Faculty Engagement as a Function of Instructional Mode and Employment Status

B. Jean Mandernach | Justin Barclay | Shanna Huslig | Christina M. Jackson

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Employees reporting higher work engagement tend to be more satisfied, productive and show increased job longevity. As such, institutions benefit¬¬—both financially and educationally—by having faculty who are engaged with the academic community. The current study examined differences in faculty engagement as a function of instructional mode (face-to-face, online or blended) and employment status (full- or part-time). A survey of 777 faculty revealed that faculty members teaching in the face-to-face classroom reported higher levels of work engagement than their online counterparts (regardless of whether employment status was full- or part-time). The discussion highlights factors that may impact faculty engagement and offers strategies for fostering engagement for those working in an online setting.

FACULTY ENGAGEMENT AS A FUNCTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MODE AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS

The majority of instructional faculty (approximately 70 percent) are off the tenure track; whether as part-timers or full-timers, the proportion of non-tenure track faculty has crept higher over the past decade (June, 2012). This growing population represents a body of educators for whom limited research exists regarding their engagement with the institution and academic community alike. To this end, the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (2012) reported, "The large and growing majority employed in contingent positions is rendered largely invisible, both as individuals on the campuses where they work and collectively in the ongoing policy discussions of higher education" (p. 1). The purpose of this study is to examine what effect, if any, instructional mode and employment status have on faculty engagement with the campus and larger academic community.

THE GROWING RELIANCE ON ADJUNCT FACULTY

Higher education's reliance on part-time faculty members continues to escalate. This increase in the reliance on adjunct faculty is seen throughout the academy, regardless of institution type. According to Langen (2011):

A noteworthy and important change is taking place in higher education classrooms. Instead of a traditional full-time tenured professor fulfilling the role of educator, it is quite likely that students will see a part-time faculty member in the classroom, lecture hall or laboratory. (p. 1)

According to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), when surveying trends in instructional staff employment status across all US institutions, the percentage of those educators explicitly listed as part-time faculty rose from 24% in 1975 to 41.1% of total instructional staff in 2009 (AAUP, 2013). This survey equally showed a decrease in full-time tenured faculty from 29% to 16.8% during the same period.

There is considerably more focus on the business side of an increasing reliance of adjunct faculty at the university level; cost containment, competition for clients, demand and consumer satisfaction are no longer just concepts taught; the schools are now vigorously practicing them as well (Louziotis, 2000). For the academy to persist, the literature posits two distinct realities. First, adjunct faculty members are no longer the minority of instructional staff. Second, as institutions of higher education

continually replace tenured faculty with adjunct positions, it is done with a continuing emphasis on organizational performance. These realities engender a seismic shift in the paradigm guiding the higher education instructional landscape. As Kuhn's (1962) groundbreaking work on paradigmatic thought tells us, "Normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none" (p. 52). We must, therefore, peer beyond the confines of what we know regarding academic community, and garner a better understanding of the impact this growing reliance on adjunct faculty has on faculty engagement and integration, even as elsewhere the emphasis remains on organizational performance. The goal of this research is to examine faculty engagement with the campus and larger academic community, to thus engender a call toward identifying potential strategies for establishing integration among adjunct faculty in order to enhance both employment longevity and instructional effectiveness.

THE CRITICALITY OF FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

In an effort to both develop a richer definition of faculty engagement and validate the Faculty Engagement Survey (FES), Livingston (2011) states, "[Vital engagement] is described as an intense and positive long-term relationship in which the person is absorbed in the experience and in aspects that the individual considers important and meaningful" (p. 32). The criticality of measuring faculty engagement is not established solely on the basis of an intense relationship, however, as it equally begets meaningful outcomes for the faculty member and organization alike as well. These outcomes include transferring energy into performance, exhibiting a reduced likelihood to withhold effort or withdraw from the organization, and have shown a positive effect on both absenteeism and turnover (Livingston, 2011).

The future of the academic profession is connected to the working conditions of contingent faculty; so is the academy's future (Rhoades, 2008). The conditions under which adjunct faculty are employed have received attention from researchers such as Rhoades, from coalitions such as the Coalition on the Academic Workforce and the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor, and from associations such as the American Association of University Professors. The work to keep adjunct faculty engaged and to assess the impact of their engagement pervades the literature; integration with the institution and academic community thus become the focus here.

