Faculty Perspectives on Underprepared Students

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Abstract

Ensuring high school students are ready for college course content remains a challenge, as many high school students underestimate the academic skills required to be successful at the postsecondary level. Currently, students in high school still fail to complete a minimal college preparatory curriculum. This disconnect has led to a continual influx of underprepared students attending postsecondary education. With the high number of underprepared students attending postsecondary education, questions have come to light regarding the faculty members' ability to instruct this growing population. This qualitative study examined the part-time, non-tenure, and tenured faculty member perspectives regarding the importance of assisting underprepared students in the classroom, institutional support provided to the faculty to address underprepared students, and the measures faculty have taken due to underprepared students at a four-year university in a New England state. Results from 6 interviews concluded faculty members were willing to assist underprepared students even though the institution provides inadequate support to the faculty to address the multiple challenges endured in the classroom. Based on the interpretation of the study's finding the following recommendations need to be considered: (1) Utilizing a full semester professional development course over a 15 week period for faculty members and (2) Establish a peer coaching program with a member from the same department and a member from another department.

Keywords: underprepared students, faculty perspectives, higher education, student entitlement, grade inflation, course dilution.

1. Introduction

Only a third of students graduating from high school are prepared or ready for college-level coursework (Bettinger, Boatman, & Long, 2013). The remaining two-thirds of entering freshman require at least one developmental course in reading, writing, or mathematics. This lack of academic preparedness has resulted in the need for remedial or developmental education at the post-secondary level (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). Because underprepared students often fail to adjust to the rigors of college-level coursework, instructors are sometimes forced to inflate grades, modify and dilute course content, and adjust teaching styles in order to pass students (Bar, Kadiyali & Zussman, 2012; Crumbley, Flinn, & Reichelt, 2012; Howell, 2011; Roselle, 2009; Tucker & Courts, 2010).

Besides students being academically underprepared for college, many view themselves as consumers and have expectations of doing minimal work for a high grade and believe negotiating grades is acceptable behavior (Plunkett, 2014). Many undergraduate students lack the basic skills required to handle college-level coursework (Hughes, Gibbons, & Mybatt, 2013; Roselle, 2009). The success of the student is contingent, in part, on the degree of commitment by the faculty instructing the course and students. One of the most important factors leading to the success of the underprepared student is how a faculty member views and addresses underprepared students in the classroom (Osterholt & Barratt, 2010).

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According to Hubbard and Stage (2009), "faculty attitudes, opinions about students, and satisfaction with their profession, form a critical aspect of the conditions under which college students seek to learn" (p.274). Identifying perspectives like the importance of assisting underprepared students in the classroom, institutional support provided to the faculty members to address underprepared students, and the measures faculty have taken due to underprepared students may be beneficial factors to the educational process in the postsecondary classroom.

Due to the growing number of remedial students in the classroom, faculty members have been forced to dilute course content in order to proceed through course material which is unfair to students who are in fact college ready and able to manage college-level course content (Holdfold, 2014). The purpose of postsecondary education is to advance the knowledge of students for preparation in the workforce. Course dilution and grade inflation, as a means to progress students through a course, is counterproductive, resulting in employers being skeptical of grades being issued to students (Loffredo & Harrington, 2012).

The continual influx of underprepared students attending postsecondary education has led to the question of faculty members' ability to instruct this growing population (Quick, 2013). Besides the issues related to underprepared students, changes in technology and the digital age have changed the way students learn and function. "Faculty members tend to teach as they were taught and accordingly have little experience with new instructional pedagogies and delivery systems" (McKee &Tew, 2013, p.4). Faculty members make decisions that reflect their experiences as students, which may not necessarily be the correct decisions to address their current student body (Kolis, Krusack, Stombaugh, Stow, & Brenner, 2011). Currently, the traditional lecture method of instruction is the most common method at postsecondary institutions (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012; Cox, McIntosh, Reason, & Terenzini, 2011; Fraser et al., 2014; Goffe & Kauper, 2014; Malek, Hall, & Hodges, 2014)

Over the years there has been an increasing concern of the faculty members' ability to adjust to the increasing number of underprepared students (Quick, 2013). While no argument prevails related to the ability of faculty members to know their discipline, suggestions have transpired to indicate that appropriate measures are needed to bridge the learning process for faculty members. Providing resources to faculty members can establish effective instructional pedagogy for classroom instruction (Quick, 2013). Examining the perspectives of the faculty by part-time, non-tenure, and tenure status, will enable an institution to effectively address the faculty who require assistance with instructing underprepared students by providing appropriate resources. Understanding the perspectives of the faculty is vital to the institution, because the faculty can assist in creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and guide the institution's climate to actualize change (Valentine, Prentice, Torres, & Arellano, 2012). The following three questions guided this study. 1. What do part-time, non-tenure, and tenure faculty members perceive about the importance of assisting underprepared students in the classroom at a four-year university? 2. What do part-time, non-tenure, and tenure faculty members perceive about the institutional support provided to the faculty to address underprepared students at a four-year university? 3. What measures have part-time, non-tenure, and tenure faculty members taken to address underprepared students at a four-year university?

2. Existing Literature

There are a variety of contributing factors that influence academic preparation for postsecondary education. One factor is the result of the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB) that shifted to the importance of testing as a means to determine a student's learning and less reliance on creativity, critical thinking, and self-regulations, all of which are considered requisite skills necessary for college success (Chandler, Slate, Moore, & Barnes, 2014). The NCLB Act has yet to achieve its goals of decreasing drop-out rates, improving achievement gaps, increasing graduation rates, or improving students' college-readiness (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The lack of dialogue between postsecondary institutions and high schools is another contributing factor for student unpreparedness. It is essential for both postsecondary institutions and high schools to establish collaborative efforts for student success. Collaborative efforts would create an environment that enhances student preparedness by aligning academic and social expectations required by postsecondary institutions (Moore et al., 2010). Today, school counselors are overwhelmed with an extensive workload and are unable or unwilling to persuade students away from college. Some school counselors experience a 1 to 700 counselor to student ratio leaving little time to provide proper guidance and alternatives to college (Rosenbaum, Stephan, & Rosenbaum, 2010). Student success goes beyond the adoption of academic skills; it also encompasses the need to collaborate with new students, professors, learning styles, and be able to satisfy course requirements (Rath, Rock, & Laferriere, 2013).

Until these and other factors contributing to the issues surrounding underprepared students are addressed, postsecondary institutions will have to bear the responsibility of educating students who are not college-ready. Chat and Venezia (2009) suggest that students can be successful if entry level courses concentrated on cognitive strategies such as analyzing, reasoning, argumentation, and interpretation (Ross &Furno, 2011). The educational process is evolutionary and faculty members need to understand that technology, pedagogy, and content delivery will continue to evolve over time. The evolutionary process will bring to fruition new learning initiatives to assist with addressing the current academically diverse classroom (Ross &Furno, 2011). In order for faculty members to take part in establishing new learning techniques, change on the faculty members' part is imperative. Faculty members may have already attempted to make adjustments in the classroom to no avail. Understanding self-efficacy and how it relates to faculty members' ability to affect change is essential, especially as it relates to past experiences associated with underprepared students (Abd-Elmotaleb & Saha, 2013; Arslan, 2013).

2.1 Academic Dilution

Critics argue that one hidden cost to remedial education is the dilution of course content at the postsecondary level to accommodate remedial students (Brothen & Wambech, 2012). As remedial education continues to be taught at the postsecondary level, there is an increase in pressure on faculty to reduce the course content by *cutting* a portion of the course material or by making the content easier in an effort to raise grades (Brothen & Wambech, 2012). A measure to reduce the amount of course material only results in quality issues, as course instruction is diluted. Any modification to reduce course content is unfair to those students who are in fact college-ready and able to manage real college course content (Holdford, 2014; Miller, 2014). Critics also argue that there are social costs to remedial education due to lower retention rates of remedial students (Bailey, Jeong & Cho, 2010).

