging. A discussion of the findings related to the online program implementation roles as informed by the literature is addressed in the next section.

**Online Program Implementation Roles**

The present study explored those who were involved in the implementation of the online programs and what roles they played. The results of this study indicate that in small to medium community colleges, the organizational structure hardly changed when online education was introduced. Yet, the literature suggests that to effectively manage and grow online education, traditional institutions must fundamentally and substantially change their organizational structure (Barak, 2012; Boddy et al., 2013; Kern, 2010; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; O'Neill et al., 2004). To support online curriculum development, new roles and responsibilities must be incorporated into the organization such as curriculum writers, instructional designers, camera operators, video editors and captioning staff (McPherson & Bacow, 2015; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Neely & Tucker, 2010; Williams, 2003).

The community colleges in this study did not transform their organization in this manner, nor has mine. All of the community colleges in the study, both small and
medium in size, utilized existing faculty to design and develop online courses for their programs, often without additional compensation and, in the case of one college, without any training. None of the colleges hired additional full-time staff to support faculty in online course development. Since that time, two of the colleges in the study perceived value in adding staff, including an instructional designer, to assist faculty with course design and issues such as captioning. But these additional staff differed by college. Ultimately, the organizational structure did not change dramatically when online education was introduced at any of the colleges in the study. This finding corresponds to Barefield and Meyer’s (2013) contention that many small to medium sized community colleges still rely on individual faculty who take on new roles and responsibilities to implement new online programs.

Additionally, the people who coordinated and administered online learning varied across the colleges. Community Colleges A and B utilized existing full-time faculty to play the role of an online education coordinator on a part-time basis. Community College C hired a full-time Dean of Online Learning to support the higher student enrollment and the larger number of online courses and programs offered at the college. In a 2016 national survey focused on online education in community colleges, 80% of all community colleges reported that at least one staff member was dedicated to coordinating online education, whereas 15% utilized part-time or temporary staff (Lokken, 2017). Thus, it is rare for community colleges to utilize faculty on a part-time basis to serve as online learning coordinators.

The literature asserts that online program development initiatives are typically led by a champion or change agent and that faculty often serve in this capacity (Owen &
Demb, 2004; Williams, 2003). For all colleges participating in the study, two or more people were considered champions. However, the people who played this role varied across institutions. While the online learning coordinator/director was perceived as a champion at all colleges, in colleges A and C, faculty were champions, whereas in colleges A and B, the faculty chair was a champion. In one college (B), an academic administrator was also a champion, but this college lacked a faculty champion other than a faculty department chair.

Further, one or more of the champions at each college took on the responsibility for developing the online degree program proposal and obtaining approval through SUNY and the state education department. The online learning coordinator and the faculty chair were responsible for the online degree proposal at Community College A, while the Academic Dean took on this responsibility at Community College B. The Dean of Online Learning managed the online program proposal development and approval for Community College C.

The research revealed that there is marginal collaboration across SUNY community colleges as they develop new online courses and programs. The findings demonstrated that each college develops and implements their own online courses and programs, which in many cases are nearly identical to what other community colleges are offering within SUNY. At the time of the study, there were 57 business online degree programs offered across SUNY and the colleges within the system viewed each other as competitors. One college in the study collaborated with another community college, which is encouraging. Yet transformational change is needed to significantly grow online
education for SUNY as a whole. The following section discusses those factors that were found to influence the online program implementation.

**Factors Influencing the Online Program Implementation**

This study examined those factors that were perceived by participants as either supporting or hindering the online program implementation. Given that the implementation of new online programs could produce significant change in an institution, the conceptual framework for this study incorporated two change models. The change models that informed this study provided a framework throughout the study to better understand the factors that influenced online program implementations.

Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation model espouses that organizational innovation is supported by certain organizational characteristics, while Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change offers factors that support change (Ellsworth, 2000; Rogers, 2003). These change models, coupled with relevant literature, provided insight into the factors that were found to influence the online program implementation.

