

FACULTY PERCEPTIONS REGARDING DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION: A  
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership  
Sam Houston State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

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by

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December, 2018

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## **DEDICATION**

My dissertation is dedicated to several people. First of all, it is dedicated to my mom, Pam Heckler, and my late father, Glenn Heckler who told me after I received my Master's degree that he was only attending "one more graduation." Unfortunately, he will not see this one, but he is forever in my heart. I also dedicate this work to my late friend and colleague, Dr. Shannon Lawson whose example and prodding gave me the courage to pursue a doctorate while working full-time and raising a family. Finally, and most of all, this dissertation is dedicated to my three daughters, Madeleine, Katy, and Trinity, who made many sacrifices and went without my undivided attention while I spent evenings and weekends doing coursework. I hope my hard work and perseverance are an example to them. And to my soulmate, Matthew Todt, who put up with living in chaos and an exhausted wife for four years. Without your support, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for being my Paul Child.

## ABSTRACT

Heckler-Todt, Glenna S., *Faculty Perceptions Regarding Developmental Education: A Phenomenological Study*. Doctor of Education (Developmental Education Administration), December, 2018, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas.

In this study, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used to explore faculty members' experiences with and perceptions of developmental education. This study was conducted at a small, open-access university in the Midwest and included the experiences and perspectives of faculty who teach developmental education courses, as well as those who teach non-developmental education courses at this university. Five non-developmental education faculty and four developmental education faculty were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and a phenomenological reduction approach was used to analyze the data. Results from the analysis process were used to write a textural description of the non-developmental education and developmental education faculty's experiences with developmental education. Faculty perceptions and experiences were compared to see if both faculty groups had a shared experience with developmental education.

KEY WORDS: : Developmental education, Transcendental phenomenology, Faculty perceptions, Developmental mathematics, Basic writing, Reading.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank my dissertation committee. First, thank you to Dr. Nara Martirosyan for her patience, help, and encouragement along this journey. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Susan Skidmore for being a cheerleader when needed and for helping me understand that everyone can do well in math, no matter their struggles, and Dr. Rebecca Bustamante for introducing me to the joys of qualitative research. As someone with a background in literary analysis, learning about qualitative analysis felt like coming home. Thank you to Dr. Patrick Saxon for recruiting me for this program from the Kellogg Institute. Finally, I could not have made it through this journey without the help of the strong, supportive women in Cohort 3.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Phenomenological research begins with a subject that is very personal to the researcher and is something the researcher has an “intimate connection to” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). According to Moustakas (1994), “The puzzlement is autobiographical, making memory and history essential dimensions of discovery. . .” (p. 59). Therefore, as is required of phenomenology, this study was inspired by my own experiences as a developmental writing instructor at a small, open-access university in the Midwest. As a result of these experiences, I was drawn to study if the perceptions that I observed regarding developmental education at this university were derived from a shared experience with the developmental education program or if my experience was unique. In addition, I wanted to explore the experiences of other developmental educators to see how their experiences compared to the non-developmental education faculty to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon.

### **Background of the Study**

In late September of 2011, I was in the first month of my new position as a full-time instructor (FTI) of developmental writing at Rural State University (a pseudonym), a small, open-access university in the Midwest, and it was clear to me that I had been misled. Throughout the interview process for this position, I was continually told that if I was hired I would be helping to redesign the developmental education program. However, once I started teaching, I had been told in both subtle and overt ways by my colleagues in the English department that my input was not needed, nor was it desired, because I did not have a doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition. Additionally, when I

met one-on-one with the Developmental English Coordinator, I discovered that the coordinator did not have any experience in developmental education and did not teach developmental courses. After this meeting, it became obvious to me that the English department was not interested in changing the developmental English program and the department did not value it. When reviewing the literature for this study (e.g., Horner, 2011; Jones, 2016), it does not seem that I am alone in these experiences. For example, I learned that despite basic writing being considered a specialization in Rhetoric and Composition, according to Horner (2011) and Jones (2016), basic writing and its instructors are viewed as not being part of academia. As a result, even though these experiences felt extremely personal at the time, I have come to realize that they are, unfortunately, rather common.

For the eight years prior, I had been an adjunct instructor and professional tutor at a large, Achieving the Dream award-winning community college in a suburb north of Philadelphia. I taught mostly developmental English courses as well as freshman composition. During my time there, I was one of the most respected adjunct instructors and was often asked to give input on developmental education curriculum changes and textbooks. As a professional tutor, I facilitated self-paced courses in the Developmental Studies Lab and worked one-on-one with students who dropped in for help in developmental English and reading courses. In 2010, the community college administration decided that the Developmental Studies Lab self-paced courses were not successful, and the decision was made to convert the lab to a Supplemental Instruction center. Because I was both a developmental writing instructor and a professional tutor in the lab, I was asked to be a member of the transition committee that determined the set up

and how the center would meet students' needs in the future. As a result of the respect I received at the community college as a developmental education professional, I was surprised to find that my experience meant nothing at my new place of employment although I had been led to believe during the interview process that it did.

According to the available literature (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Salyers 2009) these experiences are not isolated to this institution. Unfortunately, developmental education faculty across the country are treated less favorably than faculty who teach college-level courses (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010). Boylan (2002) acknowledged that developmental educators often feel marginalized within their institutions. Similarly, Schwartz and Jenkins (2007) observed that when departments do not value developmental education, they do not prioritize its needs within the department. For example, faculty who are passionate about teaching developmental education are often not recruited to teach developmental courses; instead, departments either hire adjuncts with little experience or interest in developmental education or assign the developmental education courses to new faculty who have the least amount of seniority within the department. Additionally, the departments frequently fail to provide adequate professional development opportunities for those who teach developmental education courses. In cases such as these, programs often are not successful due to a lack of support (Schwartz & Jenkins, 2007). However, advancements in the field have led to developmental education being seen as its own discipline, and the discipline now has three doctoral programs specializing in the field (Saxon, Martirosyan, Wentworth, & Boylan, 2015). Unfortunately, not all institutions recognize the expertise developmental educators bring to campus (Boylan, 2002). Therefore, this experience compelled me to

determine if my experience is a shared experience among developmental education faculty at this university and if other non-developmental education faculty feel the same ill-will toward developmental education as many of the English and Humanities faculty seemed to express.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current research and best practices (Boylan, Calderwood, & Bonham, 2017; Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Datta, 2010; Mazzerelli, 2010) document that for a developmental education program to be successful, it must have top down support from senior leadership to the faculty to the students. When administrators are supportive of developmental education, the faculty who teach developmental education courses feel supported and respected (Datta, 2010). In addition, faculty who do not teach developmental courses are more likely to support and respect their developmental education colleagues and view the developmental education program as necessary (Boylan & Saxon, 2012). However, more often than not, developmental education programs are viewed as a strain on an institution's resources (Complete College America [CCA], 2012). As a result, many legislators, administrators, and non-developmental education faculty have negative perceptions of developmental education (Boylan & Saxon, 2012; CCA, 2012). Due to these negative perceptions, developmental educators are often not given equal status within the institution as their non-developmental education colleagues (Datta, 2010). Additionally, the faculty who teach within the developmental education program and the students who take developmental education courses end up feeling marginalized (Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Datta, 2010).

Specifically, at Rural State University (RSU), which is the site of this phenomenological study, many non-developmental education faculty have expressed negative perceptions of the developmental education program in both one-on-one conversations, departmental meetings, as well as in university committee meetings. Although senior leadership is supportive of developmental education and understands its importance to the mission of an open-access institution, the leadership has not given the program a formal departmental structure. The program is housed within University College, but the college has no department and no chair. The dean of the college does both the work of a dean and of a department chair. The majority of the faculty who teach developmental courses are full-time instructors who are paid less than tenured and tenure-track faculty and who have no path to promotion. Due to the lack of a department chair and availability of tenure, the only faculty within the college who can initiate curriculum and curricular changes are the Director of Developmental English and the Director of Developmental Mathematics, both of whom are jointly appointed between University College and their academic departments. Additionally, these two positions are tenured through the academic departments. Therefore, according to conversations with the Dean of University College, both directors often feel pressured to shape curriculum the way that the academic departments want it shaped rather than what is best for the program, college, and students. As a result, the Dean of University College, not wanting to harm the Directors' chances of obtaining tenure, feels unable to fulfill the vision the Dean has for the program. The fact that the developmental education program has not been given a department within the college seems to send the unspoken message that developmental education faculty cannot be trusted to create curriculum and that their expertise is not

respected enough to fully invite them to enjoy the privileges of academia that tenured faculty have, such as job security.

Negative faculty perceptions have been found to have a detrimental effect on developmental education programs, faculty, and students (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Pitts & White, 1996; Stahl, 1981). When institutions place little value on developmental education, the developmental education faculty may not be properly hired and trained; furthermore, they may have no passion for developmental education or its students (Boylan, 2002; Schwartz & Jenkins, 2007). Moreover, studies (e.g., Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Quick, 2013) have demonstrated that, in general, neither developmental education faculty nor non-developmental education faculty receive much professional development regarding developmental education. Due to these identified shortcomings in developmental education program implementation, programs face a greater risk of being unsuccessful (Schwartz & Jenkins, 2007).

The solution to the problem of negative perceptions regarding developmental education seems simple: change people's perceptions. However, negative perceptions are very difficult to change due to confirmation bias, which is the tendency for people to process information in a way that validates their preconceived notions and avoids contradicting their biases or beliefs (Allahverdyan & Galstyan, 2014). As a result, these perceptions influence one's actions (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). In transcendental phenomenology, the perception is "the primary source of knowledge" and "cannot be doubted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). In each perceptual moment one has, something is unconsciously "retained and carried forward to the next moment" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 75). Because we are unaware of these actions, we retain these perceptions as part of our

individual experience. Therefore, if we wish to study perceptions and how they are formed, we must study shared experiences. In this particular context, faculty perceptions of developmental education provide rich potential for the exploration of confirmation bias in an educational setting.

### **Educational Significance**

This phenomenological study adds to the dearth of research that has been done in the area of faculty perceptions of developmental education programs. In researching the extant literature, I was unable to locate any studies to date that compare the experiences of non-developmental education faculty to those of developmental education faculty to determine if their experiences are shared. Some studies have examined non-developmental education faculty perceptions (e.g., Harris, 1998; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1996; Quick, 2013; Robinson, 2009; 2013; Stahl, 1981) and other studies have examined developmental education faculty's perceptions (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Mesa, 2012; Zientek, Schneider, & Onwuegbuzie, 2014). In addition, there are even more studies that examined students' perceptions of developmental education (e.g., Koch, Slate, & Moore, 2012; Lesley, 2004; Mesa, 2012; VanOra, 2012; Zeas, 2013). However, none of the studies that I was able to locate examined both non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty's perceptions within the same study.

Another aim of this study was to raise the awareness of both faculty groups regarding their experiences with developmental education. As a result, it is hoped that each group will have a better understanding of the other's experiences and work toward common ground solutions that will help underprepared students succeed. According to



Boylan, Calderwood, and Bonham (2017), underprepared student completion is not just incumbent upon developmental educators, but it is also the duty of everyone from the custodian to the president. Therefore, non-developmental education faculty have a key role in the success of underprepared students. It is the developmental education faculty's responsibility to prepare underprepared students for gateway courses, but after the students complete their gateway courses, they still must navigate the remainder of the college curriculum (Boylan et al., 2017). Consequently, non-developmental education faculty must view developmental education students as the institution's future graduates (Boylan & Saxon, 2012). To accomplish this task, Boylan and Saxon (2012) urge institutions to treat their developmental education faculty as experts in their field and as colleagues on equal footing as faculty who teach college-level coursework. This shift in thinking starts with a better understanding of each group's experiences.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of the non-developmental education faculty and the experiences of the developmental education faculty regarding the developmental education program at a small, open access university. The experiences of these two faculty groups were examined to determine if each group has shared experiences or if each group experienced developmental education differently. This study helps raise awareness of the importance of perceptions and how they impact developmental education programs, developmental education faculty, and students.

## Research Questions

1. What are non-developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at one open-access university?
2. What are developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at one open-access university?
3. How do the perceptions of non-developmental education faculty compare to those of developmental education faculty?

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used for this phenomenological study is self-determination theory (SDT), which is a social psychology theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Social psychology focuses on how the environment affects people's attitudes, values, motivations, and behaviors. Deci and Ryan (2012) have conducted over 30 years of study regarding motivation that initially started with examining extrinsic rewards and intrinsic motivation and has since developed into "an empirically derived theory of human motivation and personality in social contexts that differentiates motivation in terms of being autonomous and controlled" (p. 416). Six mini-theories have sprouted from self-determination theory: Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), Causality Orientations Theory (COT), Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), Goal Contents Theory (GCT), and Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT) (Self-Determination Theory, 2016). Self-Determination Theory assumes that the "human organism is evolved to be inherently active, intrinsically motivated, and oriented toward developing naturally through integrative process . . . [that] are inherent in human nature" (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 417). For healthy development and psychological

well-being, three basic psychological needs must be fulfilled. These basic psychological needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

**Basic psychological needs and definitions.** Deci and Ryan (2000) consider the three psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness,) to be the absolute foundation for psychological and physical well-being and are at the very heart of the human psyche. These three psychological needs are essential for a person to feel effective in their endeavors, connected to others, and that their life has coherence and purpose. Therefore, all three needs must be fulfilled; “one or two are not enough” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). Autonomy refers to one’s volition or desire to own one’s experiences and behaviors and organize these experiences and behaviors so that they align with one’s values and beliefs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In addition, someone who acts autonomously self-endorses his or her own behaviors; these behaviors are not controlled by some external factor (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Relatedness refers to the need to be connected to others and to have supportive experiences, to be loved and cared for as well as to love others and care for them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Competence or effectance is the ability to have an effect on one’s environment and to obtain “valued outcomes within it” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p.231). One feels competence when he or she engages in “optimal challenges and experience[s] mastery” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 252) and experiences desired outcomes as a result. The social environment is critical in providing support (or lack thereof) for these needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these needs are not met or they are thwarted, whether purposely or not, the person suffers psychologically and even physically through psychosomatic ailments (Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2013). As a result of need thwarting, the person may feel alienation (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

**Need thwarting.** When any one or all of the three basic psychological needs are thwarted, people begin to look for other ways to satisfy these needs, which in turn may lead to further need thwarting. For example, a study on workplace bullying found that the victim may feel a lack of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which may lead to the victim experiencing poor psychological well-being and psychosomatic complaints, such as burnout (Trépanier et al., 2013). Burnout is described as emotional exhaustion and cynicism or mental withdrawal (Trépanier et al., 2013). The psychological state that burnout produces may spill over into other areas of the victim's life, resulting in a lack of overall psychological well-being and satisfaction with life in general. Conversely, Williams et al. (2014) noted that employees who perceived their managers as satisfying their psychological needs experienced no instances of psychosomatic symptoms or other symptoms that could not be attributed to an illness that had a physical cause. Additionally, the employees may actually be protected against emotional exhaustion and may be less likely to leave their job (Williams et al., 2014). Thus, need fulfillment is the key to well-being.

**Basic psychological needs and motivation.** The degree to which the three basic psychological needs are fulfilled directly affects motivation. "[T]he satisfaction of all three fundamental needs is the necessary motivational fuel through which individuals can thrive and fully invest themselves in their tasks" (Trépanier et al., 2013, p. 127). Although there are three types of motivation, intrinsic, extrinsic, and amotivation, Ryan and Deci (2000) have identified a continuum of motivation that is determined by the level in which a person's psychological needs are met by the social context and whether the behavior has been internalized by the person.