ENGAGING ADJUNCT FACULTY

As the intent is to review research regarding adjunct faculty engagement, expose the impacts of engagement, and assess the potential to improve current levels of integration with institution and academic community alike, it becomes fruitful to equally review pertinent research efforts from a range of faculty environments. One of the hallmarks of American postsecondary education is the wide variety of its approximately 3,900 institutions, which have different expectations for their faculties and equally different working conditions, professional responsibilities, and salaries for faculty members (Gaff, 2007). Employee engagement is a strong predictor of positive organizational performance (Markos, 2010). Boyer himself who is thought to have contributed much of the seminal work leading to today's definition of the scholarship of engagement (Barker, 2004), concluded that the challenge is to strike a balance among teaching, research, and service. This position is supported by two-thirds of today's faculty who believe that institutions need to find other ways, besides publication, to evaluate faculty scholarship (Glassick, 2000).

The next step is to then determine what has been done to further assess adjunct engagement as it may regard community, thereafter reviewing how adjunct faculty development has been and is currently managed. The peer-reviewed scholarship is largely quantitative; principally it focuses on the utility of the adjunct workforce, comparisons between part-time and full-time faculty, and personal, institutional, or systemic stressors related to institutional reliance on a part-time workforce (Madden, 2010). This gives rise to the potential for further research and application of Boyer's model with, as described by Colbeck & Michael (2006) includes "four separate, yet overlapping functions" differentiating the scholarships of discovery, integration, application, and teaching (p. 7).

One such application was at the University of Louisville, where although the Boyer Model was ultimately not adopted by the university, its impacts were seen in a resulting reprised schema. Changes described included new ways of recognizing means

to demonstrate scholarship; these changes include rewarding all functions of faculty, and now accepting papers on pedagogic issues, review articles, case studies, textbooks, book chapters, and the creation of new teaching methods and treatment protocols all as demonstrations of scholarship (Schweitzer, 2000). Instances where the Boyer Model was successfully, fully adopted can be seen in a national study of Chief Academic Officers of 4-year institutions that included findings suggesting the Boyer Model and formal policy reform to support it have been helpful for baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral/research universities in addressing some of their major reward system challenges, although there is much work to be done (O'Meara, 2005).

The Boyer Model has served as a successful paradigm, guiding the actions of numerous institutions down a fortuitous path. Tantamount has been research regarding engagement in a broader context and the continued surge of a reliance on adjunct faculty. From these, and building upon the success of applications of Boyer's work, new approaches and potential intersections have emerged. A comprehensive approach emerges as engagement is viewed as a core value of the university of the twenty-first century, focused on producing and transmitting new knowledge, and this approach begins with understanding the role of the university within a larger system of knowledge production, where academic knowledge interacts with and is shaped by community-based knowledge (Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & O'Meara, 2008). What results, therefore, is a collection of engagement, development, and integration strategies, aimed at shaping a faculty driven by a central role of systemic interaction alongside knowledge production within an academic community context.

ADJUNCT FACULTY DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION

Intentional variations occur when people or organizations actively attempt to generate alternatives and seek solutions to problems; intentional variations result from conscious responses to difficult situations, planning sessions, advice from outside consultants, and so forth (Aldrich & Ruef, 2009). The definition of intentional organizational variation will serve well to set the context of what engagement, development, and integration strategies exist thus far in the pursuit of a revised approach to adjunct faculty engagement and integra-

tion with institution and community. Among these are:

1. organizational solutions - such as the Commission on Community Engaged Scholarship (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005);
2. administrative solutions - such as an interpretive accreditation strategy to bring about organizational change or renewal, which in turn enables continuous learning and transformation as an alternative to the mechanical fulfillment of accreditation requirements (Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009); and
3. technological solutions - such as computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) using computers to work collaboratively and designed to provide faculty with ready access to information and a means to engage in focused dialogue with each other (Miller, Koyanagi, & Morgan, 2005), or a virtual community of practice model developed using an online social networking service (Lewis, Koston, Quartley, & Adsit, 2011).