The literature cites the barriers to successfully implementing online education as: resistance to change, inadequate funding, insufficient marketing, lack of faculty compensation, limited resources, lack of shared vision, lack of strategic planning, retraining of existing people, and reinvention of processes (Berge & Muilenburg, 2000; Davis et al., 2008; Kearsley, 2013; Khan & Law, 2015; Mitchell & Geva-May, 2009). Participants in the study offered examples of those factors that either supported or hindered the implementation in the following sections.

**Faculty support by institution**

In traditional institutions, faculty support is critical for the development and implementation of new online programs (Kern, 2010). According to the literature,
institutional support of faculty in online education encompasses several main areas: 1) organizational culture that allows faculty input, 2) training opportunities and instructional support, and 3) compensation or rewards (Shattuck, 2013).

The first area of institutional support concerns organizational culture. Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation model espouses that organizational innovativeness is best supported by an organization that is decentralized, providing decision-making control to lower levels in the organization (Rogers, 2003). Similarly, Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change model asserts that changes will be accepted by adopters more readily if they can provide input and participate in decisions related to the change (Ellsworth, 2000). Consistent with these change models, participants in colleges that perceived faculty as supported by the institution characterized their organization as decentralized, thus providing faculty with freedom, flexibility and empowerment to make decisions.

The second area of institutional support for consideration is faculty training and instructional support for online education. Due to reliance on faculty for online course development, faculty training is an important aspect of an online program implementation (Kern, 2010; Shattuck, 2013). Faculty training to teach online and develop online courses was extensive in Community Colleges A and C; the participants emphasized that online education training and guidance for faculty was a factor that supported online program implementations. In one college (B), online training for faculty was non-existent. This was perceived as a barrier to successful online program implementations. Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change (Ellsworth, 2000) highlights the importance of organizations providing intended adopters with sufficient knowledge and skills to implement change, Thus, the findings are consistent with this change model.
Additionally, due to the technology involved, the process for implementing an online program is different than that of a traditional program. Two of the colleges (B and C) in this study experienced difficulty in their implementation due to lack of experience by the people responsible for implementing the new online degree programs. The faculty and staff struggled to determine how to effectively implement the new program and courses. While SUNY provides guidelines for academic program development, each individual college determines their institutional process to comply with the guidelines.

The STAR Model ™ (Kates & Galbraith, 2007) provides a framework for organizational design that emphasizes the importance of evaluating the skills of people in an organization and determining how to best develop their talent to meet the organization’s goals. Training faculty to teach online, and to design and develop online courses, is a crucial component of a successful online program implementation (Ensminger et al., 2002). Unfortunately, inadequate training is widely reported in the literature as a barrier to faculty participation in online education (Shattuck, 2013). Specific to community colleges, Jaggars (2013) found that faculty were not provided with sufficient ongoing training for online teaching. The findings from community college B were consistent with this literature.

The third area to consider is compensation for online program development. The STAR model ™ (Kates & Galbraith, 2007) asserts that rewards can be instrumental in motivating people to achieve organizational goals. Baran and Correia’s (2014) Professional Development Framework recommends that community colleges offer faculty rewards such as release time, stipends, or some form of compensation to
encourage development of new online programs. Only one college in the study (A) provided compensation for online program development and this was perceived as supportive.

**Faculty motivation for the online program**

In this study, participants in two of the colleges (A and C) conveyed that faculty were highly motivated to implement the online degree program, whereas Community College B experienced a lack of faculty motivation that truly hindered the implementation for years. Community College C also experienced a lack of motivation from the Faculty Chair, which delayed the progress of the online program implementation.

In Finkel’s (2015) study and Lokken’s (2017) survey, community college administrators identified the greatest barrier to online education growth as engaging faculty to develop new courses and programs. Community college faculty are often over-extended and feel a lack of support for online education by the institution. They feel there is inadequate compensation to develop programs, little recognition, outdated policies and a lack of professional development (Baran & Correia, 2014; Jaggars, 2013; Kearsley, 2013; Lorenzo, 2010; Xu & Jaggars, 2013). In the absence of rewards, resources, training and funding for online education, faculty are less likely to lead new online program implementations (Ensminger et al., 2002; Kern, 2010; Moloney & Oakley, 2010).