Due to the growing number of underprepared students in the classroom, faculty members have been forced to dilute course content in order to proceed through course material (Brothen & Wambech, 2012). Faculty members are more lenient now than in the past when it comes to allowing students to retake a test and revise an assignment. The strict course withdrawal deadlines are a thing of the past, as extended course withdrawal deadlines are more the norm (Hall, 2012). In addition to accommodating students to meet the demands of college course material, faculty members still find the need to inflate grades.

Grade inflation is another form of academic dilution which has become rampant over the last few decades. There are a variety of reasons why faculty members have to inflate grades. Grade inflation occurs when faculty members find the need is to assign high grades to low-ability students in an effort to attract and retain students (Bar, Kadiyali, & Zussman, 2012; Wongsurawat, 2009). Grading practices utilized by faculty members include curving grades, retaking tests and examinations, discarding the lowest grade, and grading on the basis of improvement through the duration of the course (Gordon & Fay, 2010). Student evaluations play an integral part in grade inflation as well. Students who receive higher grades are usually happy, and more apt to rate a faculty member in a more positive manner. Full-time and/or tenure faculty are less likely to inflate grades than their part-time and/or non-tenure faculty member counterparts (Hall, 2012).

Institutions that rely heavily on the student evaluations of faculty members may find faculty members relaxing their grading standards which may impact their teaching efforts. Such actions by faculty members could be counteracted by students adjusting the time they spend on studying and taking the course seriously (Love &Kotchen, 2010). Grade inflation is not only an issue at the postsecondary-level, it is also a concern and prevalent at the secondary-level, and can be a contributing factor to student entitlement. In 1996 the average grade point average in high schools was 2.64 and increased to 2.90 by 2006 (Godrey, 2011). Even students classified as college-ready and considered academically proficient experience academic issues in college suggesting college readiness might encompass more than academic skills (Karp & Bork, 2012). This could be the result of grade inflation at the secondary level. Inflating grades at the secondary level provide high school graduates with an unrealistic sense of their academic abilities.

It also provides admission counselors with an inaccurate assessment of the students' academic abilities and may lead to acceptance into a university that is above the students' academic ability (Carey & Carifio, 2012; Carifio & Carey, 2013; Goodwin, 2011). There are many negative ramifications to inflating grades both in academia and the business arena (Bar et al.,2012). Faculty members who inflate grades prevent the recognition of achievement by students who actually have earned good grades through hard work.

Grades become less informative when they are inflated, especially to those who count on their accuracy like fellow faculty members and other transcript readers (Bar et al., 2012). As faculty members continue to issue higher grades for lower achievement, grades will become more and more meaningless (Pattison et al., 2013). This will become problematic for employers, licensing boards, academic institutions, and other agencies that rely on the accuracy and trustworthiness of these assessments as the grades become questionable to their validity as performance and academic records fail to coincide (Ali, 2013; Lee & Anantharaman, 2008). Inflating grades fail to serve any purpose in the long run, as it gives students inaccurate feedback on their performance (Holdford, 2014; Lee & Anantharaman, 2008; Miller, 2014).

2.2 Disconnected Expectations by Students

The number of students entering college continues to increase each year, and this increase is now accompanied with a host of new issues for professors like student entitlement and unreasonable expectations. Students are brought up in a system where the reliance on self-esteem is most important. The movement to increase students' self-esteem has come with misconceptions by students, as it has given way to students believing they are entitled to good grades with little effort, leaving professors mystified on how to become accustomed and prepared to address these students (Cain et al., 2012; Lippman, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009).

Today students view themselves more as consumers, and professors nothing more than service providers (Hall, 2012). This becomes apparently true when it comes to the student evaluations of faculty members. Since the questionnaire is designed to measure student satisfaction of the faculty member, and not the learning that transpired in the class, the student is therefore viewed as a customer rather than an actual student. The questionnaire is less of a measurement of what the student has actually learned in the course, and is nothing more than a customer satisfaction indicator (Ali & Ajmi, 2013). As students consider themselves as paying customers, they now expect professors to assign good grades regardless of the work content submitted (Ausbrooks et al., 2011). Many students no longer view hard work, effort, and quality as essential to earning a college degree (Hall, 2012). This behavior by the students has led to the misconception that professors are more like gatekeepers, and less like intellectual leaders (Cain et al., 2012; Lippman et al., 2009).

2.3 Assisting Faculty

New faculty members usually start their professional educators' positions unprepared to address college and university expectations. This is due in part from inadequate graduate training programs. Higher education institutions expect faculty members to utilize a variety of pedagogical styles and to be able to address the multiple learning styles required to achieve successful student outcomes. This would include the faculty members' ability to instruct students in a manner that relates their knowledge to the current world, how their field of study connects with others, and is able to connect with the diverse classroom structure (Whitfield & Hickerson, 2013). Professional development is one means to offer faculty members the avenue to learn and exchange ideas in a community to address issues associated with underprepared students in the classroom (O'Sullivan & Irby, 2011). Through professional development, collaborative practices are fostered providing faculty members with the opportunity to be empowered to change the means by which they implement their teaching method of educating students. Implementing effective instructional changes in the classroom will enhance the students' potential to understand the material being presented more effectively (King, 2011).

2.4 Instituting Change at the University

In order to effectively create change, faculty members need to be allowed to take ownership of the change process (Bruckman, 2008; Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014). By allowing faculty members to take ownership of the change, it will create an atmosphere that encourages engagement, and lessens the chance for resistance to take hold. Faculty learning communities can be one avenue to assist faculty members in implementing change at the institution (Daly, 2011). Since some change may be required at the instructional level, it is important that faculty members understand they will be instrumental in bringing any change to fruition. University leaders need to understand their role will be to facilitate the process and that any changes should be faculty driven in order to be successful. The university climate needs to be conducive to creative thinking and goal clarity and receptive to recommended changes (Oreg& Berson, 2011).

3. Methodology/Design

A qualitative design was chosen for this study due to the fact that it was the perspectives of the faculty members that were vital to understanding the needs of faculty members as they relate to underprepared students in the classroom. To ensure validity and reliability was accomplished, data triangulation was utilized (Barratt, Choi, & Li, 2011; Yin, 2009). Multiple sources of data were collected to enhance the evidence of the historical and behavioral issues associated with this study (Wahyuni, 2012). Multiple sources of evidence enabled the converging of the lines of inquiry to achieve triangulation and corroboration. This study incorporated both interviews and documentation review as a means of preparation for triangulation (Barrett, et al., 2011; Yin, 2009).

3.1 Setting, Sample, and Data Collection

This study was conducted at a four-year University in a New England state. There are approximately 540 faculty members employed at the university who were considered as potential volunteers for this study. After Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the volunteer list was examined and 6 faculty members were purposefully contacted to participate in the study. Prioritization was implemented for even distribution among the part-time, non-tenure, and tenured faculty members which comprised the unit of analysis.

Participant Code	Gender	Race	Faculty Status	Level of Education
01PT	Female	Caucasian	Part-time	Master's degree
02NT	Female	Caucasian	Non-tenure	Doctorate
03T	Female	African American	Tenure	Master's degree
04PT	Female	Caucasian	Part-time	Master's degree
05NT	Female	Caucasian	Non-tenure	Doctorate
06T	Female	Caucasian	Tenure	Doctorate

Since all students are required to enroll in general education courses, participants were selected from faculty who taught general education courses. These courses comprise all majors, and therefore would be a cross selection of students. This type of purposeful sampling avoided faculty experiences from a particular major. To verify general education faculty, a review of the past five years of general education courses offered were examined. Saturation was met after the conclusion of the sixth participant. It was at this point the data was clearly repetitive and not yielding any new data. The small size allowed for more in-depth responses from the participants (Yin, 2009). Each interview was conducted in the faculty members' offices and lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The environment where the study was conducted was in the faculty members' offices, a natural setting of the faculty. By interviewing faculty members in their familiar settings, it assisted in increasing the internal validity of this study, as the participants were interviewed in a comfortable environment that is unrestricted (Turner, 2010; Yin, 2009).