At the programmatic level we see examples such as a set of semester-long faculty learning communities that incorporate a curriculum designed to deepen faculty members' knowledge of service-learning as an educational philosophy, academic program, and instructional pedagogy (Furco & Moely, 2012). Finally, Bates (2012) in a recent dissertation to address adjunct faculty burnout, introduced a number of possible solutions including instituting a promotion system for adjunct faculty that rewards both experience and professional development, a required mentoring program for all new adjunct faculty, strategies related to scheduling which may help to prevent burnout, scheduling courses in relative geographic proximity to faculty, and proactive efforts to avoid bumping adjuncts from low-enrollment courses.

WITH A RELIANCE ON ADJUNCTS, AN EXPANDED COMMUNITY

Palmer & Zajonc (2010) remark, "The conventional view that privileges a single reductive perspective is so pervasive that undoing its effects will be difficult, but if we were to succeed, then the fragmentation of our education and our lives would be healed" (p. 78). While this commentary was provided primarily regarding interconnection, its

lessons live in engagement as well. The business of higher education regards adjunct faculty as members of the academy who, based upon training and experience, are fit to teach a certain course(s) within a given discipline. This gives rise to faculty pools filled with qualified personnel who teach what they are assigned yet are not required to know of their colleagues' work whether in the same or a neighboring program, department, or school. Employees may be very engaged but not working in a way that benefits the organization, or worse, may be moving in competing directions at the same time (Karsan & Kruse, 2011). What follows, then, is not solely research regarding how best to engage the adjunct faculty member, how best to utilize his/her talents, or how to connect him/her with the institution and with the academic community; it is the interconnection of all three. The goal then of this research is to provide an examination of adjunct faculty involvement with the campus and larger academic community, establishing integration striving to enhance both longevity and effectiveness.

Work engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior. A frequently used instrument to measure engagement is the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale [UWES] (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003) which includes the qualities of vigor, dedication, and absorption; the UWES has been validated in several countries, including China, Finland, Greece, Japan, South Africa, Spain, and the Netherlands (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). Based upon this expanded definition of engagement and selected instrument, the purpose of the current study is to examine differences in faculty engagement as a function of instructional mode and employment status.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

Initial survey respondents include 777 faculty (37.1% male; 61.1% female; 1.8% not reporting) currently teaching at the post-secondary level with a mean age of 47.9 years. Table 1 shows the distribution of faculty by instructional mode (online, campus, blended) and employment status (adjunct or full-time).

Table 1
Distribution of Faculty by Instructional Mode and Employment Status

		INSTRUCTIONAL MODE			
		Online	Campus	Online & Campus	TOTAL
Employment Status	Adjunct	597	10	64	671
	Full-time	78	4	24	106
	Total	675	14	88	777

The majority of participants (61.0%) have a master's degree with 34.2% holding a doctoral degree. On average, participants have taught 8.39 years at the college level with 5.42 years of online teaching experience.

PROCEDURES

An email request to participate in an online survey was sent to all faculty teaching at two mid-sized institutions with significant online faculty populations. In addition, we asked all email recipients to forward the request for participation to faculty colleagues at other institutions. Per the nature of the snowball participant solicitation process, the response rate is unknown as there is no data on the number of faculty that ultimately received a request to participate. The anonymous online survey (powered by SurveyMonkey®) was available for responses for six weeks. In order to access the online survey, potential respondents were required to access the survey via the link sent in the email invitation.

MATERIALS

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale [UWES] was utilized to gauge faculty attitudes of work engagement. As operationalized by this scale, work engagement is "a positive work-related state of ful-

fillment that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006, p. 701). The UWES requires participants to rate their agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale (0=never; 6=always) to the following nine statements:

DIMENSION	SURVEY STATEMENTS
Vigor	· At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
	· At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
	· When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
Dedication	· I am enthusiastic about my job.
	· My job inspires me.
	· I am proud of the work that I do.
Absorption	· I feel happy when I am working intensely.
	· I am immersed in my work.
	· I get carried away when I'm working.

Work engagement scores are calculated as an overall mean of all item scores; in addition, subscales scores (vigor, dedication, and absorption) are calculated according to the mean score of the relevant items. As such, scores range from 0 to 6 with higher scores indicating increased work engagement.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the frequency with which they visit the physical campus (response options include: never, 1-5 times, 1-6 times annually, 7+ times annually, regularly but not daily, and daily) as well as the distance they live from the campus (estimated in miles).