The continuum of motivation moves from right to left with intrinsic motivation being the best type of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is based on one's need to feel competent and self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is considered the most valuable form of motivation because the locus of causality is completely self-determined and the motivation is intrinsically regulated. A person who is intrinsically motivated is completely motivated by his or her own volition (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation is the next type of motivation on the continuum and has the most variations of regulation within it: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. As one moves along the continuum within extrinsic motivation, the more external the regulation becomes the less self-determined one's behavior becomes. However, not all extrinsic motivation is nonself-determined. The first type of regulations within extrinsic motivation is integration regulation in which people have completely internalized what was initially external regulation and integrated it into their self, making their motivation self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, an employee may complete work tasks because he or she has the ability to help those in need and does not feel compelled to complete the tasks due to a reward or threat (Williams et al., 2014). Similarly, identification regulation is also a self-determined type of motivation. People with extrinsic motivation with identification regulation have more fully internalized a behavior because they have recognized its value (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These behaviors have been self-endorsed and are associated with a higher level of commitment and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For instance, people who recognize the benefits of regular exercise have internalized the value of exercise;

therefore, they have a desire to exercise due to the personal benefits they receive and not because of an external force pressuring them to do so (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Conversely, the last two types of regulation within extrinsic motivation are not self-determined. When a person has introjected regulation, the person has internalized the regulation, but it has not become part of the person's integrated self (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The person administers punishments and consequences to himself or herself due to pride, guilt, and shame, or perceived public standards or mores. Due to this lack of assimilation of these regulations into the self, the resulting behaviors are not self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, in the workplace, an employee might complete tasks to feel pride or avoid feeling guilt (Williams et al., 2014). Finally, external regulation is described as the "classic case of extrinsic motivation" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 236) because it is the least autonomous type of regulation due to its dependence on some type of external reward, punishment, or consequence. For example, an employee may be driven to work hard to earn a raise or to avoid reprimand; however, the employee's motivation for doing so is completely external to the employee and feels out of his or her control (Williams et al., 2014).

The final type of motivation on the continuum is amotivation or a lack of motivation. Amotivation results from people not valuing an activity or feeling as if they are not valued. The locus of causality for amotivation is impersonal. Amotivated people feel incompetent, or they feel that they have no control over a situation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, amotivation is a complete lack of extrinsic or intrinsic motivation as well as a complete lack of self-determination. People who experience amotivation usually also experience depression and self-derogation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For

example, someone who experiences workplace bullying more than likely would feel amotivation. The person may feel that he or she has no control over the situation (lack of autonomy), would more than likely feel unliked and not part of the workplace community (lack of relatedness), and may begin to believe over time that he or she is ineffective or lacks competence. Additionally, if the person felt he or she lacked the ability to change the situation through the chain of command or by quitting, the person would feel a high level of amotivation (Trépanier et al., 2013).

**Motivation and perceptions.** When applied to faculty perceptions, the perceptions of both developmental and non-developmental education faculty are important in the way that they inform the fulfillment of psychological needs, specifically autonomy. According to Knee and Zuckerman (1996), “events which support autonomy are more likely to promote intrinsic motivation, interest, flexible and creative thinking, deeper learning, and positive emotion than events which are primarily controlling” (p. 76). If administration wants support for developmental education from both groups of faculty, then administrators must find a way for all faculty to internalize the goals of the developmental education program and retain autonomy. Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) observed that when someone holds a favorable attitude (perception) toward an entity (person, object, concept, etc.) that he or she is likely to act favorably towards it; however, if someone has an unfavorable attitude (perception) toward an entity, then he or she is likely to act unfavorably towards it. Therefore, non-developmental education faculty who have negative perceptions towards the developmental education program may act unfavorably toward the program. Those unfavorable actions could result in the non-developmental education faculty being unsupportive of developmental education in a

variety of ways from voting against programs and educational policy within the university that favors developmental education to actively stigmatizing the developmental education faculty and their students.

According to Altstadt (2012), the best way to obtain faculty support, whether it is the developmental education faculty or the non-developmental education faculty, is by making faculty feel they are included in decision-making and implementation of reforms. This inclusion gives faculty autonomy, rather than mandating changes that may make them feel unsure of their competence, unsure of their place within the university (relatedness), and takes away their academic freedoms (autonomy). Mandated changes may also lead faculty to feel amotivation because they would have no control over the mandate (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Knee and Zuckerman (1996) noted that the level of reaction to an event depends on the individual based “[o]n the assumption that people differ in the extent to which they perceive the environment as fostering autonomy or imposing control” (p. 77). Academic freedoms are important to all faculty; however, when non-developmental education faculty have negative perceptions of the effectiveness of the developmental education program, they may seek more control over the developmental education curriculum or policies that govern the program. Thus, taking away the autonomy of the developmental education faculty, making them feel extrinsic motivation at best and amotivation at worst.

Finally, when developmental education faculty internalize the negative perceptions of other faculty, both developmental and non-developmental education faculty as well as those of the students, these perceptions do not allow them to satisfy some or all of the basic psychological needs. Therefore, their well-being suffers.



Bustillos (2007) noted amotivation in the developmental mathematics faculty in her ethnographic study regarding developmental mathematics faculty's beliefs about developmental education and students. Some of the faculty in the study, when faced with roadblocks, threw up their hands and said, "[T]hat's just how things are done here" (Bustillos, 2007, p. 295). Likewise, based on her observations as a participant-observer in the study, Bustillos felt that the entire institution seemed to be "mired in defeat" (p. 295). Therefore, perceptions of both developmental and non-developmental education faculty are tied to their self-determination and the fulfillment of their basic psychological needs. These perceptions can determine how faculty act in regards to the developmental programs, other faculty, and students. Additionally, perceptions can determine motivation in regards to the amount of support someone gives a person, idea, event, policy, or program.

In conclusion, the fulfillment of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence and the effect that they have on motivation would more than likely influence one's perceptions. In addition, the extent to which one's actions are self-determined also seem to influence perceptions. Therefore, self-determination theory seems a logical conceptual framework through which to view the experiences of developmental education faculty and non-developmental education faculty.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Perceptions.** Perceptions will be generally defined as "the way the mind interprets the information it receives" (North, 1993, p. 2) based in part on a person's cultural heritage, daily problems and interactions, and the way someone interprets his or her environment. In transcendental phenomenological research, all meaning comes from

one's perceptions (Moustakas, 1994). These perceptions begin with what one feels an experience, issue, or object means. The meaning that is placed on these experiences by perceptions becomes the "primary evidence of scientific investigation" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59).

**Developmental education versus remedial education.** Often, developmental education and remedial education are used as interchangeable terms by researchers, legislators, and all groups of faculty. However, these terms are not synonymous. According to Boylan, Calderwood, and Bonham (2017), developmental education is the combination of courses with learning support both of which are guided by learning and development theory. Developmental education holistically addresses students' needs (Datta, 2010). Remedial education is stand-alone courses that focus on below college-level skills. In remedial courses, students are given the opportunity to relearn basic skills needed for college-level coursework (Datta, 2010). The term developmental education will be used in this study.

**Centralized versus decentralized programs.** There are two types of developmental education programs: centralized and decentralized. Centralized programs are all encompassing programs where all the developmental education courses and services are housed within one department (Boylan, 2002). Often, faculty in the centralized model exclusively teach developmental courses. In the decentralized model, developmental education courses are housed within the department of that discipline (Boylan, 2002). Faculty often teach both college-level and developmental courses.

### **Developmental education faculty versus non-developmental education**

**faculty.** Developmental education faculty are faculty who teach developmental education courses as their primary job function. These faculty may teach college-level courses; however, developmental education courses make up the majority of their teaching load. Developmental education faculty may teach in a centralized or decentralized program. Non-developmental education faculty are faculty who solely teach college-level courses and have never taught developmental education courses. These faculty may teach within a department that offers developmental education coursework, such as mathematics or English, but they do not teach developmental education courses. Despite not teaching developmental education courses, these faculty may have underprepared students in their college-level courses who are currently taking developmental education coursework or students who have previously taken developmental education coursework but have matriculated on to college-level courses.

### **Delimitations**

This study will be restricted to describing the shared experiences of non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty regarding their experiences with developmental education at a particular open-access university in the Midwest. The non-developmental education faculty will be faculty who are either tenured or on the tenure-track, who have never taught developmental education, and who have taught at RSU for at least two academic years. The developmental education faculty will be either tenured, tenure-track, or senior instructors who have taught developmental coursework at the university for at least two academic years. Data will be collected through interviews with individual faculty. In addition, this study is bound by

being a transcendental phenomenological study. Because faculty's shared experiences will be studied, both negative and positive perceptions will be described.

### **Limitations**

An obvious limitation of any study that involves a topic such as perceptions is accurately describing something as elusive as perceptions. Perceptions are based on complex psychological needs, values, and beliefs. Using a tool such as interviews in an attempt to describe perceptions is also limited by the study participants' level of self-awareness and willingness to give honest responses regarding their own behaviors. In addition, a possible limitation to the study is the researcher's ability to analyze the interview transcripts and complete an unbiased phenomenological reduction of the participants' experiences. Another limitation is that the experiences described within the study are the experiences of a limited number of non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty at an open access university in the Midwest. As a result, these experiences might not be generalized to other open-access universities.

### **Assumptions**

It is assumed that the participants all have experiences with the phenomena being studied and that they will be open and honest about their experiences with developmental education. In addition, the participants are assumed to have a sincere interest in participating in the study. The phenomenological reduction of the transcripts from the multiple interviews conducted for this study will hopefully provide common themes from which a textural description of the shared experiences may be created. These experiences will be examined through the noema and noesis. Noema ascribes meaning to experiences while "noesis refers to the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, remembering, or judging;

all of which are embedded in meanings that are concealed and hidden from consciousness” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 69). Finally, it is assumed that the meaning ascribed to these experiences, which is drawn out by the researcher, will be unbiased. Therefore, the researcher’s experiences with the phenomenon will be bracketed in the writing of an *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter I of this dissertation contains the introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, educational significance, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, definition of terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. In Chapter II, an examination of the related research is covered and summarized. Chapter III presents the method, research questions, research design, setting and population, participant selection, data collection, role of the researcher, validation, and data analysis sections. In Chapter IV, the findings for each research question are presented along with participant profiles and demographic information. Finally, in Chapter V, a summary and discussion of each research questions is given in addition to implications for practice, and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter was to review existing research regarding perceptions of developmental education. During the review of literature, several core themes emerged. What follows in this chapter is a thematic review which brings forth common perceptions of developmental education, faculty, and students. The review begins with an examination of literature that influenced legislation regarding developmental education. This legislation in turn has had an impact on how non-developmental education faculty regard developmental education. In addition to legislation, there are also several other factors that affect non-developmental education faculty's perceptions of developmental education. One factor is how veteran faculty view developmental programs and students. Other factors included how students are labeled, student skill levels, developmental students' academic behaviors, disposition, and study habits, and the life issues many developmental students experience. It was also indicated in the existing research (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2012; Quick, 2013) that non-developmental education faculty's perceptions were influenced by the feeling that they must lower their academic standards so that underprepared students could be successful. Another theme that emerged from the studies on developmental education (e.g., Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Robinson, 2009) was the importance of non-developmental education faculty's view of developmental education because some developmental education faculty felt stigmatized by their non-developmental education colleagues. In addition to the impact that non-developmental education faculty's perceptions have on developmental education, administrator support of developmental

education is also vitally important. Finally, faculty perceptions are a recurring theme in academia that is useful to examine when considering the role faculty have in the educational environment.

### **Legislative Perceptions of Developmental Education**

Legislators' negative perceptions of developmental education ignited with Complete College America's (CCA) 2012 *Bridge to Nowhere* report. This report is highly stylized with several infographics, recommendations, and data from the states. The infographics represent underprepared students as students sitting at a desk with a question mark above their heads and prepared students as having light bulbs above their heads. Similarly, under the statement "If you're African American, Hispanic, or a low-income student, you're more likely to be headed toward the remediation dead end" (CCA, 2012, p. 6) is an infographic breaking down the demographic of underprepared students in 2-year and 4-year institutions. The data appear within arrows that point toward the middle of the page to a dead end sign. Although there is a methodology section and a list of *Reformers Who Lead It* section to the report, there is no list of references or citations to indicate where the recommendations were obtained. The methodology section does not, in fact, list a methodology for quantitative or qualitative research, but instead, lists where the data were obtained: "The data presented in this report were provided by the 31 participating states themselves, using the Complete College America/National Governors Association Common Completion Metrics" (CCA, 2012, p. 4). In addition, the report promotes that states "adopt and implement the new Common Core State Standards in reading, writing, and math" (CCA, 2012, p. 7). It also firmly places the blame for underprepared students not succeeding in college on the

institutions themselves. “. . . [C]olleges and universities have a responsibility to fix the broken remedial system that stops so many from succeeding” (CCA, 2012, p. 7).

Included within this report is a list of “Governors Who Get It” (CCA, p. 4). Among these governors is John Kasich of Ohio. In 2012, Ohio’s 129 General Assembly passed a bill requiring all presidents of state institutions of higher education to “jointly establish uniform statewide standards in mathematics, science, reading, and writing for a student to be considered as having a ‘remediation free’ status” (College Remediation, p. 586) by December 31, 2012. The bill also required each institution to report to the Governor, General Assembly, Chancellor, and Superintendent of Public Instruction aggregate costs of providing developmental courses. In addition, the institutions must provide disaggregated costs by city, local, or exempted village school districts from which the students taking developmental coursework graduated from high school and any other information the Chancellor of Higher Education deemed necessary (HB 153).

Another governor who “gets it” (CCA, 2012, p. 4), according to the Complete College America 2012 report, is Florida governor Rick Scott. In 2013, the Florida legislature in Senate Bill 1720 made developmental coursework optional (Hu et al., 2016). Therefore, any student who places into developmental coursework is advised to take the developmental classes, but the student can choose to take college-level courses despite not having the skills to successfully complete those courses. According to Hu et al. (2016), who conducted research funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the results of this legislative change are mixed. The researchers compared enrollment and pass rates for developmental education courses and gateway courses for first-time freshmen for the 2009-2010 to 2013-2014 academic years before the legislation to one



year after the legislation (2014-2015 academic year). The key findings of the study revealed that enrollment in developmental education courses dropped 11-21% although enrollment in compressed developmental education courses (51-72 %) and gateway courses (12.7-16.2 %) increased (Hu et al., 2016). Hu et al. (2016) stated in the key findings that “with the influx of enrollment into gateway courses, however, the likelihood of passing declined for English (3.4 percentage points) and math (8.7 percentage points)” (p. 3). The report noted promising results for the whole cohort (both underprepared and prepared students) of first-time freshmen in community colleges. The number of first-time freshmen who successfully passed the gateway course increased 9.4 percentage points for English and 6.1 points for mathematics (Hu et al., 2016). The students who had previously taken a developmental education course or were taking a co-requisite course were more likely to pass the gateway course. However, one little publicized result of students failing coursework in Florida according to House Bill 1545 passed in 1997 is that students who fail a course three times must pay a “repeat surcharge” (Policies & Procedures, 2012, *Repeat Surcharge*). While this surcharge may be incentive for some students to pass the course before they are charged the surcharge, students who opt out of developmental coursework may be unable to pass the gateway courses without learning the foundational material provided in developmental education. As a result, some students may end up paying more to pass a course that they perhaps could have passed the first time if they had taken a developmental education class beforehand.