An interview guide was provided to the participants prior to the interviews and assisted in maintaining structure, and at the same time allowed for flexibility during the interview process and to ensure that all participants were asked the same questions in the same manner. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, permission was required and granted by the Institutional Review Board at the four-year university. Once permission and approval was granted, participants were asked to sign a consent form before the interview transpired (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The informed consent form was provided to the participants along with the interview process and a description of how the information provided during the interview will be utilized. The only members present during the interview were the researcher and the faculty member.

Permission was granted by the participant before the recording of the interview. Once the interview concluded, an opportunity for debriefing was offered to review key points or address any concerns a participant may have regarding the interview (Finkelstein & Thom, 2014). Recorded interviews were transcribed from oral speech to written text and analyzed by identifying key words or phrases from each of the interviews (White & Drew, 2011). Transcriptions were made available to the participants to verify the information and account for the accuracy of the interview. From the identified key words or phrases, coding was assigned to indicate emerging themes and the essence of the phenomenon composed (Jackson, et al., 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Microsoft Word and Excel were utilized to organize the data, as this method allowed for a thorough understanding of the data collected. Establishing a database assisted in improving the reliability of this study by tracking and organizing the data. This also assisted in decreasing the chance of an error and bias occurring while defining and coding themes (Yin, 2009).

A review of institutional documents commenced during the interview process. Included in the documents review were the last ten years of University Senate minutes. It was decided that it would be valuable to gauge the environment of the institution by reviewing the University Senate minutes to understand any initiatives and issues at the institution. The University Senate is the governing body of the institution. The faculty handbook was another document reviewed, as this document illustrates all the policies and procedures within the institution, as well as the responsibilities of the faculty. University and national surveys were also utilized in the document review. All the documents were reviewed for data incorporation to provide a better understanding of the overall data collection and analysis.

3.2 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the sample size of the participants. The sample size was small, as the primary source of data collection was retrieved from a series of interviews with faculty members. Another limitation was the fact that the data collected only included one university and the data was evaluated from faculty members and did not include other constituents like administrators and counselors.

4. Findings

Through data analysis 8 themes emerged:

- Faculty has certain level of responsibility
- Faculty provides certain level of assistance
- Faculty frustrations with underprepared students
- Lack of training
- Limited university engagement
- Diminished academic standards and assessment
- Adjusted course instruction
- Identified student mindset.

The analysis of the data concluded that all the participants viewed the number of underprepared students at the postsecondary level as a troubling situation, due in part by the fact that the number of underprepared students continues to increase each year. There was agreement that finances are a contributing factor to admitting so many underprepared students. In short, the university needs to admit questionable students to meet fiscal responsibilities.

4.1 Faculty has Certain Level of Responsibility

All of the participants agreed that they have a certain level of responsibility to assist underprepared students. The level of the assistance did vary to a certain degree by faculty status. There were two major reasons why faculty members were willing to assist underprepared students. The first one related to the fact that students are graduating high school underprepared and therefore should not be blamed completely for their inability to handle college level coursework, and the second related to the university admitting students who are underprepared in a means to meet budgetary concerns.

Participant 02NT stated, "I think there are too many students who are underprepared, but I don't put that on the institution for accepting them, I put that on the secondary education for not preparing them." Participant 01PT believed it went further than the high schools and offered, "I do believe students are more underprepared and I think it's the generation, it's the time period in which we live." When it comes to how successful underprepared students will be at the postsecondary level, participant 06T stated, "The best I think… hope for is a noncompetitive degree in a noncompetitive nature and I have to work with the students I get." Participant 05NT believed students have a misconception of college and are not adequately prepared or "cut out for college." It is a "disservice to say you are going to be successful" but that is part of the problem; students really don't have an understanding of what college entails. There was clear agreement among the participants that students entering college today lack critical thinking skills and participant 01PT stressed, "Critical thinking is something you're not seeing in today's students at the college level." There are variables that may be contributing factors to why students lack critical thinking skills, and why the K-12 system is failing to graduate students who are prepared for college.

The No Child Left behind Act was at the forefront of blame, as participant 02NT clearly articulates, "I saw a huge difference once the No Child Left behind Act was in operation for four or five years; that standardized testing. I saw the level of critical thinking ability drop significantly." Participant 03T illustrated a dramatic decrease in critical thinking over the years.

I would say the majority of my students are underprepared and have no critical thinking skills. I think everything for them is very black and white. If it doesn't fall within that, if they can't assimilate information and be able to form an argument, if they don't believe or they don't understand or they don't agree, then they have no critical thinking skills. I think that's … I have that all the time in my classes (03T).

Five of the participants indicated that the No Child Left behind Act as a defining point in time that changed how students think. When it comes to assigning projects participant 02NT stated, "I have had to increase the number of steps, breaking down the project into smaller pieces, and then I have had to take the time to teach each of those pieces." Participant 06T expressed how faculty conversations often lead to what happened to the students today. Participant 06T went on to say those conversations would eventually lead to a discussion of the No Child Left behind Act as the contributing factor and "That's not a political statement that is a pedagogy statement."

Students are arriving at the university underprepared, and their deficiencies need to be addressed and this responsibility is ultimately one faculty members will have to embrace as participant 05NT stated, "They are 100% responsible to assist underprepared students." Participant 05NT goes on to state, "We need to meet the students where they are now, not where we would like them to be. I think they're here so that's my responsibility, I am absolutely responsible, not necessarily to try to go back and teach everything, but at least try to meet them where they are with the intention of bringing them to where they hope they can be." Participant 06T expressed, "This is a noncompetitive university" where students can be successful.

We have students who find their footing and come into their own when they are here through hard work, relationships with faculty and their nurtured in those relationships; intellectually. When it comes to admitting students, it comes down to a financial decision. The admissions department makes the decision of admitting students; faculty members do not have any input and would be more selective if they did (06T). All of the participants agreed that there is pressure to admit students which is a contributing factor to the increase in underprepared students. Participant 05NT commented the admission process is "flawed," but at the same time, "We need to admit students." Participant 04PT went on to state that the admissions office, "Is kind of forced to admit a certain number and so I think we admit students that we probably should not." Participant 04PT added, "We need to admit a certain number of students for budgetary reasons and if those students are looking at other institutions… I think we are taking students on the lower end of the spectrum."

4.2 Faculty Provides Certain Level of Assistance

The degree to which faculty members assist underprepared students did vary to a small degree. That being said, none of the faculty members admitted they would not assist an underprepared student. Underprepared students can be successful if both the students and the faculty members are actively engaged. Participant 01PT discussed how an underprepared student can be successful if the student was willing to take ownership of their weakness.
It is up to the student to seek help when needed and take advantage of the resources available on campus. Another part to student success is the willingness of the faculty member to assist the underprepared student. This would require action on the faculty member's part and would include finding the service or services needed for the student, or working with the student outside the classroom.

Participant 01PT has experienced, "Underprepared students in my classes at all levels from freshmen to unfortunately seniors, who are really aren't as prepared to be successful in the classroom. I think I have some responsibility to make sure they are successful; that is on me." Some of the types of assistance provided by participant 01PT included informing the student that their writing needs improvement and how this could be accomplished to discussing the types of services available to the student and what should be expected from these services. This dialogue between the student and faculty member is vital for student success. Participant 01PT went on the say that it was important to take the time and let the student know they should visit the writing center as a means to help improve their writing skills or a visit to the tutoring lab to assist with their time management skills. These actions will assist the underprepared student in establishing good writing habits and with submitting papers on time.