In a recent literature review of factors that motivate faculty to participate in online education, the primary motivators are intrinsic, including personal satisfaction, professional growth, intellectual challenge, career enhancement and the use of new technologies (Shattuck, 2013). While extrinsic rewards are secondary motivators,
providing release time was a highly valued incentive, but one that was not always provided (Shattuck, 2013). Similarly, Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change asserts that for a change to be effective, the adopters need time to learn, adapt, integrate and reflect, in addition to motivation, whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic (Ellsworth, 2000). Although the specific reasons for motivation or lack of motivation were not studied, the participants clearly expressed that faculty motivation was a significant factor influencing online program implementation.

**Persistence of champions**

Rogers (2003) asserted that the presence of a champion is instrumental in the success of an innovation by overcoming indifference or resistance to the new idea in an organization. Ely’s Eight Conditions of Change emphasizes that change leaders must remain committed to the initiative and express continuing support (Ellsworth, 2000). Results from this study indicate that the persistence of champions in community colleges was perceived by all participants as supporting a successful online program implementation on their campus.

The results of this study found that the culture of community colleges is consistent with other studies – nimble, flexible, participatory and empowering, and conducive to fostering online education (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Cohen et al., 2014; Jurgens, 2010; Levin, 2005). Perhaps this culture contributed to the fact that all community colleges in the study implemented new online programs despite the challenges that were encountered. Champions throughout the organization rose to the challenge and led the online program implementations on their campus, even without experience, training, or in some cases, faculty support.
Institutional goals for online education

The participants from one college in this study (B) cited the absence of an institutional goal for online education as a factor that hindered the online program implementation. Parallel to this finding, the literature suggests that one barrier to growth in online programs in community colleges is a lack of strategic planning (Khan & Law, 2015; Moloney & Oakley, 2010; Muilenburg & Berge, 2001). Similarly, the STAR Model™ (Kates & Galbraith, 2007) contends that such a strategy provides an organization with a direction including the goals and objectives to be achieved. Without clear goals and objectives, initiatives such as new online program implementations may experience delays or obstructions, as was found for Community College B.

Staffing and budget to support

New online degree programs require careful planning to determine the necessary budget for curriculum development, training, marketing and management to support the implementation (Burke, 2005; Hunkins & Ornstein, 1989; Moore & Kearsley, 2012; Williams, 2003). Cohen et al. (2014) advocated that community colleges must have adequate resources to develop and implement new online courses and programs. Kearsley (2013) further asserted that inadequate staffing of an online program implementation can result in faculty or student dissatisfaction which can negatively impact the success of a program. While a large majority of community colleges are now dedicating at least one person to online education (Lokken, 2017), the findings from this study revealed that smaller community colleges still do not have dedicated online education staff. All of the participants in the study perceived their college to be frugal, yet only A and C identified the inappropriate budget and staffing as a barrier to the online program implementation.
Marketing of new online program

The literature suggests the importance of marketing new online programs to gain student enrollment, yet acknowledges the reality that marketing is often ignored by institutions, particularly those who have limited resources (Kearsley, 2013; Lokken, 2016; Neely & Tucker, 2010). The findings of this study concur with the literature – marketing is lacking for online programs for community colleges; this was evidenced in all three colleges in the study. For the participants in the study, the result was frustrating because they put time and effort into implementing the online degree program in an effort to gain student enrollment; yet the programs were not adequately marketed. This finding is particularly troubling given the dichotomy between the importance of implementing new online programs for the colleges and the clear lack of promotion of new online programs by the colleges. The next section discusses the implications of the findings of this study.

Implications

Community colleges play a crucial role in online education, enrolling over 50% of all online undergraduate students (Lokken, 2016; Merrill, 2008). Many smaller-sized and rural community colleges within SUNY who are currently experiencing decreasing enrollment and a declining local population have considered developing new online programs to attract students from outside their service area. In this study, online business program implementations from the perceptions of key faculty and online learning staff from three SUNY community colleges were explored. The findings from this multiple case study analysis provided me with insight into how online business programs have been implemented, who was involved, and what factors either hindered or supported the implementation. In this section, I will share the implications of these
findings for online program implementations in my professional practice, within SUNY, and for online education in community colleges in general.