Due to the need for more American’s to obtain a post-secondary education, the Complete College America report, and initiatives driven by educational special interest groups such as the Lumina Foundation and Achieving the Dream, a remediation reform

movement was sparked (Boylan, Calderwood, & Bonham, 2017). This reform encouraged institutions to accelerate students through developmental education. As a result, many institutions have eliminated their traditional, stand-alone remedial courses that often had two or more levels students were required to complete before achieving college-level coursework. These courses have been replaced with innovative ideas such as co-requisite courses that pair college-level coursework with a developmental education support course and mathematics pathways that recognizes not everyone needs algebra to be prepared in mathematics. Despite the sometimes misguided efforts of the special interest groups and legislators, the demand that more students pass developmental education coursework has resulted in innovative solutions to the traditional developmental curriculum (Boylan et al., 2017).

### **Perceptions of Developmental Education Programs on US Campuses**

**The developmental education stigma.** From the negative information being disseminated by “policy analysis organizations” (Goudas & Boylan, 2012, p. 2), such as Complete College America which is driving legislation in numerous states, it seems that the words “developmental education” have a negative connotation to them.

Unfortunately, the rancor surrounding developmental education has trickled down to the faculty within higher education. Some refer to developmental courses as “bonehead English,” “math for dummies,” “remedial reading,” or “precollege courses” (Boylan & Saxon, 2012, p. 20). When the campus community is allowed to use stigmatizing language such as this, Boylan and Saxon (2012) point out that students will feel stigmatized by their developmental status. However, it is not just the language used to

describe developmental education that perpetuates negative perceptions but also policies put in place to deal with the presence of underprepared students in higher education.

In the 1970's and 1980's, it was common practice for institutions to "cool out" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 249) underprepared students by either influencing them to drop courses due to low performance or influencing them to lower their expectations for academic success (Datta, 2010; Pitts & White, 1996). In Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum's (2002) study titled, *The Unintended Consequences of Stigma-free Remediation*, the authors explored the practices of cooling out versus stigma-free remediation and explained how institutions moved from one approach to another. "Cooling out" was accomplished through "a combination of pre-entrance testing, counseling, orientation classes, notices of unsatisfactory work, further referrals for counseling, and probation" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 250). This practice was seen as stigmatizing to the students. Therefore, a more student-centered approach was developed in which colleges did the opposite of cooling out (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). Using the stigma-free approach, students' placement in developmental courses was not discussed with them and these students often were unaware that their skills were below college-level. The result of this stigma-free approach was that students had a false impression of their placement and the amount of time it would take them to obtain a degree. Therefore, these students did not know or understand that they would be taking up to four semesters worth of courses that did not count as credits toward a degree or toward transfer to a four-year university. In addition, the students whose placement was not discussed with them had similar dropout numbers to the cooling out students because they often run out of money and time before they can complete a degree (Deil-Amen &

Rosenbaum, 2002). The authors of the study equated this approach to a con game. They believed that the students were being conned into thinking their abilities were better than they truly were, and the students were not given realistic timelines upon which they could finish a degree.

This switch to stigma-free approach came with a philosophical change in institutions' approach to remediation. Previously, the approach to remedial education was more of a behaviorist approach (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002) which viewed students' gaps in basic skill knowledge as deficits that needed to be corrected (Harris, 1983; Stahl, 1981). More recent approaches, however, use developmental theories of learning, which focus on developing the whole student. As a result, remedial education was renamed developmental education and a more holistic approach to addressing students' needs became the norm. The term developmental was used to imply "a temporary stage from which individuals will emerge with assistance" (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 256). Yet, as Martha Maxwell, a pioneer in developmental education and learning assistance, pointed out in 1998, the term developmental was problematic as well because in the K-12 school system developmental refers to a student's cognitive abilities (Arendale, 2010). Students who are developmentally delayed or who have developmental issues are typically intellectually challenged. Thus, unintentionally perpetuating the belief that students served by developmental education are somehow cognitively deficient.

**Faculty perceptions of developmental education.** Faculty have varied opinions of developmental education. Many faculty, especially those teaching in community colleges, believe that higher education should be open to all; therefore, accepting

underprepared students is consistent to the missions of these institutions (Boylan, 2002; Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002). In addition, many developmental educators see their role as helping students achieve their educational goals “by guiding them through a series of short-term improvements” (Deil-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002, p. 254). In fact, some even attempt to stay away from judging students’ abilities or to pigeon-hole students based on their academic histories. However, Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) take a dim view of these positive perceptions. They believe that when faculty and administrators at these institutions have positive perceptions of developmental education they are perpetrating fraud on underprepared students by not providing the students with a realistic understanding of their academic standing. However, some studies indicate that underprepared students are more successful in their developmental coursework when faculty’s attitudes are positive (Harris, 1983).

On the other hand, many non-developmental education faculty have negative perceptions of developmental education. Some of these negative perceptions seem to originate from feelings that underprepared students have been “thrust upon” (Stahl, 1981, p. 11) the non-developmental education faculty. Others feel that even though students have progressed through the developmental education program, they remain less prepared for college-level coursework (Goudas & Boylan, 2012; Overby, 2004). Studies (e.g., Overby, 2004; Stahl, 1981, Pitts & White, 1996) over the years have reported that some faculty doubt that developmental education is effective. In a 1996 study, Pitts and White explored non-developmental education faculty’s experiences with underprepared students in their classrooms. The researchers interviewed 14 non-developmental education faculty at an open-access university. Many of the faculty interviewed in this study expressed

skepticism regarding the results of developmental education programs and seemed ignorant of the broader purposes and goals of the programs. One faculty member interviewed in the study said, “They may have done enough to get through an exam that allowed them to exit the developmental program. But . . . they are not what I would consider proficient, acceptable” (Pitts & White, 1994, p. 22). Yet another in Pitts and White’s (1996) study said, “I haven’t talked to any faculty or staff over there [in the developmental area]. I really don’t know too much about what they’re doing. . . I’m very ignorant about what goes on in that area” (p. 22).

In a study conducted by Overby (2004), she compared course completion rates, graduation rates, and GPA’s of students at her institution who took developmental education courses versus those who did not. Within the same study, she also surveyed the non-developmental education faculty at that same institution. The result of the faculty survey showed that many non-developmental education faculty thought that the poor performing students in their courses were current or former underprepared students. However, Overby (2004) found when comparing the quantitative data that students who had taken developmental education coursework did as well or even outperformed students who had not taken developmental education coursework.

### **Factors Affecting Faculty Perceptions of Underprepared Students**

This section explores factors that affect both non-developmental education and developmental education faculties’ perceptions of developmental students. Although the origins of a specific faculty member’s perceptions regarding developmental education cannot be speculated upon, evidence regarding common perceptions can be obtained from the existing literature. For example, according to Quick (2013), negative

perceptions of developmental education may be perpetuated by a lack of professional development and veteran faculty passing on these negative perceptions to younger, less experienced faculty. Among both the non-developmental education and developmental education faculty, many inexperienced faculty seek the counsel of colleagues and mentors to learn how to deal with underprepared students (Quick, 2013). In an action research project on using Living Education Theory in basic writing, Salyers (2012) recounted how she sought the help of a veteran faculty member during her first week of teaching in an attempt to deal with hostile and disengaged students in her classes. Salyers recalled that several colleagues told her that the students' behaviors were characteristic of underprepared students who tended to be, by their account, "childish, undisciplined, lazy and disengaged," stating that these behaviors were "a 'carry-over' from high school" (p. 71).

Sometimes the more seasoned faculty often perpetuate and shore up beliefs that underprepared students are difficult, unmotivated, subpar students because they have been there as well (Bustillos, 2007). Bustillos (2007) conducted an ethnographic study of developmental mathematics faculty participating in The Math Project, a cooperative project between community college faculty and the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California. Bustillos (2007) found that many of the mathematics faculty in her study had been educated within a 4-year, traditional higher education environment, yet the students they taught within community colleges were not within this traditional model. Therefore, faculty in this study had difficulty relating to their students' struggles. In addition, the faculty did not recognize that their view of what it means to be

a student came from their own traditional education and differed from the experiences of their students.

**Labeling students and their skills.** The population of students being served by developmental education have had different labels ascribed to them over the years, such as remedial students, developmental students, or compensatory student (Arendale, 2010). Not only have these labels served to stigmatize the students, but they have had a profound impact on the level of support administrators are willing to give programs that serve this population, such as developmental education and learning assistance. The effect of this labeling is especially seen in 4-year institutions where administrators are reluctant to enroll large numbers of students who are not college-ready (Arendale, 2010). Many terms used to describe this student population imply that these students lack the competency to be college students (Arendale, 2010). “At risk” is another popular label that indicates students “precarious position in higher education community” (Mulvey, 2005). Although labeling is an unproductive practice, there seems to be no way of describing this population of students that does not imply stigma. Therefore, “underprepared” seems to be the least stigmatizing label and the most commonly used one to refer to students who arrive at college underprepared for college-level coursework.

Often, the label underprepared is ascribed to a student who does not have the basic skills and knowledge that typical college students have or that the curriculum requires (Stahl, 1981). Many non-developmental education faculty feel it is their duty as educators to help underprepared students although they do not want any part of remedial education (Stahl, 1981). However, some non-developmental education faculty’s reaction to having underprepared students in their classrooms ranged from referring the students



to the learning assistance center, writing workshops, and even Adult Basic Literacy Education classes to taking a sink-or swim attitude and allowing the students to either do the coursework as expected or fail (Stahl, 1981). Quick (2013) conducted a survey to determine how faculty felt about working with at risk or what Quick termed “academically vulnerable” (para 1) students. Of the faculty surveyed, 82% felt learning centers should be responsible for helping underprepared students and 58% said students with deficiencies in reading and writing should attend a community college. Some admitted to just ignoring basic skills deficiencies as long as the students mastered the subject material (Quick, 2013). Overall, faculty have strong opinions about the presence of underprepared students in higher education and who is to blame for their underpreparedness.

The majority of faculty blame students’ underpreparedness on their high schools (Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010; Stahl, 1981). For example, Corbishley and Truxaw (2010) surveyed faculty who taught college mathematics regarding their expectations of the mathematical knowledge that incoming freshmen should have and what the faculty’s perceptions of students’ readiness for college mathematics were. A questionnaire was sent to eight college and university mathematics faculty in the Northeast of the United States. There were 22 participants in the study. Overall, the mathematics faculty perceived that many incoming freshmen have inadequate algebra skills. As a result, many incoming freshmen need developmental courses that cover first year high school algebra, and the ones who do not need remediation typically have just adequate algebraic skills. In addition, the mathematics faculty in the study felt that even students who have taken higher level mathematics courses in high school often do not have a grasp of those

skills because they were rushed through high school mathematics to get to calculus. Finally, faculty observed that students only wanted to memorize formulas and equations but did not seem to be able to logically apply mathematical procedures to determine when to use these procedures or if an answer made sense (Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010).

In a study by Zientek, Schneider, and Onwuegbuzie (2014) of 89 developmental mathematics faculty at six community colleges and one state college, the faculty were asked two questions: “(a) Please describe factors that you believe impact students’ need to be placed in developmental courses, and (b) What factors do you believe hinder the success of some students in developmental mathematics courses?” (p. 71). Some developmental education faculty blamed the inability to apply mathematical principles to standardized testing and “teaching to the test” (p. 73). One study participant responded that the result of teaching to the test is that “[t]he school district looks good, but the students never actually retain the information . . . [T]hey continue to struggle because there is no application of what they are learning” (Zientek et al., 2014, p. 73). Some faculty in this study noted that underpreparedness in mathematics often had a cumulative effect going as far back as grade school. Students fall behind for whatever reason in grade school or junior high and are unable to catch up. As a result, they are unable to understand higher level mathematics because they do not have a good foundation in “multiplication facts, placement value, fractions, etc.” (Zientek et al., 2014, p. 73). One reason some faculty in the Zientek et al. (2014) study felt students’ basic skills in mathematics were lacking was due to a time delay between the last time they took mathematics and their most recent experience with mathematics. This phenomenon was not isolated to non-traditional students. Even among traditionally aged college students

in developmental mathematics there was a time delay in math courses. “[E]ven though [the students] might have earned passing grades in high school math, [the students] did not take a math course during senior year and, therefore, lost some skills” (Zientek et al., 2014, p. 73).

These perceptions that students’ skill levels are lacking is not isolated to mathematics. English faculty also have definite opinions about students’ skills and their place in academia (Holschuch & Paulson, 2013; Horner, 2011; Salyers, 2009). Regarding reading instruction, many faculty question why reading instruction is needed in college, assuming that students who are underprepared in reading have no place in higher education (Holschuch & Paulson, 2013). These perceptions are often tied to beliefs about literacy and intelligence. Salyers (2009) discussed in her study the erroneous belief that students who cannot master Standard American English are intellectually deficient, yet she acknowledged that this belief is still used to label students based on their “deficiencies” (p. 76). When Salyers conducted an informal survey of the students in her class, many reported being told they should not have high expectations for a career, were not college materials, or did not have the intelligence for the demands of college, or even that they were “not too bright” (Salyers, 2009, p. 77). Horner (2011), Endowed Chair in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Louisville and recipient of the 2012 Conference on College Composition and Communication Outstanding Book Award, confirms this belief in his article “Relocating Basic Writing.” Horner states, “The dominant view . . . holds literacy to be singular, uniform, and stable, and a cognate for intellectual ability, social and civic maturity, merit, even morality” (Horner, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, students who struggle with English, writing, and reading are often

categorized as less intelligent. According to Horner and his colleague, Timbur, (2002), basic writers are thought to be non-native English speakers and those who are uneducated. As a results, their right to be part of higher education “is suspect and whose presence is often seen as a threat to the culture, economy, and physical environment of the academy” (p. 609).

English faculty, both developmental education and non-developmental education, typically lament students’ lack of basic English skills such as punctuation, grammar, and spelling. In Zeas’s (2013) research regarding the perceptions of adjunct faculty at a community college in Philadelphia, a faculty member stated, “[O]ne student misspelled 1 million things. I got tired of correcting him because there is nothing wrong with him other than laziness. So finally, I wrote at the top of his paper (spells out) PLEEZ LERN TWO SPEL” (p. 84). This type of degrading comment supports the attitude behind the comments Salyers (2009) mentioned from her students. This belief that students’ ability to use language is inherently tied to their intelligence may not be an isolated misconception among individual faculty but may be perpetuated within the specialization of Rhetoric and Composition.

Jones (2016) in his phenomenological study interviewed six community college faculty about their perceptions of the qualities of college-level writing. Jones points out that Compositionists, someone who specializes in Rhetoric and Composition, see themselves as upholding the conventions of English to students. Therefore, when students come to college with dialects other than Standard American English, they are labeled. Because compositionists see themselves as standard barriers for an ideal form of English, they “may attempt to correct different forms [of English]; this places some

students into the category of Basic or ESL writer, which may be another way of labeling someone as an outsider” (Jones, 2016, p. 36).