RESULTS

Due to the large discrepancy in sample sizes between groups, comparative analysis was not conducted. As such, mean engagement scores are examined in relation to existing norms and scoring standards as specified by the UWES. As indicated by the UWES guidelines, norm scores for the UWES-9 are as follows:

	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	Total Score
Very Low	≤ 2.00	≤ 1.33	≤ 1.17	≤ 1.77
Low	2.01 – 3.25	1.34 – 2.90	118 – 2.33	1.78 – 2.88
Average	3.26 – 4.80	2.91 – 4.70	2,34 – 4.20	2.89 – 4.66
High	4.81 – 5.65	4.71 – 5.69	4.21 – 5.33	4.67 – 5.50
Very High	≥ 5.66	≥ 5.70	≥ 5.34	≥ 5.51

Mean overall UWES scores as well as sub-scale scores were calculated for all faculty as a function of employment status and instructional mode. Table 2 provides overall mean work engagement;

Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide mean subscale scores on vigor, dedication and absorption.

Work engagement. Faculty members who worked on campus reported the highest means of both adjunct (M=5.722) and full-time (M=5.778) of all modalities. The next highest means were reported by faculty working in a blended environment with adjunct faculty (M=5.494) reporting higher means than their full-time counterparts (M=5.343). The lowest means were reported by faculty working online with adjunct faculty (M=5.344) reporting slightly higher means than their full-time counterparts (M=5.140). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Work Engagement as a Function of Employment Status and Instructional Mode

Instructional Mode		INSTRUCTIONAL MODE			
		Online	Campus	Online & Campus (Blended)	TOTAL
Employment Status	Adjunct	5.344	5.722	5.494	5.365
	Full-time	5.140	5.778	5.343	5.210
	Total	5.321	5.739	5.455	5.344

Vigor. Faculty members who worked on campus reported the highest means of both adjunct (M= 5.633) and full-time (M= 5.583) status groups with regards to vigor with the total mean of (M= 5.619). The mean of 5.619 translated into a high score on the UWES-9. Adjunct faculty working in a blended environment (M= 5.376) reported higher scores than their full-time counterparts working in a blended environment (M= 4.985). Adjunct faculty working online (M= 5.106) were higher than their full-time colleagues (M= 4.820), the lowest out of all instructional modes. With a total mean of 5.106, all groups achieved a high score on the UWES-9. This data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Vigor as a Function of Employment Status and Instructional Mode

		INSTRUCTIONAL MODE			
		Online	Campus	Online & Campus (Blended)	TOTAL
Employment Status	Adjunct	5.106	5.633	5.376	5.140
	Full-time	4.820	5.583	4.985	4.887
	Total	5.073	5.619	5.275	5.106

Dedication. Faculty who worked on campus reported the highest means of both adjunct (M= 5.633) and full-time (M= 5.583) status groups. Faculty who worked in a blended environment (M=

5.376) reported the next highest set of means. Faculty teaching full-time online (M= 4.820) reported the lowest means of all instructional modes with adjunct faculty (M= 5.106) reporting that they were more engaged than their full-time colleagues. With regard to total means, adjunct faculty (M= 5.140) reported a higher level of work engagement than their on-campus faculty (M=4.877). The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Dedication as a Function of Employment Status and Instructional Mode

		INSTRUCTIONAL MODE			
		Online	Campus	Online & Campus (Blended)	TOTAL
Employment Status	Adjunct	5.536	5.733	5.667	5.552
	Full-time	5.261	5.750	5.530	5.340
	Total	5.505	5.738	5.631	5.523

Absorption. Faculty members working on campus reported the highest means in both adjunct (M=5.800) and full-time (6.000). This mean of 5.738 translated into the very high category on the UWES-9. Adjunct faculty working online and on campus (M=5.667) and full-time faculty working online and on campus (M=5.530) reported the next highest means. Again the lowest means occurred with online only faculty with adjunct faculty (M=5.536) and full-time online faculty (M=5.261). Online and campus faculty reported total means of 5.631 and online adjunct and full-time faculty reported means of 5.505 placing both instructional modes in the high category on the UWES-9. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Absorption as a Function of Employment Status and Instructional Mode