**Implications for Online Program Implementations in my Professional Practice**

This research provided me with a clear understanding of how SUNY community colleges similar to mine implemented online degree programs, the people who supported the implementation, and the factors that influenced the implementation, either positively or negatively. Through this research, I learned that comparable community colleges who are experiencing enrollment challenges sought to implement new online programs to improve the situation. Yet, the absence of a strategic plan specific to online education resulted in a variety of perceived issues – lack of goals for online education, lack of faculty support by the institution, inadequate staffing and budget to support online education, lack of training for faculty and staff, and lack of marketing for new online programs.

Many of these issues can be resolved through the development and implementation of a specific strategic plan for online education that is supported by campus leaders. The strategic plan will include a review of the current state of online education at the college, an analysis of the internal strengths and weaknesses, and the external opportunities and threats impacting the college. The core of the strategic plan should delineate the new strategies that the college will take, including a clear identification of the goals for online education and the budget necessary to support the plan. I will work closely with our online learning director to develop and implement this comprehensive strategic plan for online education at our college. It is my belief that this strategic plan will guide the future of online education for the entire college, thus supporting the necessary growth in online programs. Overall, these findings can be
used to improve how online education is planned and managed at my college and within SUNY as a whole.

**Implications for Online Program Implementations within SUNY**

This study focused on online program implementations within SUNY community colleges. Thus the implications from the study are particularly relevant to SUNY community colleges. SUNY leaders recognize the future importance of online education; yet they acknowledge that to achieve the projected growth, the individual community colleges need to become more collaborative and the entire system needs to be more efficient (Cartwright, 2016).

While collaboration across community colleges is happening in pockets, community colleges and SUNY leaders should consider how to promote further collaboration. For smaller community colleges, pooling of resources such as an online learning director or an instructional designer could alleviate the challenges related to resource shortages. Perhaps several community colleges could collaborate and offer the same degree program rather than each of the faculty developing the courses and programs individually for their own campus.

Ultimately, it is even conceivable that a SUNY Online Community College E-campus could be created to consolidate courses, pool resources and achieve economies of scale. Rather than marketing each individual community college’s online offerings, marketing could be done for the entire E-campus. To effectively compete with other fully online colleges, courses could be offered more regularly, rather than using the existing fall, spring, and summer semester model. Transformational changes such as these will be complicated due to faculty collective bargaining agreements that are specific to each campus and the local county funding model. Yet, if nothing is done,
small community colleges experiencing population decline within SUNY may need to close their doors. If SUNY wants to grow online education across the state, particularly within community colleges, the leaders need to address how to best achieve these goals, while realizing that drastic changes may be required.

**Implications for Online Education in Community Colleges**

As online education continues to grow in community colleges, the findings from this research can be used to determine those processes that best support online education. The study revealed a gap between the recommended phases and tasks for implementing new online programs and the current state. As community colleges consider growth in online programs, a process flow and guidelines can minimize the uncertainty about how to implement an online degree program. The New Product Development Model (Booz et al., 1982) can serve as a framework to streamline new online program implementations.

Based on what was learned from this study and my business background, I plan to consult with community colleges who wish to grow their online programs. The goal of the consulting will be to assist community colleges to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their online program implementations. Initially, the consultation will involve an evaluation of the college to understand the current state of online education at their institution including: organizational structure, organizational culture, leadership, strategic planning, goals, budget, faculty contracts, and roles and responsibilities. As a result of this evaluation, institutional recommendations will be provided to the college.

Following the evaluation, I will assist the college in setting up the proper project team for the online program implementation and help to identify a project manager to champion the effort. This team will then be trained on the process of implementing a
new online degree program. To facilitate the training, I have developed a New Online Program Development Process (Appendix F) that community colleges can utilize as a tool to guide new online program implementations, with an associated detailed project plan. The process was adapted from the New Product Development Process (Booz et al., 1982).