This view of students who require basic writing and reading instruction as “outsiders” to the academy is also seen at the institutional level. According to Horner (2011), institutions tend to place basic writing courses, students, and instructors ideologically outside the academy. In this way, literacy becomes another form of privilege. For students who are privileged enough to have literacy skills to enter college-level coursework right after high school, they are welcomed into the academy with open arms. If these students happen to have mathematics skills that require remediation, these students are usually sympathized with by college representatives with reassurance that they are not good in mathematics either. However, if a student enters college needing basic writing or reading instruction, their lack of literacy often holds them back from taking college-level coursework. Often, this type of literacy education is used “as a means of gatekeeping, social sorting, or brutal assimilation and indoctrination” (Horner, 2011, p. 9). Remediating students without the privilege of literacy skills is viewed as a way of “gifting them” (Horner, 2012, p. 10) with the keys to be successful, upright citizens.

After examining how students at York College were using the writing center, Robinson (2009) observed that students are often referred to the writing center by a faculty member who has ascribed a label to the student as being somehow less than capable in writing. Learning to write in academia requires students to learn a more formal version of English that they may be unfamiliar with. Robinson (2009) noted that even for native English speakers, this can become a struggle because it may require the

student to risk losing their home language, which is a large part of their identity.

Therefore, asking these students to make the switch to academic writing and Standard American English is almost like asking them to change their identity (Robinson, 2009).

Although many of the perceptions described above by both mathematics and English faculty may be accurate depictions of underprepared students' skill levels, such as students having weak algebra skills and being rushed through mathematics in high school, these perceptions color faculty's interactions with students. Some faculty acknowledge these characteristics and work in good faith to help their students overcome what is often a lifetime of underpreparedness (Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010). However, others use these characteristics to pigeon-hole students and to act as gatekeepers who must protect the standards of the academy from being corrupted by these students.

**Academic behaviors of underprepared students and the emotional strain on faculty.** Aside from the academic deficiencies that both non-developmental education and developmental education faculty perceive underprepared students as having, some characteristics ascribed to underprepared students are the result of faculty's perceptions of students' non-cognitive challenges. In an effort to create a taxonomy of underprepared students' characteristics, Capt and Oliver (2012) interviewed developmental education faculty at a community college regarding the challenges associated with teaching students in developmental education courses. Several of these faculty described underprepared students as not knowing how to study and not prioritizing study time. Others said that the developmental mathematics students lacked commitment to persist throughout the course. It was agreed that underprepared students required quite a bit of personal attention to keep them engaged with coursework. However, the faculty in Capt and Oliver's (2012)

study tried to address these challenges by integrating a number of pedagogical approaches into their teaching. For example, many incorporated learning strategies, such as note taking and time management, into their courses. Some incorporated study guides and scaffolding models and required mandatory lab time as course requirements while others attempted to create a learning community within their classrooms and provided more one-on-one attention (Capt & Oliver, 2012).

The faculty in Bustillos's (2007) ethnographic study of developmental mathematics instructors participating in The Math Project had a different response to the unique challenges of underprepared students. Bustillos found faculty members' beliefs influenced their teaching. When minority students failed in remedial mathematics, instead of questioning the teaching methods or the system, these developmental education faculty were more apt, due to their ingrained beliefs, to blame the students themselves, believing the students lacked motivation and/or innate ability.

There are several existing studies (e.g., Mulvey, 2005; Zientek et al., 2014) focused on developmental students' lack of self-regulatory behavior and their lack of self-efficacy. For example, according to Mulvey's (2005) study examining the existing literature regarding underprepared students, students in developmental courses were often characterized as not attending class regularly, not setting goals, and not monitoring their progress. It was noted that support for helping students gain more self-regulatory behavior seemed to be dependent on what discipline the instructor taught. In this study, only the study skills and mathematics instructors actively taught strategies so that students could learn to self-regulate their behavior. In another study, Zientek and colleagues (2014) found that developmental mathematics faculty perceived

underprepared students as not having study skills, time management skills, and did not use instructor feedback to improve their performance in the course. Therefore, researchers promote study skills courses as an important part of any developmental education program (Mulvey, 2005; Radford, Pearson, Ho, Chambers, & Ferlazzo, 2012; Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004; Zientek et al., 2014).

Some studies (e.g., Mulvey, 2005; Zientek et al., 2014) note developmental students lack time management skills, ability to prioritize tasks, note taking skills, and lack of regular class attendance. Zientek et al. (2014) suggested that when students are not enrolled in study skills courses at the same time that they are enrolled in developmental mathematics that the instructors need to “examine further their roles in improving these measures (p. 78). Similarly, Quick (2013) and Zientek et al. (2014) found that both developmental and non-developmental education faculty perceive students as not wanting to put in the effort to complete homework assignments, which hinders their success. In a study regarding the disconnect between students’ goal orientations and community college mathematics faculty’s perceptions, Mesa (2012) indicated that both developmental education and non-developmental education instructors do not think that students have the intrinsic motivation to learn. One faculty member stated, “[Remedial mathematics students] don’t care if they understand it as long as they get a good grade on the test . . . a good enough grade that they can keep their financial aid” (Mesa, 2012, p. 61).

In addition to lacking study skills, faculty have a plethora of other complaints about underprepared students’ affective behaviors. Zientek and colleagues (2014) noted that students in their developmental courses did not expect to spend time outside of class



studying. In addition, college mathematics faculty felt some underprepared students simply did not possess the maturity level for college responsibilities and perceived their students as not caring about the course, being hostile toward the instructor, and feeling that their placement in the course was some type of punishment. College mathematics faculty responding to a survey in a study conducted by Corbishley and Truxaw (2010) complained that students were not inquisitive about mathematics and lacked the study skills to work independently outside of class.

However, Mesa (2012) found that there was a mismatch between developmental mathematics instructors' perceptions of their students' achievement goal orientation and the students' perceptions of their own achievement goal orientation. The developmental mathematics instructors' rated their students' achievement goal orientation lower than the students themselves did. In a survey measuring students' achievement goal orientation, developmental mathematics students rated themselves as being highly motivated toward success and even more motivated than students in college-level courses. When Mesa interviewed mathematics instructors about their students' achievement goal orientation, some instructors felt that the students were not motivated, were not confident, did not want to learn alternative ways to do problems, were bitter, and had a poor self-concept. There was no discussion in the study about how instructors addressed these issues. However, Mesa (2012) recommended that some possible explanations for the discrepancies between the students' perceptions and the instructors may be that this survey was conducted at a community college and due to the students commuting to the college, students and instructors did not get a chance to know one another outside of classroom interactions. Another possible explanation was that due to the wide-range of

competencies that instructors see in the classroom the instructors may rate their students' abilities and self-efficacy lower than the students' themselves do.

Much of the existing literature (e.g., Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Lesley, 2004; Robinson, 2009; Zeas, 2013) discussed students' negative attitudes about being placed in remedial courses, which is often due to years of struggling academically and being made to feel unintelligent by the education system and educators. As a result, some underprepared students can seem hostile or resentful to their developmental education faculty. In describing her own experiences with basic writing students, Salyers (2009) shared that her mostly socio-economically disadvantaged, minority students viewed her, a middle-class white woman from Scotland, as "alien" (p. 71), and the students openly disrespected her by using their cellphones in class, coming in late, and refusing to answer questions. Before she changed her approach to teaching the students, Salyers said the first few weeks were "uncomfortable" and "overwhelming" (p. 71). In addition, Salyers (2009) experienced:

a sickening dissonance in [her] own classroom, the gap between the person and the educator [she] wished to be and wished to be perceived as, and the perception, the reflection in their eyes, that [her] students were giving back to [her]. (p. 71)

The experiences Salyers (2009) described are not isolated incidents among developmental education and non-developmental education faculty who work with underprepared students on a regular basis. In the Undergraduate Teaching Faculty: The 2013-2014 HERI Faculty Survey (Egan et al., 2014), 71% of faculty teaching in 4-year public universities reported that working with underprepared students were a source of stress for them. For the faculty that Quick (2013) surveyed, the source of this stress

originated from “[t]rying to balance . . . responsibilities of classroom instruction, preparation, advisement, and university committee work” (para 30) in addition to attempting to meet the needs of this student population. These issues may leave some faculty feeling as if underprepared students are an unwelcome burden in the learning environment.

**Life issues.** It is important to note that underprepared students face issues that typically prepared students often do not. Many studies (e.g., Adams, 2012; Boylan et al., 2017; Salyers, 2009; Zientek et al., 2014) acknowledge the plethora of life issues that many underprepared students deal with on a daily basis. As outlined in the above reviewed studies (Capt & Oliver, 2012; Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010; Mesa, 2012; Salyers, 2009), faculty often believe that students drop out of courses or do not succeed because they cannot do the work required in the developmental courses; however, some studies (e.g., Adams, 2012; Boylan et al., 2017) have shown contrary results.

In a series of YouTube videos created by Peter Adams (2012), former coordinator of the writing program at Baltimore County Community College (BCCC) and a pioneer of the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), he describes how the developmental education faculty at BCCC surveyed students in developmental courses at the beginning and end of each semester. The faculty asked the underprepared students what reasons might contribute to them deciding to drop out of the course. Overwhelmingly, the students did not respond with academic reasons, but with reasons that involved their life outside of the classroom. Students named financial problems as the number one reason they thought they might not be able to complete their college coursework (Adams, 2012). Other reasons students listed were legal issues, problems with their children, health

problems, car trouble, laid off from their job, and unstable home situations. Adams (2012) noted that some faculty believed that students' life issues were not their problem; however, others acknowledged the toll that these issues take on students' classroom performance.

In another study on instructors' perceptions of students' placement, Zientek and colleagues (2014) reported that developmental mathematics faculty acknowledged that issues with children and jobs took students' time outside of the classroom. According to this study, childcare issues were a major difficulty for many students that caused absences and for the students to fall behind in their coursework (Zientek, et al., 2014). Finally, Salyers (2009) in her study on transforming students' perspectives about writing described the life issues her students dealt with on a daily basis. One student could not sleep at night because of gunfire in the neighborhood, another was beaten by her boyfriend who did not want her to obtain a degree, and a third became homeless.

In their 2017 report *College Completion: Focus on the Finishline*, Boylan, Calderwood, and Bonham acknowledge that students in developmental education courses often have life problems that arise and interfere with their education. Boylan and colleagues (2017) noted that even when underprepared students were able to successfully complete their developmental education coursework, their life issues did not suddenly disappear, leaving them to continue to balance home and work responsibilities while trying to navigate the remainder of the college curriculum. According to Boylan et al. (2017), a gap in the reform movement is the lack of attention to this issue. However, some institutions are creating on and off-ramps for students who have to pause their

education because of life events that may derail them for a semester or more (Boylan et. al., 2017).

**Faculty concerns regarding academic standards.** Both non-developmental education and developmental education faculty express concerns about academic standards. As Hughes and Clayton (2011) pointed out in their working paper on assessing developmental education placement standards, faculty felt frustrated when students who were not academically prepared for college-level coursework were enrolled in their courses. These concerns are understandable given that in some studies (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2012) faculty have commented in interviews that they have felt pressured by administration to pass more students or that they felt blamed for their students not passing their courses. As a result, many faculty have felt it was necessary to change their teaching methods.

In Quick's (2013) survey of 174 college faculty, 48% of faculty who taught in disciplines other than Teacher Education felt adjusting their teaching and course materials decreased the effectiveness of their teaching. As a result, many faculty viewed these accommodations as watering down or dumbing down of course content so that underprepared students could understand it (Quick, 2013). As a response to one of the open-ended question in Quick's (2013) survey, one faculty member stated, "Dealing with these problems means that I am unable to teach the course material at the level and to a depth that is appropriate for college level knowledge" (para 27). Faculty in several studies (e.g, Bustillos, 2007; Pitts & White, 1996; Stahl, 1981) complained that a final consequence of underprepared students in their classrooms was feeling concerned that colleagues and administrators would accuse them of lowering standards. Others worried

that they were catering to students rather than challenging them with more traditional teaching methods (Bustillos, 2007). In Salyers' (2009) study in which she explains her initial experiences teaching basic writing, she equates the institutions' and ultimately the legislative demands for better results in a shorter amount of time with no additional resources as a "Houdini-like maneuver" (p. 69).

Overall, many faculty felt caught between upholding the academic standards of their discipline and institution, meeting the needs of the underprepared students, and bowing to the demands of administration. The experiences of these faculty are not unique. Some studies (Hughes & Clayton, 2011; Nora, 2009) noted that reliable and valid placement tests are needed to identify students' academic needs. These placement tests would provide an entry point for coursework and an academic plan for completion. However, far too often what happens instead is a softening of standards in an effort to reduce the number of students taking developmental coursework (Hughes & Clayton, 2011; Nora, 2009).

Although many faculty expressed the need to lower academic standards to accommodate underprepared students in their classrooms, student success and retention experts such as Vincent Tinto recommended the opposite. Tinto (2004) believed that faculty and institutions should hold high standards for underprepared students but provide academic supports to help students meet those standards. For example, Tinto recommended the use of linked courses, which link a developmental course with a college-level course, supplemental instruction, and learning communities. In addition, effective assessments of students' in class progress which is tied to an effective early alert system should also be in place (Tinto, 2004). Finally, the monitoring of students'

progress should not stop after they exit the developmental education program but continue until the students completes their degrees. As Boylan and colleagues point out in their 2017 report, after students have finished their developmental coursework, they still must navigate the remainder of their college courses. These students will be more successful if they are supported throughout their undergraduate education.

### **Importance of Faculty Perceptions**

When conducting a survey of faculty perceptions regarding developmental education, Overby (2004) noted a comment made by one faculty member: “I’m not sure why faculty perceptions are so important” (para. 36). However, as indicated in the literature reviewed above (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Mesa, 2012; Zientek et al., 2014; Robinson, 2009; Salyers, 2009; Zeas, 2013), faculty perceptions have a profound impact on developmental education. Datta (2010) pointed out one of the most important reasons faculty perceptions are so key is that “[n]ot only do [faculty] deliver the academic content, but they also set the tone for the program and the students” (p. 25). In addition, faculty perceptions of students’ abilities may affect students’ learning. Mulvey (2005) observed that when students felt that faculty cared about their development as a student, students were more likely to persist and succeed. Although some underprepared students do exhibit certain characteristics that can make them difficult to work with, faculty should not allow these characteristics to become stereotypes by which they judge an underprepared student. When faculty are influenced by stereotypes of underprepared students, then their perceptions toward this population of students may become negative and affect their teaching of and support for these students.

Unfortunately, all too often, negative perceptions set a tone of stigmatization for both the students and the developmental education faculty (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Pitts & White, 1996). This sense of stigmatization may depend on if the faculty teach within a centralized developmental education program or a decentralized program (Datta, 2010). A centralized developmental education program houses all of the developmental courses within an institution usually within its own academic department (Boylan, 2002). The faculty in a centralized program usually teach just developmental education courses. However, in a decentralized program, the developmental education courses are housed within the academic department of that particular discipline, and the faculty tend to teach both developmental and college-level courses (Boylan, 2002). Although Boylan (2002) promotes the centralization of developmental education, Schwartz and Jenkins (2007) note that the success of either model depends upon the characteristics and culture of the institution and the implementation of the developmental education programs.

**Possible stigmatization of developmental education faculty.** As noted by Horner (2011), Robinson (2009), and Datta (2010), developmental educators are often isolated from non-developmental education faculty, especially if they are within centralized programs that operate separately from other academic departments. In addition, the centralized developmental education faculty frequently only teach developmental education courses (Datta, 2010). Many researchers (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1996) have found that this isolation may lead to stigmatization if the non-developmental education faculty have negative perceptions of developmental education program and the students these programs serve. Datta (2010) in



a study regarding the perceptions of faculty and administrators toward remedial mathematics found that there was considerable stigma associated with teaching developmental education courses. The developmental education faculty were often seen as less than their non-developmental counterparts (Datta, 2010). Bustillos (2007) found in interviews with developmental education faculty who participated in The Math Project that not only did the developmental education faculty members feel stigmatized, but they also felt “under attack” (p. 73) regarding the low pass rates of their students.