Due to serious writing issues, participant 04PT has taken time in class to address very basic sentence structure like how to write a five paragraph essay. Participant 01PT noted, "I think if you admit the underprepared student, and you can identify the underprepared student, I think you take on the responsibility of giving them information to make sure they are successful."

Participant 02NT relies heavily on individual work with underprepared students outside the classroom. This means extra time for the faculty member. "I try to catch the student as they're circling the drain and try to pull them back up. When I get underprepared students and I need to get them up to speed, it quite often means hooking them up with the tutoring and writing centers…… that extends to extra office hours." Participant 02NT has worked with students in the summer program. This program "Brings in underprepared students and gives them an opportunity… and those students who were interested in succeeding and accepted my help moved forward." Students come to college lacking even the basic skills of identifying an appropriate resource. At the beginning of the semester, participant 06T explains to the class what a viable resource is and what resources not to use like Sparks Notes or Joe's website. In my 101 course I get a paper from a student, a young non-trad, and I look at it and as God is my witness, I see www.bobswebsite.com. So I say come here (subject beckons with finger to student) and I say, what's this? And she said Bob's website. I said, what did I tell you? You told me not to use Joe's website. How do you deal with that?

Participant 03T teaches in an interactive manner, where students interact with each other. This teaching method assists underprepared students. "I think interaction is very helpful but I believe that not all classes can be taught that way." Participant 03T further stated, "I think I can only assist them so much, but as soon as it becomes a detriment to the rest of the class, I have to let them go, because then it's affecting those students who are prepared." Due to time constraints during the academic year, some faculty members see the need to utilize their summers for researching the necessary materials to address the diverse academic populations in the classroom. Participant 06T has spent several summers reviewing materials to ensure the correct and current materials are taught to address competency tests that are required for some students. Participant 06T commented, "I feel professionally obligated" to make sure the course content covers the materials needed to pass these professional competencies exams.

4.3 Faculty Frustrations with Underprepared Students

It was clear that while faculty members were willing to assist underprepared students, it did come with a degree of frustration. There was complete agreement by the participants that underprepared students slow down the class. Participant 01PT explained, "Underprepared students certainly slow you down and take up more time." This sentiment was shared by participant 02NT who stated when "You get a student who is unmotivated or is so crippling behind they slow down the classroom." Participant 02NT explained how she would handle an underprepared student in class. "I've asked them if they would hold questions and see me later, and I hate to do that but if someone is so far behind they are harming the other students learning experience." Participant 01PT questioned if admitting students to stay afloat is worth it as "We're looking at a 16% four-year graduation rate." Too many students are passed into the universities underprepared.

I'm finding students, I don't say this despairingly, it really saddens me, they can't write a sentence; how are they going to write a coherent paragraph? How are they going to pass any class that requires writing? These skills need to be clarified before students come in. I do not believe a university, as oppose to a college, should be doing remedial work. Somebody's got to get this done before they get here; you're asking students to run a marathon with a broken leg (06T). Participant 06T further commented that the community college is a good place for underprepared students. "Some of the best students I have ever had come from the Connecticut community colleges. There are a few I can point to specifically that do a great job."Faculty members have become frustrated when they are unable to successfully engage students in their learning. This sense of frustration could question a faculty members self-efficacy as participant 05NT stated, "I have sometimes been… not a good teacher because I have been frustrated or threatened by that student who is simply not ready to think through the kinds of developmental issues that are involved with being a student. With a student who isn't ready to or isn't prepared to be in a college classroom with other college students and so that student undermines other student's ability to learn due to the behaviors or by simply not understanding the material. I feel frustrated because I don't think I have been an effective teacher as I like to be at times by trying to teach at all levels of success."

Participant 04PT is discouraged by the success of students in the 200 and 300 level courses. "I see real issues with writing and I think at that level, or by that time, if they were to be successful I think at that point they would have either sought help or would have worked on those issues and I don't see it. I see real difficulty in writing, sentence structure, supporting their argument, grammar and spelling; I mean it is so bad, over 50% of my students in class have serious writing issues." The degree of their under preparedness will ultimately determine their success. Participant 04PT did believe that if the support was provided, and the student sought the support, success was achievable.

Understanding that faculty members are frustrated, participant 01PT suggested having institutions identify a clear-cut criterion that students should meet for admission to the university. When an institution fails to identify or adhere to their criteria and admits them to the institution then, "I think you take on the responsibility of giving them the information or some kind of follow-up to make sure that students are successful, not just opening the door and say here you go. We already know you may not be successful but good luck." More responsibility needs to be placed on the high schools to ensure students graduate high school prepared for college. Participant 03T stated, "Underprepared students need to be addressed not in the university, but in high school" where they are not being prepared. That's not our responsibility to prepare them. It's the high school's responsibility and middle school's responsibility to prepare them." Participant 05NT goes on to say, "Maybe every student needs to have a …. in the United States maybe there needs to be a grade 13 that is focused on how to be a student in college."

4.4 Lack of Training

Reactions were mixed among the participants regarding resources like professional development. Participant 05NT observation on faculty preparedness indicated that some faculty members are not prepared to teach due to the lack of training. "I think it would be great to have a seminar at the beginning of every semester where everyone has to take a two week seminar on high impact pedagogies. I don't think that will happen for all kinds of reasons like budget and motivation." What our students need are courses delivered in a different way; an instructional shift. None of this can be accomplished without "some real retirements" and that's not to be nasty or bitter but at a certain point one needs to shift focus from the classroom to something else (05NT).

Participant 02NT stated that there is limited funding for conferences, so faculty will tend to go to conferences related to their content and not necessarily focused on underprepared students. Document research revealed that only 62% of the faculty believes that the university workloads allow faculty members adequate time to continue professional growth. A faculty-staff survey conducted in 2012 revealed that only 34.8% of the faculty believes the university provides adequate training and support for faculty advisors. According to the faculty handbook, "faculty workshop(s) on advisement should be offered" (University Faculty Handbook, 2015, p. 101) however, none of the participants mentioned being offered such training. A 2015 Student Satisfaction Survey indicated that only 54% of the students were satisfied with their academic advisement. The Student Satisfaction Survey also asked students if they would consider the teaching provided to be of high quality. Only 62% of the students indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied.

There were some mixed opinions among the faculty members when they were asked if the university provides resources to faculty members. Participant 01PT mentioned, "There are resources for faculty members like the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)." CELT provides monthly workshops for faculty members covering a wide range of topics including, but not limited to, underprepared students. The question is whether faculty members will take advantage or are afforded the time to take advantage of the workshops provided by CELT. Participant 06T commented that CELT has, "A lot of information on very specific topics" other than that as for resources provided, "none that I can think of."Participant 04PT acknowledged there was CELT for faculty, but also acknowledged, "Never attending any session provided by CELT." Other than CELT, minimal support is provided to faculty members. Participant 01PT went on to say, "I talk to faculty members for advice."Document research validated and verified the university does provide professional development through CELT. Document research revealed that in 2014 the university was awarded a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation to assist faculty members with philosophy, pedagogy, and strategies for supporting first-year students. Faculty would be provided with individual support to incorporate first-year elements into their courses. Workshops would be available to faculty members through the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. The purpose of the workshops focused on training faculty members on how to incorporate first-year materials into existing courses.