		INSTRUCTIONAL MODE			
		Online	Campus	Online & Campus (Blended)	TOTAL
Employment Status	Adjunct	5.391	5.800	5.439	5.402
	Full-time	5.338	6.000	5.515	5.403
	Total	5.385	5.857	5.459	5.403

Recognizing the potential impact of a physical connection to the campus on one's engagement, an ANOVA was conducted to examine overall work engagement as a function of how frequently faculty visit the physical campus. No significant differences in work engagement were found as a function of frequency of campus interaction, $F_{(5, 735)} = .539$,

p = .747. Likewise, there was no significant correlation between the miles a faculty member lives from the campus and their overall work engagement, $r_{(745)} = .052$, p = .161.

While it was found that online full-time faculty are highly engaged, they are engaged less than the online adjunct faculty; more research needs to be conducted to understand factors underlying this difference.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that faculty categorized as campus and blended were more satisfied overall in work engagement than those categorized as online faculty, regardless of part-time or full-time employment status. With the increased focus on fiscal accountability in higher education, universities are looking for less expensive ways to serve their student population. Institutions of higher education rely on adjunct and non-tenured faculty to deliver a growing number of courses with many of these classes being delivered online. As the number of those teaching online continues to increase, the need for engaged, satisfied faculty in this area is critical.

As the academic climate shifts and challenges the traditional tenure track model, the methods of evaluating faculty impact must change as well. Faculty engagement is a predictor of long-term faculty performance. Positive engagement is helpful in preventing absenteeism and attrition (Livingston, 2011). Boyer's model of engagement has provided institutions with the framework by which to evaluate faculty performance. Faculty engagement is one such method of evaluating faculty performance. In addition to predicting individual performance, engagement is also a predictor of organizational performance (Marcos, 2010). When the institution is performing successfully, the faculty – and, by extension, their students – are more satisfied.

Overall, all instructional modes scored in the high category for vigor, dedication and absorption. Faculty members working on-campus only reported higher scores overall in all categories. Faculty teaching online only reported the lowest levels of engagement. Though the levels were still "high" according to established baseline data provided by the UWES scale, the results were still lower than the on-campus and blended modes of instruction. Findings reveal that in terms of work engagement,

those faculty members working on-campus full-time (M= 5.778) and adjunct (M= 5.722) reported the highest means. Online faculty had the lowest means with adjunct faculty (M=5.344) reporting slightly higher means than their full-time online counterparts (M=5.140). Likewise, in terms of vigor, faculty members who worked on-campus reported the highest means (adjunct, M= 5.633 and full-time, M= 5.583) with adjunct faculty working online (M= 5.106) reporting higher vigor ratings than their full-time colleagues (M= 4.820). Similarly, in terms of dedication as it relates to work engagement, faculty who worked on-campus reported the highest means among both adjunct (M= 5.633) and full-time (M= 5.583) status groups with faculty teaching full-time online (M= 4.820) reporting the lowest means of all instructional modes with adjunct faculty scoring (M= 5.106). Examining absorption as a component of engagement, the same pattern repeats with faculty working on-campus reported the highest means in both adjunct (M=5.800) and full-time (6.000) statuses; the lowest means once again occurred among online-only faculty with adjunct faculty scoring (M=5.536) and full-time online faculty (M=5.261).

Online faculty who teach off the tenure track as adjuncts or full-time are an ever-increasing group with specific needs. Online faculty who participated in this study indicated having lower levels of engagement than their on-campus and blended counterparts. With the growing reliance on this online group, it is essential to determine additional strategies for filling the needs of this group to increase levels of faculty engagement with both the institution and academic community. Further exploration is needed to determine both the potential differences in engagement with regard to the various instructional modes and differences in motivations.

Some factors that may affect work engagement include age of respondents, classroom environment, and level of comfort with technology. The average respondent's age is 47 and it is possible that because these individuals are not digital natives, they might not feel as comfortable adapting their teaching style for online delivery, even if they are considered experts in their given fields. Fish and Gill (2009) found that instructors with no online teaching experience are less comfortable with the online modality of teaching; however, with ad-

equate support and training, their perceptions tended to become more positive and they were more willing to consider online teaching as an effective mode of knowledge transfer (Fish & Gill, 2009).