Many developmental education faculty are stigmatized due to other faculty’s negative perceptions of the student population who are taught by the developmental education faculty. Some non-developmental education faculty may characterize underprepared students as “ignorant” or “boneheads” (Bustillos, 2007, p. 171) who are “childish, undisciplined, lazy and disengaged” (Salyers, 2009, p. 71) who take courses such as “bonehead English” or “math for dummies” (Boylan & Saxon, 2012, p. 20). Datta (2010) found in some of the institutions he studied regarding perceptions of remedial mathematics that the stigma of exclusively teaching these courses damaged an instructor’s standing within that academic department. Community college developmental educators in Datta’s study reported not only feeling stigmatized by their colleagues at their home institution but also by those who taught at the nearby 4-year university. This group of developmental education faculty reported being blamed for poor student outcomes. In fact, the program chair stated, “in all of his dealings with other departments he has had to defend his faculty, staff, and program vigorously” (Datta, 2010, p. 56). The developmental education faculty acknowledged to Datta (2010) that this stigmatization affected their morale. The more experienced instructors who have

taught developmental education for several years were the most likely faculty to express feeling demoralized by their colleagues' attitudes toward them.

Datta (2010) was not the only researcher to note the stigmatization that developmental educators sometimes experienced. Similarly, Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) in their study of stigma-free remedial education noted that teaching remedial courses was less prestigious and could be harmful to one's academic career. In addition, Bustillos (2007) noted that when a junior faculty member wanted to teach more advanced courses that other faculty members questioned the instructor's competence to teach the course. According to Bustillos (2007), "The issue was so contentious that senior faculty proposed the implementation of new policies that would require faculty members to teach a specific sequence of courses before being allowed to teach in any advanced courses" (p. 295). However, this stigmatization seems to apply to faculty who only teach developmental education coursework whether they teach in centralized or decentralized programs (Datta, 2010).

Conversely, Datta (2010) found that faculty who were part of decentralized programs felt little to no stigmatization. These faculty members taught both developmental education and non-developmental education courses and had a greater connection to other faculty within their individual disciplines. Even though the faculty who taught in decentralized programs did not report feeling stigmatized, decentralized programs are not necessarily better than centralized programs. According to Schwartz and Jenkins (2007) in their summary of key findings from developmental education literature, the model for administering developmental courses is not as important as the implementation of the program. When departments place little value on developmental

courses, do not properly hire and/or train faculty who are committed to helping underprepared students, and “limit instruction and supports to the content of their discipline rather than to broader success in college” (p. 5), the developmental education program will not serve the needs of its students.

According to Boylan and Saxon (2012), if developmental education courses are going to attain excellence, then developmental education faculty must be treated like professionals. They recommend that developmental education faculty have the same job status, rank, and salary as non-developmental education faculty. In addition, developmental education faculty must be given the autonomy to choose their own content materials, write their own syllabi, and be allowed to give input to administrators and collaborate on problems within the program. However, the ultimate key to a developmental education program being successful is the tone set by administration (Boylan & Saxon, 2012).

### **Importance of Administration in Gaining Faculty Support for Developmental Education**

Because support for developmental education programs often depends on an entire institution’s perceptions of the importance of that program, how administrators perceive and support developmental education is crucial. In a study of community college administrators’ perceptions of developmental education, Mazzarelli (2010) found that faculty may not be able to teach to their full potential if they are not supported by administration. Faculty and administration needed to be united on developmental education because the “overarching ideology” (Mazzarelli, 2010, p. 25) of a program is reflected in the attitudes of both administration and faculty.

In Boylan and Saxon's (2012) book, *Attaining Excellence in Developmental Education: Research-Based Recommendations for Administrators*, the researchers emphasized the importance of the administration of any institution that offers developmental education to be supportive of the program. In addition, Boylan and Saxon (2012) outlined specific ways in which administrators can show this support. First, they recommended that administration send a clear message that negative and stigmatizing language toward developmental education and its students will not be tolerated. Secondly, administrators need to consistently state the important place that developmental education holds within the institution. For example, excellent instruction of students within developmental education courses can help non-developmental education faculty hold students accountable for maintaining high academic standards later in their college careers (Boylan & Saxon, 2012). Finally, Boylan and Saxon (2012) recommended that administrators should urge all faculty to view underprepared students as the institutions' graduates of the future and publicize developmental students' success stories widely among the campus community. Doing so will set a tone that developmental education is important to the institution and should be valued by everyone on campus.

Both developmental education and non-developmental education faculty's perceptions are influenced by the level of involvement they have in decision-making and the amount of professional development they have received (Alstadt, 2012; Gardner, 2017). The tradition of shared governance in higher education may put faculty at odds with administration if faculty feel that their concerns are going unheard (Gardner, 2017). Gardner (2017) emphasized that administrators need to approach faculty as collaborators

in solving a problem and not try to manipulate them into accepting some type of mandate. Similarly, in a policy bulletin by Alstadt (2012) outlining how supporting faculty leadership will make developmental education more successful, he emphasized that faculty should be involved in decisions and in state-wide committees regarding developmental education. According to Alstadt (2012), when faculty were involved, states and institutions obtained more faculty support as well as greater understanding from faculty as to why reforms were taking place. As a result, the faculty felt less threatened because they had a hand in creating the reform rather than having the reform come as mandates from legislators, boards of regents, or administrators.

Several studies (e.g., Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Harris, 1983; Quick, 2013) indicated that professional development may also be another way to obtain faculty support and to help them gain more positive perceptions of underprepared students. Harris (1983) conducted a study of college faculty's attitudes toward developmental education and found that faculty who had training in teaching developmental coursework had a more positive attitude toward underprepared students than faculty without any training. Boylan and Saxon (2012) advocated that developmental education programs in general are more successful when the faculty have been trained in developmental education. In Quick's (2013) survey of college faculty, participants indicated that they had no formal training in developmental education and wanted to learn more about supporting underprepared students.

The existing literature (e.g., Alstadt, 2012; Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Gardner, 2017) examined within this review, seemed to indicate that when faculty as a whole support programs and reforms, then these initiatives have a greater chance of success.

Conversely, if programs and reforms are viewed suspiciously, skeptically, or negatively, then faculty are less likely to support them or see the value in them (e.g., Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Mulvey, 2005; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1996; Salyers, 2009; Stahl, 1981). The reasons for these perceptions and reactions are varied; however, they can be better understood when viewed as recurring themes within higher education itself.

### **Faculty Perceptions: A Recurring Theme in Academia**

Although thus far in this literature review the focus of faculty perceptions has been on developmental education, faculty perceptions are a recurring theme in academia. Whether these perceptions are about developmental education, students with disabilities, or English as a Second Language (ESL) students, faculty perceptions are important. Perceptions can affect how faculty vote within their departments, on educational policy committees, and in faculty senates regarding programs and curricula. Faculty perceptions can also affect funding, changes in policies, and development of curriculum. In addition, it is important to explore whether faculty perceptions regarding students' skills, academic behavior, disposition, and study habits, as well as their life situations are concentrated on underprepared students or if faculty have similar concerns about other student populations. Therefore, faculty perceptions regarding students with disabilities and students who speak English as a second language students were examined in this review.

**Faculty perceptions of students with disabilities.** In reviewing the existing literature (e.g., Lombardi & Murray, 2011; Sniatecki, Perry, & Snell, 2015) on faculty perceptions, it seems that faculty had similar beliefs and perceptions of students with disabilities as they do of students in developmental education. Lombardi and Murray (2011) developed and field tested the ExCEL (Expanding Cultural Awareness of

Exceptional Learners) on faculty's willingness to accommodate students with disabilities. The ExCEL survey was designed to report on demographic information, previous disability-focused training, and faculty attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities, accommodations, disability law, and inclusive instructional practices. The researchers surveyed full-time teaching faculty and adjunct instructors.

The survey results indicated that faculty have negative perceptions of students with disabilities and providing them accommodations in the academic setting. Lombardi and Murray (2011) found that when faculty felt a lack of competence in dealing with students with disabilities, they were less likely to provide any accommodations beyond those required by the institutions' requirements. Teacher Education faculty were the most likely to willingly provide accommodations and eliminate barriers for students with disabilities, especially through Universal Design concepts; however, these findings were not consistent across colleges (Lombardi & Murray, 2011). Faculty who received training in methods of accommodation and recent legal mandates were also more likely to provide accommodations but not necessarily adjust course assignments or provide accessible course materials (Lombardi & Murray, 2011).

Similarly, Sniatecki, Perry, and Snell (2015), surveyed 123 full and part-time faculty at a public liberal arts university in upstate New York regarding their attitudes and knowledge of students with disabilities. Much like faculty perceptions of underprepared students (cf. Bustillos, 2007; Pitts & White, 1996; Quick, 2013; Stahl, 1981) faculty who were surveyed by Sniatecki et al. (2015) felt that providing accommodations to students with disabilities compromised course rigor and academic standards. Just as faculty in Pitts and White's (1996) study felt the presence of underprepared students in the

classroom adversely affected the other students, the faculty in Sniatecki et al.'s (2015) study felt students with disabilities posed negative consequences for the other students. The faculty felt that accommodations for students with disabilities provided them with benefits that other students did not receive. The faculty in Sniatecki and colleagues' study also seemed to be unaware of policies and procedures surrounding students with disabilities. Additionally, some faculty were also suspicious of the Disabilities Office and failed to call upon those professionals for assistance (Sniatecki et al., 2015). These erroneous beliefs seemed to echo what Pitts and White (1996) observed about non-developmental education faculty who were unaware of the broader purposes and goals of developmental education

Both Lombardi and Murray (2011) as well as Sniatecki et al. (2015) observed that students with disabilities often state that their educational experiences are adversely affected by faculty with negative perceptions. This point is especially important because faculty in Sniatecki et al.'s study generally had positive attitudes toward students with physical disabilities; however, they generally had negative perceptions of students with mental health and learning disabilities. Sniatecki et al. (2015) found that 96 % of faculty "agreed or strongly agreed that students with physical disabilities could be successful at the college level" (p. 262). Only 90 % of faculty felt students with learning disabilities could be successful and 83 % felt students with mental health disabilities could be successful. Both Lombardi and Murray (2011) and Sniatecki et al. (2015) found that faculty seemed receptive to professional development about students with disabilities, which was similar to studies about developmental education (Datta, 2012; Mulvey, 2005).



**Faculty perceptions of ESL students.** In Goldschmidt and Seifried's (2008) study of the mismatched expectations of ESL students and the faculty who taught them at the Delaware County branch of Penn State, the researchers discovered that 64% of the faculty surveyed said they had adjusted their teaching to accommodate the ESL students. These findings are consistent with those regarding non-developmental education faculty teaching underprepared students (cf. Capt & Oliver, 2012; Bustillos, 2007; Pitts & White, 1996; Quick, 2013). In addition, Goldschmidt and Seifried (2008) suggested that the faculty needed to help ESL students succeed instead of acting as gatekeepers barring their entrance to higher education.

In a study conducted by Song (2006), 15 ESL instructors were interviewed regarding their perceptions of why students failed their ESL courses. These instructors cited family responsibilities and work were often contributing factors to students not passing their ESL courses. Many instructors in this study made comments such as "It seems like school is not [the student's] top priority right now" (Song, 2006, p. 421). Another instructor explained that the instructor allowed a student to come to class later after dropping her son off at school because the student "seemed pressed by family responsibilities" (p. 422). Song (2006) observed that a recurring perception among the instructors in the study was that family and work kept students from spending enough time on their homework. Despite seeming sympathetic to students' outside responsibilities, the instructors would not accept employment as an excuse for the students not completing their homework. As a result, the instructors cited the number one contributing factor to the students failing their ESL course was the quality of students' homework. These issues echoed those that faculty noted about students in

developmental education courses, such as having family issues, needing to work, and encountering problems with childcare as interfering with underprepared students' ability to complete coursework and attend classes (cf. Adams, 2012; Zientek et al., 2014).

However, family and work obligations were not the only problems that the instructors in Song's (2006) study perceived as contributing to the students' failure. The instructors perceived their students as being "cognitively immature," "shallow intellectually," having "incoherent thinking," "having a lot of difficulty organizing . . . thoughts clearly," and "failure to engage in thought and generate ideas" (p. 422).

Although Song (2006) suggested that the students rush through assignments because they were pressed for time, the instructors' perceptions were that the students' homework was unacceptable due to what they characterized as poor intellect, lack of education or poor educational background. One instructor even blamed the New York City public schools. These instructors' perceptions of their students' lack of intellectual ability was similar to that of the faculty perceptions in studies (cf. Horner, 2011; Salyers, 2009; Zeas, 2013; Zientek et al., 2014) about developmental education. Faculty in these studies also felt students' underpreparedness was the result of not being college material and poor secondary education. Similar to faculty's perceptions of underprepared students' affective characteristics (cf. Mulvey, 2005; Zientek, 2014), the ESL instructors that Song (2006) surveyed also referred to some of the same characteristics as a reason for students failing. According to the instructors' comments in Song's study, the students who failed were lazy, were not serious, had attitude problems, did not care about learning, and lacked motivation. Overall, it seems that faculty perceptions of ESL students were very similar to the faculty perceptions of underprepared students.

## Summary

In examining the existing literature regarding faculty perceptions of developmental students, several themes emerged. Nationally, legislators have negative perceptions of developmental education based on reports by special interest groups such as Complete College America's (2012) *Bridge to Nowhere*. The publicity and legislative changes that these reports facilitated have led to an overall negative perception of developmental education by institutions of higher education (Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Deli-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002; Goudas & Boylan, 2012; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1994). Although some non-developmental education and developmental education faculty have positive perceptions of developmental education and the students served by it (Deli-Amen & Rosenbaum, 2002), overall, the literature suggests that non-developmental education faculty, and even some developmental education faculty, have negative perceptions of developmental students (Bustillos, 2007; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1996; Stahl, 1981). There were many factors that affected these faculty perceptions of underprepared students. First, underprepared students are often labeled in many different ways by institutions and faculty (Arendale, 2010; Mulvey, 2005; Quick, 2013; Stahl, 1981). Secondly, both non-developmental education and developmental education faculty had negative perceptions of underprepared students' skill levels (Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010; Holschuch & Paulson, 2013; Horner, 2011; Jones, 2016; Robinson, 2009; Salyers, 2009; Zeas, 2013; Zientek, et al., 2014). Thirdly, both types of faculty also had negative perceptions of underprepared students' academic behaviors, disposition, and study habits (Bustillos, 2007; Mesa, 2012; Mulvey, 2005; Pitts & White, 1996; Quick, 2013; Zientek et al., 2014). All faculty acknowledged that underprepared

students have life issues that impeded their ability to be successful (Adams, 2012, Boylan, Calderwood, Bonham, 2017; Salyers, 2009; Zientek et al., 2014). Finally, as a whole, faculty reported feeling resentful of and stressed by the demands that these students required of them as educators (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2012; Pitts & White, 1996; Quick, 2013; Salyers, 2009; Stahl, 1981).