4.5 Limited University Engagement

The participants were in agreement that there needs to be more engagement by the university community. Participant 02NT stated that the stakeholders at the university are not engaged by a long shot. "I believe many are not in it to win it. Not in it for the kids." Participant 02NT continued, "I think in general the administration doesn't look favorably upon these students and I worry sometimes that they look at any extra help that is given to them as money out of the budget." When it comes to the responsiveness of the institution, "I would have to say I have not expressed my opinions to the university in a fashion that would allow them to respond." As a non-tenured faculty member, "I do have some concerns about administrative retaliation if I were to make too many waves, or more likely, that they'll just ignore me." Participant 02NT would like to visually see the administration around campus as "I don't see administrators walking around the campus. I've never seen one in a classroom. I've never seen one in any university building that was a student centered building." Participant 01PT stated, "Everybody puts on a face that they want to assist underprepared students, but I don't seriously believe that is the case. I see in my experience this is very businesslike."

Okay, if you need the numbers, you have to hit that number, you do whatever to hit that number and then it's...they don't want to hear about the student that was admitted to the institution who did not meet the criteria and who is now academically suspended and struggling to maintain a good academic standing. I believe that it goes so far up the chain of command (01PT). The people who are involved include the registrar's office, the cashier's office, financial aid, student affairs to some extent but that is as far as it goes. "I think with all the issues going on a college campus they don't want to hear about the problems the students are having, the struggles and situations that they might be in or experiencing (01PT)." The university should include the students to get their point of view, bring them into the discussions.

Participant 05NT stated, "Approximately 10% of the university is engaged to assist underprepared students." While this is a problem, it can be good since it allows others to pick-up the slack and pass the baton to prevent burnout. "The university is as responsive as it can be, though I wouldn't say it's across the board." I came here from that very elite private institution and it would have been irresponsible on my part to not educate myself of what I was getting into, what kind of students are here, what are my expectations, so I didn't come in here expecting that same level of preparation and support. Participant 05NT went on to say, "The University does provide the resources it can with our budget system. I've also gone looking for grant money to increase the level of support. One of the resources underutilized is our website. More money needs to be allocated to the website to educate students before they arrive at the university. I'm working on a website specifically for first-year students." This will also assist parents, as parents need to be educated on what students need.

Participant 04PT stated that only segments of the university are actively engaged to assist underprepared students. The academic side is more invested. "I think everyone is aware of it just because you hear it so much, and the remedial, and we stopped offering some of the basic level math, and writing, and we're pointing them to the community colleges, and that kind of things, so you hear those are things and hear the amount of remediation our students need, but I think those actually involved are just a segment." When the issue comes up at meetings, "I provide anecdotal evidence from my classes, but it's hard because we need to admit a certain amount of students for budgetary reasons."

Participant 04PT did acknowledge there are resources provided to students such as the writing center, the tutoring center, and the math lab. Document research revealed only 60% of the faculty believes the university provides sufficient resources to improve programs and instruction. Participant 06T said "simply no" when it came to the engagement of university stakeholders. "Many of the stakeholders across the board are only interested in furthering their own interests. This is administrative, I can point to administrators, I can point to support staff administrators, and faculty who are interested only in their own interests, whatever those narrow interests are." Participant 06T stated that the university is "completely nonresponsive" to their concerns regarding underprepared students being admitted to the university. Participant 03T stated, "That the university administration provides what they want to whom they want to address the underprepared students. If you are either not popular or people don't value what it is that you do, then they're not going to give you any resources and that's it." According to the Faculty Handbook, the university is supposed to provide a variety of training workshops and individual training for faculty in the use of all relevant courseware and/or software. Training is provided as needed to ensure faculty remains current in the use of the technology (University Faculty Handbook, 2015).

4.6 Diminished Academic Standards and Assessment

Participant 05NT admitted that the meaning of grades is questionable. "I think my grading shifts all the time." "I have semesters that I just think this doesn't really matter and I will have students who probably should have failed but it's not going to serve them and their larger education purpose to fail, therefore I will do a 'D,' but I don't know if that's by composition of the classroom or my particular mindset at the time." Participant 01PT expressed, "I don't think I've adjusted grading of anything in my class. I have a set, straightforward kind of grading through quizzes, tests, and assignments. If a student is underprepared, it will be reflected in their grade. I don't think I've ever changed the grade to meet the composition of the class." Participant 06T gives pop quizzes in class and stated, "I have ratcheted down the rigor of my quizzes and my finals." When participant 06T began giving quizzes, the blank space on the quiz would have to be filled in by the student recalling the information. Now the faculty member provides three possible answers and the student selects the appropriate answer. Participant 05NT stated, "I have certain outcomes in mind, I just sometimes have to change the way I get there." "I've never met every goal or outcome, but sometimes I hit some outcome I had no idea I would hit." Changing how content is taught is essential. Instead of teaching writing from a thesis statement or paragraph, "I'm backing off and backing down to what a sentence does in order to understand how to approach a thesis." Participant 05NT continued to state," I don't think I dilute the content. I hear from other faculty who say we're diluting the content, I don't agree with that." When it comes to teaching participant 05NT believes, "Professors are not always trained in how to teach" and blame the student and say "it's the students fault, I shouldn't have to change the methods" of teaching.

I think faculty have not shifted at all and I don't want to say that they're terrible teachers and need to learn in their own ways how to be better teachers, to work with these students, because the truth is these students are here and we can sit around and complain, we can just dilute, sometimes we see the dilution of the content maybe that will be helpful. I see that happens too often, we say it's just, a big eye roll, and these students don't have this so therefore I can't do this, it's just, that's just poisonous and fruitless (05NT). Participant 04PT commented, "We have degraded the quality of our education." The quality of the degrees awarded have lost their value as participant 04PT explains, "I feel that college has become almost like high school used to be" with a high school diploma being the equivalent of a bachelor's degree. "I feel a master's degree is kind of almost what the bachelor's degree was worth." Participant 04PT believes that students should wait until their ready or go to the community college, but with declining enrollments in this area, it is hard to say no.

If the university is going to admit underprepared students, it needs to provide the appropriate service to these students so they can be successful and receive an education that prepares them for the workforce. For the elite students, they can go into the honors program if they feel they need to be challenged. Participant 03T acknowledged, "I never graded on a curve, never, which makes me completely unpopular because those people who get an 'F' who deserve an 'F' get an 'F' and they get very angry about that. Between rate your professor and being asked why students complain that they're getting an 'F,' I can't change my standards, I just can't." Participant 02NT changed over to a point base system where each task is awarded a certain amount of points. "Students who fail to put forth the effort will suffer. The students, who write well, will get all the points, and will pull an 'A' compared to those students who not write as well will pull a 'B' or 'C' and if they cannot handle it will fail out. I will encourage them to withdraw first so they have a 'W' rather than an 'F' on their transcript." A faculty-staff survey conducted at the university in 2012 revealed that 68.9% of the faculty believes the university provides support for systematic assessment of what and how students are learning through their academic programs. The numbers fall when it comes to outside classroom experiences. The results revealed that 52.9% of the faculty believes the university provides support for systematic assessment of what and how students are learning through their experience outside the classroom.

4.7 Adjusted Course Instruction

Participant 01NT discussed how underprepared students "challenge" course instruction, "Because you may have a section of students one semester where teaching is very easy because the students do what you expect them to do, they read ahead, their prepared when they come to class, their prepared for discussions and the next semester you have a group of students who you ask a question and you hear crickets chirping." Participant 01PT indicated that besides slowing the class down, underprepared students tend to need the material covered more than once and sometimes one-on-one which means extra time in and outside the classroom.

"I assume the students know very little and spend more time on the very foundational, very basic foundational things before I actually move into the practice of the skill."This was echoed by participant 06T who stated, "When dealing with my freshmen students whether you like it or not I'm going to presume you know nothing."