The new program development process starts with the generation of new online program ideas. In this step, the project team will consider ideas for new online degree programs based on employment trends and input from advisory boards. Once the team has several new program ideas, the programs will be researched further to select those that are feasible and fit with the institution’s mission and vision. After the program is selected for consideration, the program concept will be developed to obtain feedback from advisory boards, employers and students.

The next step is to determine the marketing strategy, plan and budget. Following this, a program proposal will be developed. This requires a thorough description of the new program, the courses that encompass the program, the course offering schedule, who will teach the courses, how the program will be assessed, how the program will be marketed, and the budget. The proposal needs to be reviewed with stakeholders, both internal and external, to gain support. From here, the proposal needs to be approved, generally by the campus, state university and state education department. Once approved, new courses are developed, the course schedule is determined, faculty are assigned to teach courses, the admissions department is prepared to accept new students into the program, and the program is marketed based on the marketing plan.
The goal is to enroll students in the program and then evaluate the program, reviewing data, and making adjustments to the program as appropriate.

The purpose of the training is to ensure that all project team members understand the steps involved in implementing a new online program and how to develop and use a project plan to manage the project. Ultimately, a successful online program implementation will facilitate the community colleges to gain new student enrollment that they need to be sustainable.

**Recommendations for Future Research in the Field**

A significant theme that emerged from this study was the importance of faculty motivation to champion the implementation of new online programs in community colleges. Although the specific reasons for motivation were not studied, the participants clearly expressed that faculty motivation was an important factor in support of online program implementation. It would be interesting to determine whether the motivation was intrinsic or extrinsic in terms of rewards, release time, and compensation.

Additionally, faculty resistance and lack of commitment to new online programs was a barrier to implementation for one college. This study did not uncover the reasons the faculty were not committed to online education. Thus, further research is recommended to determine why some faculty were motivated to serve as a champion of the online program implementation and others resisted being involved. Another area of future research could explore the characteristics of champions within the community college setting. By uncovering specific motivating or demotivating factors, and the characteristics of champions, new research could inform institutional leaders about how to improve their approach to online education in their college.
The study examined the implementation of online programs from the perspectives of the faculty and staff involved. A recommendation would be to explore the student perception of online business program implementation within SUNY. The students’ insights on the result of the online business program implementations can provide an understanding of how students perceive the OpenSUNY system. For example, a survey might be developed to ask students how they feel about the OpenSUNY portal that shows 57 online business associate’s degree programs and the factors that students consider when they select a program and college. Such data can reveal some recommendations for SUNY to consider.

A limitation of the study was the small sample size of three community colleges within one state university system. Given the large variety of online education models within state-wide systems, further research could be conducted at other community colleges to determine how other states organize, plan and manage their online education. The results could then be used to inform all institutions.

Conclusions

From its inception, community colleges have enthusiastically embraced online education, and students are attracted to online education in community colleges. For many community colleges, student enrollment in online education is the only area of growth. Thus, community colleges who have experienced declining overall student enrollment coupled with population shrinkage in their service area can implement new online programs to gain student enrollment. Recent trends in online education, such as the growth of exclusively online students and declining enrollment in for-profit online institutions, provide community colleges with a sizeable opportunity to expand their online programs and grow enrollment (Allen & Seaman, 2016). However, the
implementation of successful online programs requires effective leadership, strategic planning, resources and process across the institution (Kearsley, 2013; Watkins et al., 2013).

Given the importance of growing online education for these community colleges, this research explored the implementation of new online programs at three community colleges within the SUNY system. This study was particularly relevant for SUNY given that over half of all student enrollment in this statewide system originates from its community colleges. SUNY’s dual mode implementation of online learning provides flexibility for each campus to develop and implement online programs to meet the needs of the individual college. Yet this approach is highly inefficient and has developed competition within the SUNY system. SUNY leaders seek solutions and innovative ideas to overcome these challenges. The overall goal of the study was to use the findings to assist the community colleges and SUNY to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of online program implementations.