It is important what faculty perceptions of underprepared students are because faculty are stakeholders within any institution (Alstadt, 2012), and they set the tone within the classroom for student learning (Datta, 2010). In addition, when non-developmental education faculty have negative perceptions of developmental education, often the result is a feeling of stigmatization by developmental education faculty (Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Robinson, 2009). The amount of support that administrators give to developmental education is also important (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Mazzarelli, 2010; Pitts & White, 1996). Additionally, there are ways to gain faculty support for developmental education, such as including faculty in decision-making regarding reforms (Alstadt, 2012) and through professional development (Harris, 1983; Quick 2013).

Finally, faculty perceptions seem to be a recurring theme in education. Studies on students with disabilities (Lombardi & Murrar, 2011; Sniatecki et al., 2015) and ESL students (Goldschmidt & Seifried, 2008; Song, 2006) were examined. Faculty had similar perceptions of these student populations as they did of underprepared students, such as low academic abilities, impeding other students' ability to learn, lowering academic standards, and life issues that often conflicted with the demands of college

(Goldschmidt & Seifried, 2008; Lombardi & Murrar, 2011; Sniatecki et al., 2015; Stevens & Miretzky, 2012; Song, 2006).

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Method**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe and compare the experiences of non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty regarding developmental education. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are non-developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at one open-access university?
2. What are developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at one open-access university?
3. How do the perceptions of non-developmental education faculty compare to those of developmental education faculty?

This chapter outlines the research design, setting and population, participant selection, data collection, role of the researcher, validation, and data analysis sections.

### **Research Design**

A transcendental phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) was used to describe and compare the perceptions that non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty at a small, open-access 4-year university in the Midwest have regarding the developmental education program. Phenomenology describes the individual experiences a group of people have had with the same phenomena and then reduces those individual experiences into a shared or universal experience (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the phenomena being examined was the perceptions of non-

developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty regarding developmental education.

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method with roots in philosophy (Moustakas, 1994). It was founded by Husserl in 1900 and grew and was expanded upon after his death (Giorgi, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). Other philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger have also expounded upon the ideas within phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994); however, the basis set out by Husserl and put forth in a guide for phenomenological research by Moustakas (1994) was the basis of the transcendental phenomenological method used for this study. Although phenomenology has different philosophical underpinnings that create different approaches to this method of research, such as transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic theories (Moustakas, 1994), the transcendental approach was used for this study due to its focus on the researcher attempting to go outside of or rise above the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Even though it may be impossible for the researcher to completely go outside of the experience, “the challenge of transcendental phenomenology [is] to develop a method for understanding the objects that appear before us” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). Therefore, the researcher was required to conduct self-reflection so that his or her own experience with the phenomenon can be better understood. In this way, by reflecting on my own experiences with developmental education in the *epoche* and those of the participants as they are interviewed, I was able to come to a better understanding of my own experiences with developmental education. Due to this focus on experiences, this study gave voice to the experiences that non-developmental education and developmental education faculty have with developmental education and explore their perceptions of it. Therefore, this

qualitative method seemed most appropriate. At the heart of people's experiences is their perceptions. Perceptions give meaning to experiences (Moustakas, 1994). It is through the textural descriptions of the participants' experiences that participants' perceptions of a phenomenon were discovered (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Setting and Population**

The participants for this study were recruited from the developmental education faculty and the non-developmental education faculty teaching at Rural State University (RSU). RSU was founded in the mid-80s as an open-access university to serve the underrepresented students in this rural area of the Midwest. Approximately 48% of the students come from 20 local high schools and about 90% are from the state in which Rural State University is located. Seventy-four percent of the students are First Generation college students, and only 19% are fully college-ready. In addition, about 70% of the students receive federal financial aid and have an average household income around \$30,000. The university has approximately 300 full and part-time faculty and approximately 3,800 students. Rural State University houses three colleges: the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Professional Studies, and University College. In addition, there are six deans: three for each college, a Dean of Students, Dean of Assessment and Graduate Studies, and Dean of the Library. The university president is relatively new and although the provost has been at the university since its founding, he is relatively new to the position of provost.

**History of University College at RSU.** The University College was created in the mid-2000's by placing a sign over the learning center door that read *University College*. However, it was not a true college until the first dean was hired in 2010. In



2011, the dean of University College was given faculty hiring lines and the faculty who taught developmental education coursework were jointly appointed between University College and their academic department. At this time, the developmental education courses were decentralized in the academic departments. Before 2013, University College did not have an official home within the university. Wherever the dean's office happened to be, whether that was in the performing arts center, the learning center, or the community outreach office, that was University College. At the beginning of the fiscal year in 2013, University College was centralized and the dean and the faculty had an actual home within the university with their own offices and workspace. As a result, the developmental education courses were centralized within University College and the joint appointments ended. Although the Mathematics Department gave its blessing to this change, the English Department fought it and still seek every chance to regain control over the Basic Writing courses.

#### **Explanation of faculty rankings and their effect on University College.**

Currently, within University College is housed developmental education, general education, interdisciplinary studies, and first-year experience courses as well as the Student Success Center and Career Services. During the 2012 union contract negotiations, faculty who had previously been referred to as continuing contract were granted full-tenure, whether they had a terminal degree or not, based on their years of service to the university. Anyone hired in 2011 or later was either tenure-track or Full-Time Instructor (FTI). Several years ago, the university administration created the Full-time Instructor position that was originally meant to fill a temporary need; however, more and more of the full-time faculty hires are FTI positions due to the budget savings of

these positions. Until the 2015 contract negotiations, FTIs were on a year-to-year contract and currently have no path to promotion beyond Senior Lecturer. However, beginning with the 2015 contract, FTIs may be given up to a 3-year contract based on the number of years of service to the university and good standing within their departments. University College has three directors: Director of Developmental Mathematics, Director of Developmental English, and the Director of First-Year Experience. Except for the Director of Developmental Mathematics and the Director of Developmental English, all of the University College faculty are FTIs. The Director of Developmental Mathematics and Developmental English are joint appointments between University College and their academic departments. In addition, these two positions are tenure-track and are tenured through their academic departments.

Depending on the department, an FTI may be given the same voice and full voting rights within the academic department as tenured and tenure-track faculty, or the FTI is treated like an adjunct who just happens to work full-time. For example, during my first year at the university, the FTIs within my department were given full voting rights as the tenured and tenure-track faculty. However, the second year during a tenure and tenure-track faculty only meeting, the department bylaws were changed so that the only motions the FTIs, who all taught developmental writing, could vote on were developmental writing program issues. In addition, the new bylaws prohibited the FTIs from serving on any committees except the Developmental Writing Committee. Another difference is that the FTI teaches 15 credit hours per semester and has four required office hours; however, FTIs are not required to do service to the university or committee work. Tenured and tenure-track faculty teach 12 credit hours per semester, have three

office hours, and are expected to do service and committee work. However, because the Directors of Developmental English and Mathematics are the only tenure-track positions, University College FTIs are given the opportunity to serve on committees within the college and university-wide committees. Because there are less than 10 faculty members within University College, it is impossible for the college to be represented on every university committee, sub-committee, and ad hoc committee, which is a distinct disadvantage for enabling these faculty members to have their voices heard. These committees all have seats for the College of Professional Studies, the College of Arts and Sciences, and one at-large seat that may be filled by University College faculty if one is able to serve. Otherwise, the at-large seat is filled by another faculty member from one of the other two colleges.

**Course loads within University College.** Developmental courses are taught by the Directors of Developmental Mathematics and English as well as the FTI faculty within University College based on their teaching specializations. Each semester, the Directors usually teach at least one developmental course, but the majority of their course load are college-level courses taught within their academic department. During the fall semester, the FTIs' course load is usually all developmental courses with one or more First-Year Experience course included. The First-Year Experience program encompasses three courses: First-Year Experiences, Academic Development, and Major and Career Exploration. In the spring semester, there are fewer students in the developmental education program. Therefore, the FTIs' course load may include one or two developmental courses, some first-year experience courses, and at least one college-level course, if not more. Before the creation of University College, a majority of the

developmental education coursework was taught by adjunct faculty. However, each year, fewer and fewer adjuncts are needed due to efforts to redesign developmental education courses to move students more quickly through the developmental education program. Beginning in the 2017-2018 academic year, any student who is underprepared in two or more subjects must go through the Bridge to Success program before being fully admitted to the university. As a result, some of the FTIs will be required to teach summer and fall with spring being on a voluntary/as needed basis and requiring a separate contract.

### **Participant Selection**

According to Moustakas (1994), there is no set protocol for selecting participants for a phenomenological study besides the participants having had meaningful experiences with the phenomena and being willing to be interviewed for a prolonged length of time or multiple times. Therefore, purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2014) of non-developmental education and developmental education faculty from Rural State University was used. There was a minimum criterion that participants in this study had to meet. For the non-developmental education faculty, the faculty had to either be tenured or tenure-track and have never taught a developmental education course. However, the non-developmental education faculty had to have taught underprepared students or students who have taken developmental education coursework in their college-level courses. In addition, they must have had knowledge of the developmental education program and the underprepared student population at RSU. Finally, the non-developmental education faculty had to have taught for at least two academic years at RSU. The developmental education faculty, had to, of course, teach developmental education courses, be either an

FTI or tenured or tenure-track faculty, and have taught at RSU for at least two academic years. Five non-developmental education faculty were interviewed. Of the developmental education faculty, four of the six faculty met the criterion to participate in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Permission to conduct the phenomenological study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at the site of the study as well as from Sam Houston State University where the researcher is a doctoral student. In this phenomenological study, the focus was collecting data from two groups of participants, non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty. The participants were recruited by sending them an email asking for volunteers who meet the sampling criteria. Because RSU is a small institution, references to the non-developmental education faculty member's academic departments were avoided whenever possible and references to the discipline the developmental education faculty taught were avoided when possible. Most of the developmental education faculty's responses, however, included details about the discipline in which they teach. Finally, steps were taken to preserve the identity of the institution that is the site of this study.

In phenomenological research, interviews are the typical data source (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews usually consist of a series of open-ended questions and comments and an interview protocol may be developed. Interview questions are not required as Moustakas (1994) claims that the most important questions to be answered in a phenomenological interview are: what was your experience and how did it affect you. However, an interview protocol was created and a series of questions were developed

aimed at obtaining a comprehensive account of the phenomenon. The interview protocol was developed using the basic psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy as described in self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) as well as the existing research that was reviewed for this study and Spradley's (1979) descriptive question types. The interview questions used for the one-on-one interviews with the non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty contained the same questions except for one. The non-developmental education faculty were asked "What motivated you to become a college professor?" and the developmental education faculty were asked, "What motivated you to become a developmental educator?" (See Appendix A for a complete list of the interview questions.) The interview questions were pilot tested with a dean and a department chair.

Before any interviews are conducted with any of the participants, the participants were informed of the purpose of the study, given the chance to opt out if they like. None of the participants opted out. The participants were then provided with an information sheet that asked for consent to participate in the study and be voice recorded. The face-to-face interviews ranged from 30-80 minutes. As suggested by Moustakas (1994) and Spradley (1979), the interviews began with a casual conversation to create rapport and trust. The participants were asked to begin by giving some background about themselves, such as their degrees, if they were first generation college students, if they felt academically prepared as an undergraduate, and how many years they had been teaching at RSU. The formal interview questions began with two grand tour questions and then move into specific details with several mini-tour questions. Example questions and experience questions were used to find the rich detail to reveal the interviewees feelings

and thoughts. The native language questions were used to find if the language of developmental education is a common one within the university. As a result, participants were asked to define what it means for a student to be underprepared and define developmental education. The interviews were voice recorded and then transcribed verbatim to text.

### **Data Analysis**

During the entire research process all files with confidential information were kept in a password protected file and any paper copies were kept in a locked filing cabinet to ensure the security of the data. Each participant was given a pseudonym as was the institution which was the setting for this study. After each interview was conducted, interviews were transcribed, and then Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data was used. This method of analysis begins with an analysis of the researcher's own lived experiences with the phenomenon under study. First, as a participant observer, a full description of my own experiences of the phenomenon being studied were given through the writing of an epoche to enhance my subjectivity (Moustakas, 1994). Then, from the transcribed interviews, horizontalization was conducted by using an *in vivo* coding process in the first cycle of coding to highlight significant words and phrases and use the comments function to insert labels for the highlighted statements or meaning units (Saldaña, 2013). During the second cycle, all relevant meaning units were coded, collapsed, and categorized as they related to the phenomenon (Saldaña, 2013). Then codes were reduced to "invariant horizons" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121) or units of meaning that held the essence of the experience across the participants and were clustered into themes. These meaning units

were organized into themes which were each defined for meaning (Moustakas, 1994). Additionally, themes and relevant codes were organized into a matrix and a hierarchy of importance was ascribed to them. These invariant horizons and themes were synthesized into a textural description of faculty members' shared experiences with the shared phenomenon of working with developmental education students and reflected upon using imaginative variation, which resulted in a structural description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, a textural-structured description of meanings and essences of my experiences was written (Moustakas, 1994).

Then from the verbatim transcripts of the interviews with non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty, the same steps were followed to develop a textural-structured description of meanings and essences for each participant's experiences. From these individual textural-structured descriptions and by following the same process as outlined above, "a composite of textural-structured description of the meanings and essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122) was integrated to create a shared experience for non-developmental education faculty and a shared experience for developmental education faculty. These experiences were then compared to determine if each group's experiences could be reduced to a single shared experience of developmental education. However, some variation in shared experiences was discovered.

### **Trustworthiness**

For qualitative research, the researcher must enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2014). To establish trustworthiness in a qualitative study, researchers follow certain procedures to check for the accuracy of the research (Creswell, 2014).



Giorgi (2010) warns that when researchers make modifications to the phenomenological methods for data analysis, they often violate the very essence of the phenomenological perspective.

The first step to ensure the accuracy of the findings is to do member checking (Creswell, 2014) by allowing the participants to review the transcription of their interviews. Although Colaizzi (as cited in Giorgi, 2010) advocates taking the validation process a step further by allowing participants to review the researcher's findings and add new data as the participants' deem appropriate, Giorgi (2010) warns against this step as it is "theoretically unjustifiable" (p. 13). Giorgi believes to maintain alignment with sound scientific and phenomenological principles that the determination of meaning must be left to the researcher. However, because the origin of most phenomenological research begins with the researcher's own experience with the phenomenon, careful measures were taken to avoid the researcher's bias and experiences to contaminate the researcher's analysis of participants' experiences. One way this issue was avoided was through the bracketing of the researchers' experiences by writing an *epoché*. As discussed in the *Role of the Researcher* section, this important step was observed. In addition, member checking was used by allowing the participants to review their verbatim transcripts for accuracy before the analysis took place (Creswell, 2014). The participants were provided with paper copies of their transcripts and informed that it was raw data that had not been edited for spelling errors, grammar, or repeated wording that is common in many people's speech patterns. The participants were asked to read their interviews and clarify any states they thought were unclear. All of the participants returned their interview transcripts with their approval and without any clarifying adjustments.

Finally, as Giorgi (2010) emphasizes, to follow true scientific principles for research transferability is a must. Therefore, Moustakas's (1994) procedures for data analysis as discussed in the *Data Analysis* section were followed closely. Additionally, thick description of the study results were used so that the study could be replicated (Creswell, 2014). The interview questions and complete descriptions of the criteria used for choosing participants and descriptions of how the study was conducted are provided in the Appendix.