Interaction with students may additionally impact levels of engagement. Classroom interaction differs from the face-to-face classroom to the online classroom. In a face-to-face synchronous classroom or synchronous online classroom, faculty can immediately interact with their students. In asynchronous classes, the interaction is often delayed and there may be less personal one-on-one interaction. In the online environment faculty and student personalities may not shine through and ongoing real-time interactions may be less organic.

While looking at the engagement of faculty, it is important to consider the current methods of support. Support mechanisms may include organizational solutions (Calleson, Jordan, & Seifer, 2005), administration support enabling continuous learning (Sandmann, Williams, & Abrams, 2009), technological solutions (Miller, Koyanagi, & Morgan, 2005), virtual communities of practice (Lewis, Koston, Quarterly, & Adsit, 2011), as well as faculty learning communities (Furco & Moely, 2012). Each is important in helping faculty grow and improve their teaching skills over time. As information on faculty support was not collected in the current study, it is possible that differences in support (and not in instructional mode) could account for variations in faculty engagement. Future research is needed to establish the value of various support mechanisms for fostering faculty engagement, juxtaposed to a greater understanding of their motivations whether by classification or as a whole.

The results of this study indicate that faculty teaching online as adjuncts or full-time had a lower level of work engagement than colleagues teaching on-campus or in blended environments. While this study did not explore reasons for these differences, it highlights the need for continued research and attention to support mechanisms that can be used to more effectively engage all faculty regardless of instructional mode. Ongoing research should examine the impact of virtual communities, faculty training, integrated social media and social opportunities on levels of faculty engagement as only a select few. Likewise it may be that "passion fatigue" is a contributor to reduced engagement. As online

full-time faculty teach year round, they may experience a higher level of burnout over colleagues who teach on a more traditional nine-month campus calendar. Burnout, or "passion fatigue," is a state of emotional depletion experienced by workers and is seen most often in those who have chronic stress and work with people on a regular basis (McCain & Holt, 2009). Recognizing the differential schedules of campus-based and online faculty, it is important to examine the naturally occurring workplace differences between these two groups that may account for variations in engagement.

The prevalence of online education mandates that institutions explore strategies to engage all faculty more fully. While an individual's role as an adjunct or fulltime member of the academe may dictate the focus of their energy, it is essential that institutions provide holistic support and dedicated attention toward integration with the campus community. Whether it be adjustments to support, technology training, or social initiatives, keeping this group—and by extension the students they serve—engaged is crucial to the institution's overall success.

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Author Biographies

B. Jean Mandernach, Ph.D. is Research Professor and Executive Director of the Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching at Grand Canyon University. Her research focuses on enhancing student learning through assessment and innovative online instructional strategies. In addition, she has interests in examining the perception of online degrees, the quality of online course offerings and the development of effective faculty evaluation models. Jean received her B.S. in comprehensive psychology from the University of Nebraska at Kearney, an M.S. in experimental psychology from Western Illinois University and Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Justin P. Barclay is a faculty member for the Colangelo College of Business at Grand Canyon University. There he teaches graduate courses in organizational development and change, quantitative methods, and leading as general manager. He also brings relevant experience in teaching students to shape and support strategy through his work as a senior analyst on the research and data modeling team of a publicly traded well-being company. He holds a doctoral degree in management from Argosy University, completed his post-doc in program evaluation from Walden University, and completed an executive education program in driving strategic impact from Columbia University. He reviews research for the Academy of Management and the Journal of Instructional Research, and has served as an assessor for the Department of Defense Third Party Education Assessment program.

Shanna Huslig is a former faculty member at Grand Canyon University and is currently working full-time to finish up her PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from GCU. Her dissertation focus revolves around Positive Psychology and plans to be finished within the next year.

Christina M. Jackson has taught public relations/strategic communication and design at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University of South Dakota. Her research areas include crisis communication, social media, and pedagogy. Jackson received her B.S. in mass communication from South Dakota State University. She received a M.A. in mass communication, an Ed.S. in technology for education and training, and Ed.D. in educational administration from the University of South Dakota. She holds the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) designation.