The study revealed that community college administrators encourage growth in online programs, but do not proactively plan for it by developing goals and an adequate budget for resources, training, compensation or marketing. Despite these challenges, community colleges have implemented online degree programs, provided that champions were persistent, faculty were motivated, and the college provided support. Yet, the implementation process requires streamlining to effectively build, market and evaluate online programs. Further, the findings suggested the importance of college leaders considering the appropriate organizational structure, compensation, and people needed to support online education growth.
The findings demonstrated that individual community colleges compete with each other for student enrollment in similar programs. Perhaps SUNY should consider the possibility of moving to a collaborative cross-campus culture, rather than a competitive one. Due to the magnitude of SUNY, this will be a large undertaking, but one that can help SUNY to achieve its goals for growing online education across all campuses.

The application of business models such as the New Product Development Process (Booz et al., 1982) and the STAR™ Model (Galbraith, 2016) can assist community colleges and SUNY as they seek ways to improve their organization to better support online business program implementations. This study contributes to the literature, offers recommendations, and addresses the need for future research in the context of online education in community colleges.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition of Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction with the status quo</td>
<td>Something must precipitate or necessitate a need for change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sufficient knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Intended adopters must have the knowledge and skills to implement change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of resources</td>
<td>Resources necessary to implement change must be accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of time</td>
<td>Adopters must have time to learn, adapt, integrate and reflect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reward or incentives</td>
<td>Adopters need motivation, intrinsic or extrinsic, depending on the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Key players and stakeholders must have a voice in the process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Leaders at all levels must &quot;buy into&quot; the process and express continuing support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Key leaders must provide encouragement, support and inspiration for adopters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear ________________:

I am a full-time professor at Cayuga Community College. I am conducting research to learn about how new online business degree programs have been implemented within SUNY community colleges. Faculty, staff and administrators who have implemented online business degree programs are welcome to participate in this study. This research will be used in my dissertation as part of my doctoral program in educational technology at University of Florida.

I am contacting you initially since you were the person within your college who submitted the original SUNY new degree program announcement. I am seeking information on those people (faculty, staff and administrators) who were involved in the implementation of your _________________ degree program. If you are willing to provide me with the names of those who were involved and their contact information, I will contact them directly to invite them to participate in my study. I appreciate your assistance in identifying the correct people at your college who may be able to assist me with my study.

Thank you,
Amy Valente
Dear ________________:

I am conducting research to learn about how new online business degree programs have been implemented within SUNY community colleges. I would like to invite you to be involved in this research by completing an interview with me. Faculty, staff and administrators who have implemented online business degree programs are welcome to participate in this study.

The private interviews will be conducted either by phone, distance learning, or if feasible, in person, at your convenience. The interviews should take between 45 to 60 minutes. Any information you provide will be confidential, and your anonymity will be maintained at all times. This research will be used in my dissertation as part of my doctoral program in educational technology. More information about this study can be found in the attached Consent form.

If you would be willing to participate in an interview, please let me know by responding to this email by ________________.

Thank you,
Amy Valente
APPENDIX D
INFORMED CONSENT

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Protocol Title – Exploring the Implementation of Online Business Degree Programs in Community Colleges

Background and Purpose of the Study
I am a doctoral student in educational technology at the University of Florida. For the dissertation component of my program, I am conducting research using interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators within community colleges, the purpose of which is to learn about how online business degree programs have been implemented within community colleges.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Study
Interviewees are asked to participate in one interview scheduled to last between 45 and 60 minutes. You will be asked open-ended questions related to how online business degree programs have been implemented at your college. You will be asked to discuss the roles that people play in the implementation and organizational factors that may support or hinder the implementation process. I may follow-up with you by phone if I need clarification regarding your responses. Your answers to these questions will help me understand how online business degree programs are implemented in various community colleges. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your interview will be conducted either by phone or in person after you have signed and returned this signed consent form to me.

Confidentiality
I will be the only person with access to information regarding the identity of participants. Your information will be assigned a code that only I will know. Your identity will not be revealed in the final manuscript that I will write, and your identity will be kept confidential at all times. With your permission, I would like to audiotape the interview. Any information that would identify you will be removed during transcription of the audio file. The file will then be erased. At all times throughout the duration of the project, research-related data will be stored on a secure, password-protected server. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law.