### ***Epoche***

In phenomenological research, the researcher always has a personal interest and is intimately connected with the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994). Husserl, a German mathematician by training, used the mathematical metaphor of bracketing as a means of placing one's biases in brackets to "place it temporarily out of question" (Priest, 2001, p. 52). Similarly, the *epoche* is an attempt to suspend judgement in order to analyze phenomenon from a new point-of-view (Moustakas, 1994; Priest, 2001). According to Giorgi (2010), the researcher, who also is a participant in the study should reveal his or her experiences of the phenomenon to the readers. Therefore, before, during, and after the data collection process, an *epoche* was written. Also, in an attempt to bracket my beliefs about and experiences with the phenomenon, a detailed reflexivity journal was kept to track my thoughts, observations, and rival explanations as the data is being collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2014). Although I am a former faculty member of this institution, I am currently the director of the learning center. Therefore, I did not hold a position of power over any of the faculty who volunteered to participate in this study. Because phenomenology involves creating a shared experience from many points-

of-view, it is hoped that the end result created a true picture of the faculty's perceptions of developmental education at RSU.

In order to bracket my biases so that they would be less likely to influence me during the data collection and analysis phases of this study, I wrote an *epoche* before beginning to interview participants. I wrote the *epoche* by answering the same interview questions that I asked each research participant. The answers to my questions were then developed into a narrative of my experiences with developmental education at this particular open-access university. The *epoche* is presented here.

I am a first generation college student, and the most educated person on both sides of my family. I grew up in a rural industrial/farming community in Southern Illinois and my high school did not offer a wide-variety of courses, nor was there an honors program of any sort. For my undergraduate degree, I attended a state university which was about 1 1/2 hours from home. I was not academically prepared in mathematics by my own estimation. My placement test placed me in statistics, but within the first day of classes I had no idea what was going on. I remember feeling very stupid and thinking everyone else knew something that I did not. I do not remember now how I got out of that course, but I did and took a much easier mathematics course that fulfilled my degree requirements. Originally, I had declared journalism as my major, but I felt out of place in the university newsroom because most of the other students had worked on their school newspapers. My high school had eliminated the newspaper by the time I was in high school. However, I excelled in English literature and changed my major to English, earning both a bachelor's and master's degrees in literature. My dream was to teach English literature at the college level, but in the end, I chose to concentrate on raising a

family. As a result, I taught both developmental writing and freshman composition for many years as an adjunct until in 2011 when I acquired a full-time teaching role at Rural State University.

Through my many years teaching and advising in higher education, I have come to believe that a students' underpreparedness is not limited to academics. A student can be underprepared for college in many ways. Although this traditionally has meant that students are not college-ready and must take remedial coursework, it may also be that a student is college-ready but is not ready for the rigors or the commitment of college level work. There are many students who were A students in high school and for whom high school was not difficult but who fail in college because they had never been challenged to the level of college rigor. I think there is also a social and emotional underpreparedness that some students face. These students are often homesick if they are living on campus or have difficulty making friends, dealing with roommates, and accepting critical feedback from instructors. Often students who are not emotionally prepared for college also blame others, especially professors, when they do not pass classes. They do not have the wherewithal to think about their own actions and take responsibility for their failing grades.

I was a developmental writing instructor at RSU from 2011-2015, and during a typical semester, I taught 1 section of the lowest level developmental writing course ENGL0095, 2 to 3 sections of the next level course, ENGL0096, and perhaps one section of the freshman English sequence. It was not uncommon to encounter students in ENGL0095 who were barely literate and who obviously needed referring to adult basic education or a vocation school rather than a university. Many students were misplaced

either in the wrong level of developmental writing or in developmental education period because they took the ACT only once in the fall of their junior year of high school and scored below college placement.

I have a lot of mixed feelings about my experiences as a developmental education faculty member at RSU. I felt a lot of frustration because the goals of developmental education program and the dean of University College were different from the goals of the academic departments. I was caught in the middle trying to do what was right for my students. Those of us who taught developmental writing had very little control over the syllabus, textbook selection, and students' final grades that students due to the essay exit exam. Not only did I feel that this was an unfair measure of what a student knows about writing, I also felt that the testing and grading process was deeply flawed and lent itself to bias.

In my experience, the dean of University College was the only person on campus who recognized the expertise of the developmental education faculty. In addition, the Dean was the only person who understood what it meant to be a certified developmental education specialist through the Kellogg Institute. Although I used my knowledge from Kellogg in the classroom, outside of the classroom, I was still unable to facilitate change that mattered to my students' experiences with developmental education.

Something else that shaped my experience as a developmental education faculty member was the time I spent on the University Faculty Senate. I found that the developmental education program and the dean of University College were often the target of some faculty's disdain. During a University Faculty Senate meeting, one faculty member even questioned what the Dean's credentials were that she could evaluate

curriculum. These experiences led me to believe that very few non-developmental education faculty members valued developmental education or University College.

Overall, I think the developmental program does do a good job of preparing the students for the college level courses. However, I think some non-developmental education faculty have unrealistic expectations of the work that students who come from the developmental program should be able to do. I believe they think those students should be more prepared for college-level work than the typically prepared students. As a result, when the former developmental education student does not out perform their typically prepared peers, the non-developmental education faculty perceives them as not being well prepared by developmental education.

After I became the director of the learning center, many of the changes and programs that I had advocated for over the years and especially since attending the Kellogg Institute were created by others. These changes included a Summer Bridge Program, co-requisite courses, and math pathways. All of which allow students to immediately start accumulating credits toward their degrees. As a result of these changes, I fully expect that the current developmental education faculty may have a different experience with developmental education than I had. I also expect that some of the non-developmental education faculty may not have the same negative perceptions of underprepared students and developmental education that I experienced when I was a faculty member.

## **Summary**

This chapter opened with a restatement of the research questions which are guiding this study. Next, the research design section outlined the method that was used

for this research. In the setting and population section, a description of the setting for this study was given. The participant selection section described the method for identifying participants in the study and the criteria used for selecting the participants. The procedures used to collect the data and analyze it were outlined in the data collection section of this chapter. The role of the researcher was described in this chapter as well as the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the researcher's *epoche* was presented.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences that the non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty have had with developmental education at an open access university. Six non-developmental education faculty and five developmental education faculty were interviewed regarding their experiences with developmental education at Rural State University (RSU). The faculty interviews were transcribed into verbatim transcripts, which were then analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis for data obtained through transcendental phenomenological research. Several themes emerged from this analysis, which are presented in this chapter along with demographic information and a brief profile of each participant.

#### **Participant Profiles and Demographic Information**

To open each interview, the participants were asked to give some background information about themselves, including their degrees, if they were a first generation college student, were they academically prepared when they entered college, and how many years they had been teaching at RSU. Each participant was given a pseudonym. Because RSU is such a small institution, whenever possible references to the participants' department, discipline, and courses have been removed. However, for some participants, this information was integral to understanding their experiences. The profile narrative also provides information about what inspired each participant to become a college professor or developmental education faculty. Before the profile narratives, the participants' basic demographic information is presented in Table 1.



Table 1

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Name	Gender	Degree	First Generation Status	Years at RSU
<b>Non-Developmental Education Faculty</b>				
Aidan	Male	Ph.D.	First Generation	15
Angela	Female	Ph.D.	First Generation	10
Janet	Female	M.S.	Not First Generation	40+
Charles	Male	Ph.D.	First Generation	17
Amy	Female	Ph.D.	First Generation	3
Julie	Female	M.A.	Not First Generation	16
<b>Developmental Education Faculty</b>				
Marsha	Female	M.A.	First Generation	6
Jessica	Female	Ph.D.	Not First Generation	4
Lynn	Female	Ed.D.	Not First Generation	6
Courtney	Female	M.S.	First Generation	30
Joshua	Male	M.S.	First Generation	5

**Profiles of Non-Developmental Education Faculty**

**Aidan.** A native of a Western country other than the United States, Aidan experienced quite a different educational system than the one in the U.S. Aidan had to choose a subject to focus on his last 2 years of high school; as a result, he only studied the three topics that directly related to his chosen career path. Therefore, when he entered college, he felt very well prepared, and his knowledge was more in line with that of a graduate student in the United States. A first generation college student, neither of Aidan's parents had any education beyond high school; in fact, Aidan's mother left school at 16 to help support her family. Aidan first discovered his passion for teaching when he visited the U.S. as an exchange student and was placed in graduate classes and served as a graduate teaching assistant. After his year as an exchange student, he returned home and finished his degree but came back to the U.S. because he had met the woman who would become his future wife.

**Angela.** Both of Angela's parents aspired to get a college degree, but her mom ran out of money after a few classes at a local community college and her dad married her

mom and worked on the railroad. Therefore, she is a first generation college student.

Angela attended a large university that is well-known for its basketball team. From the local area, she was unsure if her high school prepared her academically because it did not have a lot of resources; however, she did credit it with giving her the survival skills she needed to navigate the large university culture. Angela did not seek to become a college professor. She had a passion for her discipline, and it was an inability to specialize in her discipline that led to her teaching at the college level. "I could become a professor, and then they would all have my fingerprints on them. I could teach them the way that I believe [my profession] should be practiced, and I would leave a little bit of my DNA on them. Then, it would be like I did it," she explained.

**Janet.** Janet is not a first generation college student. Although her mother started college, she did not finish; however, her father completed a degree using the GI Bill. One of her older brothers has a Ph.D. in nuclear physics and the other has an M.B.A. Janet grew up in one of the smallest school districts in the area and attended RSU when it was still a community college. She first earned an Associate's degree in the healthcare field in 1977 and worked for 10 years with a company in a neighboring state. She ended up running five offices for that company. In the 1980's she returned to RSU to complete another Associate's degree in a different field and then a Bachelor's degree. She was in the first class to graduate with a 4-year degree after RSU became a university.

Although she felt academically ready for college, she remembers taking some courses that were lower than the ones on her high school transcript but still college level. She initially came into teaching as an undergraduate when she was working as an assistant in a computer lab. During her senior year, a faculty member became ill and the

university was scrambling at the last minute to fill a position for a class that had to be offered, so they asked Janet to do it. After Janet graduated, she continued to teach a few classes. One day the chair of her department sat her down and said, "You're going to go to graduate school and this is who you're going to commute with." The chair had picked out the program, the school, and even how Janet was going to get to the school. After graduating with her Master's degree, Janet continued to work in the department, eventually gaining tenure and becoming the department chair.

**Charles.** Charles, too, is from the local area and is a first generation college student. Despite feeling academically prepared for college, Charles expressed not being emotionally prepared to enter the large Big Ten university for which he had received a scholarship. "[The university's] campus was a big shock. I'd never been anywhere except for the state fair when I was a kid," he explained. After graduating from college, Charles worked in industry for several years. Even though Charles worked in different states and even in Europe for a while, he found himself continually returning home. He returned to the area for graduate school, after which, he said he took two years off and "didn't do anything except for hunt ginseng and drink beer." Then, after working several more years in the chemical industry and away from home, he eventually took a position at RSU where he has been since 2000. Charles described his purpose at RSU as "to help kids in this area get a good start in life." He understands how to do that because he was once a student just like them.

**Amy.** Amy is also from the region and a first generation college student who followed her older sisters' examples and attended college. Amy taught for 18 years at the high school level at five different area schools. She described her work history as

looking like she was running from the FBI. During her time as a high school teacher, she became involved in a program that provided professional development for teachers, and she facilitated a lot of workshops. "I realized I kind of like this professional development idea and I like teaching teachers," she explained. As a result, she decided to pursue a Ph.D. However, it was still several years after completing her doctorate that she decided to make the change to college teaching. She had taught from the same textbook 12 of her 18 years of teaching and needed a challenge. "I already knew that number 13 on page 75 they're going to miss because they're going to miss that negative sign. You know there was no challenge left. . . I'm not lacking for a challenge around here because every day is something different, something unexpected," she said.

**Julie.** Like many of the other non-developmental education faculty, Julie is from the local area. However, she is not a first generation college student. Her mother had a Master's degree and her father had a two-year degree. Julie has always been a high achieving student. She was the valedictorian of her high school class and she pursued three majors as an undergraduate. Julie explained, "I don't know why I thought I needed all three. I actually wanted to be an artist and just get the art degree, but my parents wouldn't pay for my college unless I got an education degree too because they thought I wouldn't be able to get a job—they were probably right." She taught high school for a short time and then returned to college to obtain her Master's degree. She was a visiting professor at another institution and began Ph.D. work and was also considering law school. In the end, her husband's father became ill, so they moved the hour back home and she had a baby and started teaching in the high school, never completing her Ph.D. However, during the time she spent as a visiting professor, she enjoyed the collegiality

and being able to discuss research interests, but most of all she missed the freedom and the time to read and prepare. As a high school teacher, Julie was expected to teach 8 different classes a day and the workload was overwhelming. She often felt isolated, and everything started to change as the tide was moving toward the Common Core. Although she loved teaching the students and considers her time teaching high school as some of the best times of her life, she was ready for a change.

### **Profiles of Developmental Education Faculty**

**Marsha.** A first generation college student, Marsha followed her older sister's example and pursued higher education. Both of her parents had taken post-secondary coursework, but neither obtained a degree. Marsha grew up in the East and most of her teaching experiences were at Eastern universities and community colleges. Although Marsha felt academically prepared for college, she admitted that she was shy and did not ask for help when she needed it. She graduated from college with a Bachelor's degree in music with K-12 teacher certification. However, because she never mastered the piano, she had difficulty finding a teaching position. As a result, she worked as a substitute teacher and in customer service at a bank for about five years before returning to graduate school to pursue a Master's in English, which was her first love. She had thought about majoring in English as an undergraduate, but at that time, she did not want to write all the papers. While doing her graduate work, she tutored writing in an educational opportunity program and co-taught a developmental writing course. Describing the purpose of the educational opportunity program that she taught for, Marsha said, "We were helping them to move on to better careers because lots of those students came from families that were first generation . . . or they were economically disadvantaged." It was the director

of the educational opportunity program who encouraged Marsha to pursue a Ph.D. in English, which she did not complete. After she left her Ph.D. program, she taught developmental writing at a college for five years until she was laid off. She taught part-time for about three years at a couple different institutions before being hired at RSU in 2011.

**Jessica.** Jessica is not a first generation college student because her father has a degree; however, she is the first woman in her family with a college degree. She attended a technical university in the Western United States, so despite having a degree in the humanities, she has a very strong science and mathematics background. Although she had never taught developmental courses before coming to RSU, she had worked with students like the ones at RSU. Jessica said, "[They] were coming from high schools that were not very high performing, and even though they had the scores to get into first year writing, their work maybe looked a little bit more like developmental and there were a wide range of writing skills." As a trailing spouse to another professor on campus, Jessica first taught developmental writing as an adjunct at RSU. Eventually, she was hired full-time as a tenure-track professor and Writing Center Director when there was a shuffling of positions. After another shuffling of positions, she became the Director of Developmental English, and she is jointly appointed to University College and the English Department.

**Lynn.** Lynn is the other developmental education director in University College and also is not a first generation college student. Her father was a mechanical engineer. Hired as the Director of Developmental Mathematics, Lynn has been at the university for six years. Like Jessica, Lynn is also jointly

appointed between University College and the academic department, in this case, mathematics. Although she was prepared for college as an undergraduate, she said that learning never came easily to her. She remembered asking her dad for help with mathematics when she was a child. She said, "He would tell me one time and then that was it. He had no patience after that." Therefore, she understood what it was like to have someone be impatient when she did not understand a concept the first time. As a result, she wanted to help students like her that struggled to learn.