Participant 06T commented that underprepared students hold the class back. "No instructor wants to be in a position to say sit down and shut up. We want students to be part of the conversation, but at some point one is forced to say, how does this contribute to the conversation? How is this relevant to the topic?" Participant 06T discussed when using big words she would follow it with a more common term thereby adjusting her diction in her classes. Participant 04PT tries to use methods that are as inclusive as possible and stated, "I kind of teach in the middle" which captures most of the class, approximately 90%. Participant 04PT recognized it is tough on the very bright, as they become bored because coursework is not as rigorous as it could be. Participant 04PT pointed out that the course is taught with a hands-on approach which involves teamwork. "I lay it out for them the first day, I basically scare them. The courses involve teamwork, creativity, there just not books and lectures. Students need to come to every class and I'm very tough on them and I find that it works and they do some amazing work and I'm proud of them."

Participant 05NT believes that there is an obligation to both the underprepared and the prepared student and both need to be challenged and finding common ground can be difficult. Participant 05NT recognized there are students who are academically and socially prepared for college level coursework and when teaching, "I try to find a middle ground which is very difficult sometimes" especially when the very prepared students want to take a discussion in another direction which leaves the underprepared 'lost' and my success as a teacher in question. "In some of my classes I use more group work because I think knowledge is socially constructed in many ways and when you can put students who are less prepared with students who are more prepared everybody sort helps it out." Participant 03T noted that underprepared students have a tendency to not approach academia as a scholarly and learning experience. Participant 03T has changed the instructional methods of the courses. "I changed my teaching so much that I have a textbook and I have a PowerPoint and I can't show an entire movie in a basic class like Exploring the Film or Sight, Sound, and Motion because I have to teach in such an unnatural way." Understanding these challenges, Participant 02NT explained how her teaching pedagogy changed to become very student centered. "I scaffold the assignments into smaller projects."

Participant 02NT remembered, "When I started teaching composition it wasn't uncommon to use readers, they would read and model after the essays, and the reason why that has fallen out-of-favor is because you don't have time anymore." Due to the number of underprepared students, participant 02NT stated, "I'm doing more teaching of the parts of the paper and the students are doing less reading. The students need to learn… and the outcomes… and time allotted to teach has not changed." Through document research it was revealed that a 2012 faculty-staff survey indicated that 89.7% of the faculty believes the university should strengthen/promote student-faculty collaboration research at the undergraduate level. This may inspire students to become more interested in the learning process. The implementation of such an initiative may assist with student attitudes in the classroom.

4.8 Identified Student Mindset

Faculty members identified a variety of student attitudes and behaviors that have changed over the years. One of the behaviors is student entitlement. There was agreement by the participants that students have a sense of entitlement. Participant 01PT stated that it comes from a "sense of instant gratification for them" resulting from how they were brought up. "It's the fact that every student who participates gets a medal. I didn't have that experience growing up. If you won, you got the medal; you didn't get one just for showing up." Today parents are more like helicopter parents, "the parents take care of everything, the student is not getting the responsibility of taking on and being held to be responsible" (01PT). The lack of teaching responsibility goes beyond the parents; it comes from their peers and teachers. The issue of entitlement is a result of the "High school, grade school, it starts in the elementary school, I see it in some of the work that I do in the community" (01PT). Nothing is their fault. "Nothing is their responsibility. If you didn't tell them verbatim, and they miss something like the withdrawal date, it's our fault even though the dates are on the website. Then they expect the university to fix it. Students complain, yell, go up the chain, and that's it, you get what you want. That's what kids today see" (01PT). Dealing with student attitudes can affect the way instruction takes place in the classroom.

It can also affect the success of the student. Participant 01PT wondered if there is a level of maturity, a level of experience that was needed to be successful in college, "What is the magic formula you need to have, and I'm not sure how you address those issues."

Participant 06T stated that students are taught in junior high and high school "how this relates to you" now students have to understand in college it's not about them. We now have to "give them the sad news that it's not about you" and ask them "how does this relate to our culture and our community, other members of our community besides you and sometimes it's very difficult to get around that." Participant 05NT added, "Students have no idea what to expect in college and some students believe it will be the same as high school." Participant 06T commented how students believe they are entitled to receiving an "A" just for showing up regardless if work was completed or not. Participant 03T stated that underprepared students approach learning, "As if they're going to the mall to buy something. Once they paid for it, they are supposed to get the grade they deserve. I pay for an 'A' so I want an 'A' kind of thing. Of course… there have been many cases in my career where I have been told to pass a student because of whatever reason. There are too many to name." Participant 02NT provided this example, "You know the special snowflake that comes to you at the end of the semester and says I have to get an "A." My mom said… I'm like you should have been in here on day one with that and not the last day of the semester, and they say you have to give me an 'A' and I don't because the points indicate that you've got a "C."

Participant 06T commented that there are behavioral issues in the classroom which were never experienced before. "I have at times 'locked the door' and I've had to have a police officer sit outside my classroom." Participant 03T affirmed that there has been a loss of respect towards teachers. "I have students who come 20 minutes late, I've had students threaten me in class, literally threatened me in class, and I've had students who said 'fuck off.' I have had students who told me 'when my father gets a hold of you' and things like that."
I have to hold it together for the rest of the class. Believe me. When you're threatened and you have 25 students there, you can't back down. You also can't fight back. You're in a very difficult position. I believe that underprepared students who are aggressive, that makes it difficult to teach and get through an uncomfortable situation (03T). Students are expected to conduct themselves in a civil manner in and outside the classroom. The Student Code of Conduct is a document that is provided to all students and does express the appropriate behavior in the classroom.

The Faculty Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct both provide students and faculty members with the policies and procedures regarding academic honesty and integrity and the ramifications if such honesty and integrity are violated.

5. *Evaluation of Findings and Implications*

The results revealed there was common agreement among the faculty members that the number of underprepared students entering postsecondary education continues to increase each year and that finances were a driving force to admitting students who are underprepared. As the accessibility to higher education increases, so does the number of underprepared students attending higher education, an unintended outcome from an open access policy (Finkelstein & Thom, 2014). All of the participants agreed that there is pressure to admit students. This is supported by University Senate minutes (2012) describing an initiative to go to an SAT optional policy.

Faculty members were in agreement that they are responsible with assisting underprepared students, though it did vary between the three groups. Research would support this finding, as it is suggested it is the responsibility of the faculty member, who are on the frontline to provide students with a quality educational experience (Estepp, Roberts, & Carter, 2012). Tenure faculty members were more critical than the non-tenure and part-time faculty members who believed in providing more personal assistance towards the underprepared students. The major contributing factor to this belief was due to the lack of preparedness provided by the K-12 system. There was complete agreement among the participants that the K-12 system should be held accountable for the increasing number of underprepared students. This was supported by the results from a national survey conducted by Achieve (2015) which indicated 75% of college faculties believe high schools are not adequately preparing students for college. Research supports the need for a better K-12 system to prepare students for college (Campbell, Filling, Firch, & Linsay, 2015). With the K-12 system being held to blame for the poor academic performance of today's students, it should be noted that the enacted 2001 No Child Left behind Act, a school reform model, could be an influencing factor.

First, NCLB striped the teachers of their academic freedom and professionalism by supplying the teachers with a scripted curriculum geared to standardized tests. This action has led to a decrease in teacher morale and higher attrition rates. The rigidly scripted curriculum fails to allow for diverse learning and teaching needed by some students and teachers (Rubin, 2011). Critical thinking skills are also stifled by a standardized curriculum and interrupts real learning (Esposito, Davis, & Swain, 2012). Participants in this study agreed that student's today lack critical thinking skills. Students being admitted now were nearly wholly educated under NCLB which is now considered to be a disaster.

The rigors of higher education continue to decline as evident by the amount of time students spend studying and was supported by the participants in this study. Study time by college students has seen a dramatic decline over the last five decades. Over the last fifty years student study time has decreased by fifty percent. In the 1960's the average study time by students was approximately twenty-five hours per week, by the 1980's it had fallen to approximately twenty hours per week, and by 2003 it had fallen to just thirteen hours per week. This decline in average study time has had no effect on grade point averages. "Undergraduate education is simply no longer as rigorous which unfortunately fits the consumer-student who wants the best educational credentials with the least amount of effort" (Stuart & Vance, 2013, p. 48).