Your Participation
You are under no obligation to participate in this interview. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may end your participation in the interview at any time without consequence. If you do decide to end your participation in the interview, any data or information collected will be erased and/or destroyed and will not be included in the study or final manuscript.

Risks, Benefits, and Compensation
There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this interview. There are no real, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest on the part of the researcher or the institutions involved in the study, and there is no possibility that the research results will be commercialized.

More Information About This Study
If you have any questions about this research protocol or the scholarly aspects of this research, please contact me, Amy Valente or my faculty supervisor, Dr. Swapna Kumar. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611; (352) 392-0433.
Agreement

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you have read and understood the information included in the form, have had an opportunity to have your questions regarding participation answered, and agree freely to participate in the research according to the terms set out in the form. You also give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to the University of Florida as part of my doctoral program. You will be given a copy of this form. By consenting to participate, you have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

I have read this form and voluntarily agree to participate in the interview. I have been given a copy of this form.

________________________________________  __________
Signature of Participant                      Date

________________________________________  __________
Signature of Student Investigator            Date
APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Provide your job title, how long you have been with your college and your overall role.

2. Please describe the online business degree program that was implemented at your institution.
   
a. Please confirm when the program was implemented.
b. What was the primary impetus behind the creation and implementation of this new online business degree program?
c. What role did you play in the implementation?
d. Who championed the new online degree program through implementation?
e. Who else was involved (job titles) and what role did each person play?
   
i. In your opinion, did the people involved have the appropriate knowledge and skills for the implementation? Why or why not?
   
ii. In your opinion, did the people involved have enough time allocated for this implementation? Why or why not?

f. In your opinion, what motivated participants to be involved in the new program's development and implementation? (Additional probing might be necessary to discuss intrinsically and/or extrinsically through the use of rewards or incentives)
g. In your opinion, did the college allocate the necessary people for this implementation? Why or why not?
h. In your opinion, did the college allocate the necessary resources for this implementation? Why or why not?
i. To what extent did you collaborate with other community colleges on this implementation? Please describe the collaboration process.
j. How would you describe the process used to implement the program?
   
i. Please review the new product development process by Booz and Allen (provide copy). New product development is defined as the transformation of a market opportunity into a product available for sale (Krishnan & Ulrich, 2001). In your opinion, to what extent did this program implementation align with this process?
   
ii. Specifically explain the curriculum development and implementation process used for this new program.

3. If interviewing faculty or instructional support staff: How would you describe the administrative leader(s) who were involved in the implementation?
   
a. Please explain how each administrative leader influenced the implementation (positively and/or negatively)? (Additional probing might be necessary to find out about attitudes toward change, supportive/encouraging/inspirational, & commitment to success of the program)
If interviewing an administrator: How would you describe the faculty member(s) and instructional support staff member(s) who were involved in the implementation?

b. Please explain how each person influenced the implementation (positively and/or negatively)? (Additional probing might be necessary to find out about attitudes toward change, supportive/encouraging/inspirational, & commitment to success of the program)

4. How would you describe your institution’s organizational culture?

a. Please describe how organizational culture influenced the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)? (Additional probing might be necessary to find out about participatory, collaborative)

5. How would you describe strategic planning of online education at your institution?

a. Please describe how strategic planning of online education influenced the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)?

6. How would you describe the organizational structure at your institution?

a. Please describe how organizational structured influence the implementation of this online degree program (positively and/or negatively)? (Additional probing might be necessary to understand whether the structure is centralized, complex, formal).
Appendix F
New Online Program Development Process

Adapted for new online degree program development at a community college

Figure F-1. New Online Program Development Process

(Booz et al., 1982)
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*Student FTE by program by permanent residence.* (2017).


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Amy Valente earned a Doctor of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida in 2017. She obtained a Master of Business Administration degree from St. John Fisher College, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from State University of New York at Albany. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Business and the Business program coordinator at Cayuga Community College. Amy has implemented fully online programs at her college and her research interests include online education planning and implementation within higher education institutions.