Each participant had their own means of addressing the academic standards and assessments in their courses, ranging from a certain set of outcomes that in some cases were never met, to ratcheting down quizzes and final exams. Grading lacked commonality as it ranged from one faculty member not curving grades to another questioning what grades mean. There was agreement that standards have fallen, with one faculty member pointing to the fact that we have degraded the quality of our education. Universities are falling short when it comes to students developing higher-order skills. Students continue to experience issues in articulating an argument in written format, along with the ability to think critically and handle complex reasoning (Pallas, 2011). Research supports the continual change to academic standards and assessment due to the growing number of underprepared students in the classroom which is forcing faculty members to dilute course content in order to proceed through course material (Brothen & Wambech, 2012).

Grade inflation remains a hot topic in higher education and the results from this study indicated that only tenure faculty members would openly not curve their grades. One of the reasons why non-tenure and part-time faculty members may tend to be more lenient on grading or more willing to dilute course content is due in part to student evaluations. Student evaluations are an integral part of how faculty are evaluated and influence changes to the curriculum and faculty performance (Hatfield & Coyle, 2013). Research suggests that grade inflation and coursework deflation are a result of a heavy reliance on student evaluations (Ali & Ajmi, 2013). Students who receive higher grades are usually happy and more apt to rate a faculty member in a more positive manner. Full-time and/or tenure faculty are less likely to inflate grades than their part-time and/or non-tenure faculty member peers (Hall, 2012). The reason for this action is supported by research which suggests part-time and non-tenure faculty members are more susceptible to intimidation from students due to their lack of tenure protection and therefore are more willing to renegotiate grades with students (Schutz, Drake, & Lessner, 2013).

Several faculty members did indicate that the university provided limited professional development through the Center Excellence of Learning and Teaching (CELT), but none of the participants attended the workshops provided by CELT. This would align with the results from a National Survey of Student Engagement conducted in 2014 that reported only 13% of faculty participate in a center devoted to professional development. There were contributing factors for this lack of action which included time constraints and motivation. Due to an increase in part-time and non-tenure faculty and a decrease in tenure faculty, tenure faculty have taken on additional services and administrative duties leaving little time for professional growth (Mamiseishvili, 2012). The need for professional development was supported by University Senate minutes (2013) which indicated that some classes had a fail or withdrawal rate of greater than 25% and it was suggested that faculty consider ways to connect content across disciplines and make learning more relevant.

There was complete agreement that faculty instruction has changed due to the number of underprepared students in the classroom. The way each faculty member addressed the changes did differ. One faculty member assumes the students know nothing and starts with the very basics and builds a foundation. Several faculty members try to teach in the middle, the only problem with this method is that the top students usually get bored. One faculty member has taken the course material and scaffolds it into small parts for a better understanding of the material.

The only drawback to this process is that it becomes very time consuming and limits the amount of material that can be taught. This method of instruction is consistent with research that suggests too enhance the critical thinking of students, faculty members need to consider explaining the material in incremental steps and incorporate a variety of perspectives surrounding the topic of the lesson. To effectively connect students to the topic and establish relevancy, faculty members should try to connect student experiences to the lesson being taught (Roselle, 2009; Sockalingam & Schidt, 2011). Some of the faculty relies on class participation as a means to engage students. The only drawback is when a student contributes to the conversation, but the contribution has no relevance to the discussion. This creates a dilemma for the faculty member because participation is important, but at the same time there is only so much class time and the faculty member needs to find a way to instruct the student that the point has no relevance to the topic and to sit down. One faculty member indicated it is hard to gauge the degree of under preparedness, as the degree of under preparedness seems to change from semester to semester making instructing even more difficult. Implementing the appropriate instructional methods needs to be at the forefront of discussion in higher education. Participants in this study agreed that professional development is important and one participant revealed that some faculty members are not prepared to teach due to the lack of training and enter the university without the appropriate pedagogical training. The results from a survey conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA would support this assertion. It was concluded that only 40.4% of the faculty feel that the training received in graduate school prepared them for the role of faculty member (Eagan, et al., 2014).

This also aligns with the literature which indicates the preparedness of faculty members to instruct has been a long-standing concern for years as faculty members possess an unsophisticated conception on how to instruct and utilize effective teaching practices (Amundsen & Wilson, 2012). The need for faculty professional development is becoming more evident as research suggests students are now graduating college lacking critical thinking skills and are not prepared for graduate school or the workforce (Head, Van Hoeck, Eschler, & Fullerton, 2013).
 Even with two years of postsecondary education critical thinking skills remain a challenge for students. This is supported by a study conducted by Arum and Roska (2011) which suggested students who complete two years of study at the postsecondary level show little if any improvement in their ability to think critically performs tasks that require complex reasoning, or have an increased ability in written communication. It is now reported that students are entering graduate school often poorly prepared to adjust to the rigors required of graduate-level study (O'Clair, 2013). Business school graduates lack important skills like; the ability to find, evaluate, and use information, as well as conduct collaborative research (Head, et al., 2013). Library resources and services seem foreign to graduate students even though these resources yield great benefits (O'Clair, 2013). Both public and private employers agree there is a need to improve written communication skills and government agencies actually rank this a top deficiency with new employees (Sundberg et al., 2011).

The participants agreed that the university needs to be more actively engaged with assisting faculty members. Research conducted by Jensen (2011) concluded that faculty who engage in a minimum of one year of pedagogical training conducted their instruction in a manner that was more student-centered, and experienced a greater sense of self-efficacy. Faculty members with a higher level of understanding in their teaching and learning are more apt to adjust their teaching strategies accordingly as a result of their effectiveness in the classroom (Jensen, 2011). Several of the participants indicated that the university has little interest or is nonresponsive to the needs of the faculty and the underprepared students. One participant stated "fear of retaliation" if too many waves were created resulting in faculty becoming less reluctant to actively engage with the administration. Another participant viewed the university engagement as a popularity contest, indicating that the "university will provide what they want to whom they want and if you are either not popular or people don't value what it is that you do, then they're not going to give you any resources and that's it." This type of administrative control and decision making will only increase as the number of tenured faculty decreases allowing more of the decision-making powers to shift away from the faculty and empower the authority to the administration (Mamiseishvili, 2012).

Several faculty members indicated a rise in adversarial behavior in the classroom which has become a real challenge when conducting instruction. Faculty members identified a variety of student attitudes and behaviors that have changed over the years. One faculty member experienced students swearing at her in class and another admitted to having to lock her classroom door and have a police officer outside the classroom for a time. Besides this disruptive behavior, the use of cell phones is another class distraction in the classroom and research suggests that 40% of students use their cell phones during class distracting approximately 85% of the students (Tindell & Bohlander, 2012).

Disruptive behavior interferes with the learning process for the other members in the classroom. It is predicted that disruptive student behavior will continue to increase in the future. Classroom aggression has been tracked by government agencies for the last two decades. The United States department of Justice reported there were 41,600 nonfatal violence incidents from 1993 to 1999 (Roberston, 2012). Behavioral issues not only affect the faculty, they affect uninvolved students by infringing on their right to a quality education (Altmiller, 2012). The increasingly inappropriate behavior, coupled with the sense of entitlement by students, has left faculty members at a disadvantage (Ausbrooks et al., 2011; Boysen, 2012; Knepp, 2012). Besides the vulgar language used towards the faculty, other disruptive and disrespectful behaviors that are commonplace include the use of cell phones, eating, coming to class late, leaving early, reading, and doing assignments from other classes (Wesp, Kash, Sandry, & Patton, 2013).

All the participants were in complete agreement on one major behavioral issue; student entitlement. Faculty members repeatedly stated that students believe they are entitled. Faculty members indicated students want instant gratification and is partially a result of helicopter parents who take care of everything. The failure of parents to teach their children on how to be responsible has led students to believe nothing is their responsibility. It also comes from the school system that rewards everyone, everyone gets a medal regardless if you really win or not. This type of rewards system may not be the most effective way to prepare students for the future. Research suggests that students fail to understand the faculty authority relationship and feel they are owed an unrealistic performance assessment (Schutz, et al., 2013). Students come into college underprepared and with the attitude that they paid for the class so they get an "A" regardless of the work produced.

Faculty members are confronted with inappropriate behavior by students believing that academic entitlement and consumer mentality are acceptable. This would align with the research that shows students are brought up in a system where the reliance on self-esteem is most important. The movement to increase students' self-esteem has created misconceptions for students, as it has led students to believe they are entitled to good grades regardless of effort, leaving professors mystified on how to address these students (Cain, et al., 2012).

Implementing the appropriate changes to address institutional challenges requires effective leadership. Research supports an active and engaged leadership is best for an institution, as the membership is a direct beneficiary. Transformational leaders motivate others and at the same time keep the interests of the individual and the organization united to establish trust, high performance, and sustainability. Through encouragement by transformational leaders, individuals set goals that go above and beyond expectations. Transformational leaders assist others to go beyond their self-interest and reach the unattainable. Revealing previously unknown strengths in others leads to an increased confidence to meet and address difficult challenges (Kaslow, et al., 2012). A transformational leader is engaged and concerned with the institution and through the success of the individual creates a climate that is conducive to critical thinking and goal accomplishment (Oreg & Berson, 2011; Sagnak, 2010). Through personalized training and other opportunities, which is vital and key, innovation and creativity are nurtured and relationships established and/or strengthened (Kaslow, et al., 2012). The lack of institutional engagement at the university is a missed opportunity, as the findings from this study indicated the institutional engagement was limited at best.

The implications from this study provide significant evidence that students are entering postsecondary education underprepared academically requiring faculty to address this population until changes are made in the K-12 system. Students also enter postsecondary education with a variety of misconceptions and behavioral issues that include, but are not limited to, student entitlement. This and other behavioral types of student mindset will continue to leave faculty at a disadvantage. Any alteration of student mindset will require actions that go beyond the faculty. Behavioral issues will continue to worsen the more we treat students as consumers, entitling students to believe they can do less and require more. Faculty members are currently forced to address an academically diverse population with little institutional support. Intervention by the institution to assist faculty is imperative in order to improve instruction and retention. Failure to improve instruction will result in a questionable reputation for higher education, as retention issues will continue to grow, and those students who graduate will do so underprepared for further advancement in their education at the graduate level and/or lack the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful in the workplace.

6. Recommendations

Research suggests that faculty members are experts in their disciplines but may have questionable instructional approaches in the classroom. It is for this reason that the first recommendation is to create a full semester professional development course for instructors. This would concur with the literature that professional development is an effective means to offer faculty members with an avenue to learn and exchange ideas in a community to address issues associated with underprepared students in the classroom (O'Sullivan & Irby, 2011). Current professional development initiatives, while informative, do not embrace all the issues faculty members are challenged with in the classroom and are usually condensed due to the limited time structure.

Utilizing a full semester professional development course will provide faculty members with 15 weeks of course instruction and develop collaboration among the faculty members in the course. Using a voluntary system, 20 faculty members would be chosen to participate. The 20 faculty members would have their faculty workload decreased by one course for the semester. The faculty members would be chosen from a variety of departments in an effort to obtain a cross-section of departments and enhance the anticipated discussions and classroom experiences. The course would enable the discussions of new teaching approaches that would be learned through the faculty members' action and reflection of their own experiences (Painter & Clark, 2015).Besides the learning of new pedagogical instruction, faculty members would become more collaborative through the exercises in the course.

The goal from this recommendation is to provide faculty members with an opportunity to share past and current classroom experiences, provide alternative instructional approaches, and at the same time develop collaboration among faculty members from different departments that would normally not exist. Providing an avenue where faculty members no longer feel isolated, but feel they are part of a team striving for a common goal would also enhance the morale at the institution. This would concur with the existing literature on the benefits of professional development. One of the benefits from professional development is the collaborative practices fostered by providing faculty members with the opportunity to be empowered to change the means by which they implement their instructional methods. Implementing effective instructional changes in the classroom would enhance the students' potential to understand the material being presented more effectively (King, 2011).

A second recommendation would be to establish a peer coaching program with a member from the same department and a member from another department. Implementing peer coaching can be an effective mechanism for faculty to work in collaboration with peers to reflect on teaching and learning. Existing literature concurs with this recommendation, as peering coaching provides experienced faculty with an avenue to voluntarily engage with other faculty members to effectively discuss problems encountered in the classroom (Zepada, et al., 2013). Outcomes from these discussions are mutually beneficial to both parties (Parker, et al., 2012). Peer coaching also provides an opportunity for senior faculty to connect with newer faculty members within the university community (Boboc, et al., 2012).

Implementing these recommendations will only increase faculty self-efficacy. Literature concurs when instructors exhibit a high self-efficacy they are more likely to create a learning environment that is student-centered and dynamic. Teacher self-efficacy allows the environment to transcend into one where students take ownership of their learning. Instructors with low self-efficacy continue with the same traditional instructional methods encumbered with managerial tasks (Wolf, et al., 2010).

7. Conclusions

This study provided evidence that high school graduates are not college ready and arrive at college with a variety of misconceptions. The literature review and the findings from this study were in complete alignment. Faculty members are faced with multiple challenges in higher education. There was complete agreement that the number of underprepared students is increasing, leaving question and blame towards the K-12 system. There was agreement with the participants and within the literature review that one of the issues with the K-12 system is the failure of the No Child Left behind Act. Students are entering postsecondary education lacking basic fundamental skills like writing and critical thinking, both essential for college level coursework. Along with the academic deficiencies, students arrive with a host of attitude issues from adversarial behavior towards faculty to a consumer mentality resulting in the belief it is acceptable to complete a minimal amount of work with the expectation of receiving an "A" grade.

Faculty members are challenged with addressing a variety of academic and behavioral issues when conducting instruction. As faculty members turn to the institution for support, they see very little engagement, leaving it up to the faculty members to instruct their courses to the best of their ability. Research suggests that faculty members are the experts in their discipline and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise, there is however, question of the faculty members' ability to instruct the academically diverse classroom. This is why it is imperative that institutions become more actively engaged and provide faculty members with the resources required to meet the demands of today's classroom. Unfortunately, the data provided from this study suggests there is a continued disconnect between the faculty and the administration at the university.

Data provided by the interviews indicated that faculty members will take on the responsibility of assisting underprepared students, though it did seem that the part-time and non-tenured faculties were more open to providing extended assistance. Faculty members were in clear agreement that the number of underprepared students continues to increase each year and the academic disparity is influencing classroom instruction. The lack of student understanding of what college entails is resulting in new challenges for faculty members, ranging from the students inability to do real college coursework to adversarial confrontations in the classroom.

The lack of university support is compounding an already difficult situation. While the target of educational accountability has been focused on the K-12 system, there is an increase of scrutiny at the university level (Pallas, 2011). It is for this reason that issues discussed need to be addressed. Faculty concerns about university support and the issues in the classroom need to be considered a priority. The university administration needs to provide more support to faculty members to address the issues in the classroom, as it is now becoming clear students are now graduating college underprepared for graduate school and the workplace. Universities are becoming more ineffective in teaching students how to think critically or effectively communicate with others, questioning the rigors of the college curriculum. Currently, graduate schools and the business community are taking notice and are beginning to become vocal and it will only be a matter of time before their voices resonant with policymakers.

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