**Courtney.** Although Courtney has been employed at RSU for 30 years, she has only recently become a developmental education faculty member. Having held several administrative and contract positions at the university, Courtney has done a variety of adjunct teaching, including speech communications, senior seminar, and academic development. In 2015, Courtney was hired to as the Director of the First-Year Experience Program, which includes teaching academic development courses for underprepared students in the developmental education program. Even though Courtney felt that she was prepared for college, she can relate to the students at RSU because she too is first generation as many of them are. When she described what motivated her to become a developmental educator, she explained that she is on her second career and is only going to do what she loves to do and that she can make a difference in doing it. "I love teaching public speaking, but there's plenty of people out there that can do that. You have to want to sit down with a student who is not the cream of the crop and challenge them to plug into the information," she

explained. Because she teaches students in the First-Year Experience course as well as Academic Development, she is in contact with most incoming freshmen.

**Joshua.** Joshua is the only developmental education faculty member who is from the local area. Although his grandmother attended college, neither of his parents did. Therefore, working from the definition that a first generation college student is someone for whom neither parent earned a degree, he is a first generation college student. Joshua felt academically prepared for college; however, the first major he chose was chemistry. Having gone to an underfunded, rural high school, Joshua's school did not have a chemistry lab. He found that many of his classmates in college had experiences in chemistry labs, and most of them knew how to navigate the chemistry classroom and understood the coursework. He felt several steps behind them. As a result, he changed his major and eventually earned a Master's degree. Joshua, too, began his career as a high school teacher, but after many years felt that he was doing so much committee work that took him away from his students when the opportunity came to teach at RSU he took it. He has been at RSU for five years, teaching both developmental courses and college-level. "I've never had a bad day of work here. I've enjoyed my job immensely," he said.

### **Findings for Research Question One**

The first research question asked, "What are the non-developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at an open access university." This question was designed to determine what the non-developmental education faculty's perceptions and views of developmental education and underprepared



students are. Participants were also asked to share their feelings about university policies regarding developmental education and how those policies affect their teaching.

Surprisingly, the non-developmental faculty's responses were quite similar to one another. The themes that emerged from the interviews were impact on teaching, student characteristics, not college-ready, gaps in knowledge, and program effectiveness. Table 2 presents the themes and relevant codes that relate to the first research question.

Table 2

*Emergent Themes and Relevant Codes for Research Question One*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>
Impact on Teaching	Adjust teaching style Covering course content Students at different levels Provide extra support Re-teaching basic skills University policies regarding enrollment
Student characteristics	Ability level Disconnect Motivation Help seeking behaviors Attendance issues
Not College-Ready	Lack of Basic Knowledge Did not learn material Not Challenged Non-traditional student Unmotivated Lack of maturity Lack of resources
Gaps in Knowledge	Scaffolding Confidence Second Chance Equalizer Experiences with academic materials
Program Effectiveness	New initiatives Quality of students Success in college-level coursework Continued need

**Impact on teaching.** The non-developmental education faculty said that the presence of underprepared students in their classrooms had an impact on their teaching. A majority of the non-developmental education faculty admitted that they had to adjust their teaching style to accommodate the underprepared students in their classes. The faculty stated that they used more active learning to engage students. Aidan explained, “You have to teach the students you have, not the students you want.” He said that he had to adjust his teaching style because he found that he could not just lecture because he was only reaching a few students who could keep up with the concepts. As a result, he decided to “design class around everyone in the class who shows up,” he stated. Instead, he used more group work and walked around the room helping and redirecting students when necessary.

Angela, Janet, and Charles all reported that it was difficult to teach an introductory level course when not all the students were on the same level. Angela stated that she had students taking one of her entry level terminology courses and developmental education courses at the same time. “That was difficult,” she explained. “Everybody was at a different level. Some people had the whole book done in the first two weeks. They knew everything I was going to teach them, and others were struggling to learn the basics.” Aidan admitted that he did not have much experience with developmental education at RSU. He had taught a preparatory course for students who had not taken high school coursework in his discipline and had been surprised at the skill levels of some of the students. Janet addressed the problem of underprepared students in the entry level courses she took by providing extra information on Blackboard, such as rubrics and links to resources.

Julie often found herself frustrated by former developmental education students who did not do the work and/or stopped coming to class. She had to modify assignments to clarify them for the underprepared students in her classes. These experiences made her realize that she was not cut out for that type of teaching. Both Aidan and Amy said that they adjusted how much material they covered in a semester. Aidan also said that he has learned that he can only cover the foundational content and must leave the niceties for upper level courses. Amy found herself re-teaching basic skills that she felt any entering college freshman should know. For example, when she starts to teach fractions, instead of finding common denominators, the students just wanted to add all the numbers together. "My high school students and my college students made the same mistakes that I would expect elementary students to make," she explained.

Nearly all of the faculty said that adjusting their teaching styles made them better instructors. Aidan's approach is to get the students actively engaged with the material. "It's very Socratic," he explained. "I give them problems, they work in groups, and I walk around [facilitating the work], tell jokes, and try to be goofy." Amy stated that teaching underprepared students has made her more creative. Julie specifically mentioned that it made her a better methods teacher for the students seeking teacher licensure in grades 9-12. "I estimated that 80% of the students my student teachers were encountering would end up in developmental education." Several of the faculty understood that the University's policies regarding enrollment were to blame for students entering the university underprepared, and that if they were going to teach at RSU then they were going to encounter underprepared students.

**Student characteristics.** The majority of the non-developmental education faculty felt that underprepared students exhibited certain characteristics that college prepared students did not. Some of the non-developmental education faculty stated that they were shocked by the ability level of some of the underprepared students they met and they recognized that the Summer Bridge program was a positive initiative. The Summer Bridge program is a six-week program required for students who place into two or more developmental courses to take their developmental coursework before matriculating into the University. Charles mentioned that in the past before the Summer Bridge program it was not uncommon to have a student who graduated from a vocational school who “literally couldn’t write. They couldn’t read a question from a test and really understand it. I don’t see that at all anymore,” he said. The faculty also noticed a disconnect between students’ expectations and their motivation. Aidan felt that some of the students in the developmental education program end up underprepared for college due to a lack of motivation in high school. These issues with motivation, according to Aidan, often spilled over into college for the underprepared students. Charles said that he was frustrated by students who were not motivated to “get up and come to class on time, dress in a decent manner, take care of yourself. Those types of things are what hurts our students more than anything,” he said. Janet stated, “They’re not as motivated, and they don’t take advantage of all the tools that they could.”

Janet’s observation that the students do not take advantage of all of the tools provided to them connected to the next sub-theme, help seeking behaviors. Many of the non-developmental education faculty lamented that underprepared do not take advantage of the tools made available to them to help them be successful. In addition, many

underprepared students do not attend class regularly or just stop showing up for class.

Julie stated that many times the students in her classes who came from the developmental education program would not complete the readings for class and then would be lost when she was discussing the readings or using the reading as a sample. As a result, the students would become frustrated and stop coming to class.

**Not college-ready.** All of the non-developmental education faculty understood that a student's placement into developmental education courses meant that the student was not college-ready, but the faculty listed various reasons as to why this population of students arrived at college underprepared. First of all, they understood that the underprepared students have weak foundational knowledge. Aidan describes himself as being part of an "elite group of faculty" who only teach college-ready students due to course pre-requisites although he has taught various levels of courses in his discipline. When he taught a course for mostly allied health majors, he thought, "Wow! Okay, the [students in my discipline] are really well-prepared compared to this cohort. I thought the allied health people were very poorly prepared. [Then I taught] the students who have no preparation at all [in my discipline]." Although the students Amy encounters in her classroom are not currently taking developmental coursework, she did know that some of them had because she saw it on their transcripts when she was advising them. The deficits she saw in her students in the classroom she compared to Swiss cheese. "There are holes in their knowledge," she explained.

Almost all of the non-developmental education faculty felt the reason for these holes resulted from students not performing well in high school because they were not challenged academically or were not pushed to take academics seriously. Based on her

experiences as a high school teacher, Amy was quick to admit that some of the benchmarks in the new K-12 educational standards are not feasible. She explained that the gap between high school and college is very wide because students are not getting exposed to the skills that they used to be exposed to, and she said, "It's not necessarily all the kids' fault. Not all students are developmentally ready [to learn some concepts]. In the name of making them smarter, we've pushed everything lower."

Another reason some students are not college-ready, according to the non-developmental education faculty, had to do with a lack of maturity. Angela said some of the students she sees in her program who are not successful fail because they are not "grown up" enough to accept the level of responsibility that college demands. Charles believed that a key problem in higher education is that everyone matures at a different level and "we have the same expectation of everybody," he explained. In his view, developmental education acknowledges differences in maturity level. However, the faculty did recognize that a certain percentage of the students who were not college-ready were non-traditional students. This population of students typically were not college-ready because they had been out of school for several years and their skills were rusty. Some of the students were either coming back to college after having stopped out or after being suspended when they were younger because they did not take college seriously. Janet pointed out that many of the non-traditional students she encounters in her classes are retraining for a new career. Perhaps they had done manual labor and were injured or too old to continue with that type of work; therefore, they are seeking a degree to obtain a job in which they can sit behind a desk.

**Gaps in knowledge.** The non-developmental education faculty all felt the purpose of developmental education was to fill in the students' gaps in knowledge. However, there were various ways that the non-developmental education faculty expected this to happen. Aidan specifically mentioned exposing students to college-level concepts by scaffolding the concepts with support materials. The faculty recognized that some students in the developmental education program just needed to gain confidence in their abilities. Citing the effects of standardized testing in the K-12 educational system, Amy explained that some students lacked confidence in their academic abilities. "You get some kids that have failed or ended up in limited or basic. Look at all those times they've been told, 'You're dumb. You failed. This isn't right. You don't know what you're doing.' It doesn't take too many of those before people believe them," she said. Aidan stated that one of the purposes of developmental education was to bolster students' confidence to give them a second chance to be academically successful.

Understanding that sometimes students make mistakes, many of the faculty, like Aidan, felt the purpose of developmental education was to give students a second chance. To the non-developmental education faculty, a second chance could mean a student is attempting college again at an older age because he or she was not mature enough the first time he or she attended college. It could mean that developmental education is providing a student who always struggled with academics a chance to know what it is like to be a successful student. Or a student could be attending RSU again after being suspended. No matter what the reason, Aidan saw the purpose of developmental education as being a great equalizer that allows everyone to be on the same level.

Four of the five non-developmental education faculty noted that the local schools are financially strapped. As a result, the schools are unable to provide the type of experiences with academic materials that more affluent school districts can. The purpose of developmental education was to expose the students to the life of academia. Julie stated, “I think that sometimes [developmental education’s] purpose, I hope, is to inspire them to understand that [academia] could be a world they could enter if they want to. However, they might discover they don’t. That’s fine too.”

**Program Effectiveness.** Overall, the non-developmental education faculty felt that the developmental education program was effective. Amy stated, “I’ve seen several of my students who started off in developmental education and are doing well now. I think that’s a testimony that the developmental education faculty are doing a good job.” Angela noted that students who complete developmental coursework get admitted to her program after undergoing a rigorous application process; therefore, she believed the developmental education program must be effective. All of the faculty had good things to say about the new initiatives to help underprepared students obtain college credits more quickly. These initiatives include a Summer Bridge program for students who are underprepared in two or more academic areas and co-requisite courses in both mathematics and English. Both Aidan and Charles cited the co-requisite mathematics courses as helping students in their majors be more prepared for introductory courses in their departments. All of the faculty had great hopes for the Summer Bridge program as some stated that they have seen a better quality of student in their courses since the program has been in place. Charles was cautiously optimistic and was adamant that the program needs to be measured for effectiveness. Meanwhile, Angela said, “We should



turn off the heat or whatever we have to do to keep [the Summer Bridge program] running.”

All of the non-developmental education faculty felt that developmental education was needed at the university and that it would continue to be a need. Aidan stated that there is currently a chasm between high school education and college expectations and someone must provide a bridge over that gap. “It either has to happen at the high school or it has to happen at the college, and it’s not going to happen in the high school in the climate we’re in right now,” he explained. Similar to Aidan, Charles believed that RSU would have a need for developmental education as long as the high schools continued to underprepare students. Janet felt with the continuous changes in technology and automation that people will need to retrain several times throughout their lives. As a result, students who need to brush up on rusty skills will need developmental education. Angela was very enthusiastic about the future of developmental education at RSU but emphasized that the university not repeat the sins of the past and admit students “who have no business being here and no plan for how [the university] is going to help them.” Many of them indicated that with the Summer Bridge program in place, RSU was no longer an open-access institution. Although they acknowledged that open access was part of the mission of the university, they were concerned about money. According to Aidan, “three, four, five years we will either be telling a really great story about how we turned it around or we will be looking for jobs.”

### **Findings for Research Question Two**

The second research question stated, "What are the developmental education faculty's perceptions of the developmental education program at an open access

university." This research question was designed to determine the developmental education faculty's perceptions and views of and to reveal their experiences with underprepared students and the developmental education program. Five themes emerged from the interview transcripts: impact on teaching, purpose of developmental education, student characteristics, issues teaching developmental education courses, and program effectiveness. Table 3 presents the themes and relevant codes that relate to research question 2.

Table 3

*Emergent Themes and Relevant Codes for Research Question Two*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>
Impact on Teaching	Checking for understanding Easily get off topic Covering content Placement policies
Purpose of Developmental Education	Opportunity Prepare for college-level courses Provide tools & build confidence
Student Characteristics	Ability level Trust Initiative Attendance Help seeking Experiences with academic material
Issues Encountered by Developmental Education Faculty	Lack of control over curriculum Ethical qualms with pedagogy Lack of respect from non-developmental education faculty
Program Effectiveness	New initiatives Worried about jobs Positive about the future

**Impact on teaching.** The developmental education faculty said that teaching underprepared students had an impact on their teaching. Marsha, Jessica, and Joshua indicated that they frequently check with students to make sure they are understanding

the material. Jessica stated that checking in with students for understanding made her more engaged in their writing process. Marsha said that when she writes handouts for students that she thinks about if they are going to understand the content. “If it has lots of big words in it that they’re not going to understand, they need to know what to do and they need to have good examples,” she explained. Courtney mentioned that she has difficulty covering all of the material in her lesson plans for the day and ultimately for the course because she feels she needs to address students’ questions as they occur. One student’s question could derail the lesson for the day because she observed that if one student voices a question that other students have the same question.

Three of the four developmental education faculty talked about the difficulties of teaching underprepared students due to some students being unmotivated and not doing the assigned work. Joshua related feeling frustrated by students who do not take their courses seriously, do not see the importance of the homework, and do not attend class. He lamented the fact that many students in his developmental education courses have potential, but some lack the motivation. Joshua said that he had addressed the problem of students not doing their homework assignments by creating a flipped classroom. He explained, “The students have time in class to work on their assignments so I can help them with it. And that has helped a little bit. I still have a handful of students that are going to do what they’re going to do no matter what I try.” But mostly, the developmental education faculty talked about how hard working their students are and how much the students wanted to succeed. Lynn believed that many students in developmental education courses want to learn and that it is the instructor's duty to reach out to them and offer them strategies for being more successful. Jessica said that she

thinks her students understand the value of learning to be a better writer and of the economic opportunity that opens up for them as college graduates. Finally, Marsha's view on her students was that "they want to do well and they work hard. They're just not sure how things operate, so it's our job to help them."

Jessica, Courtney, and Joshua all felt that placement had an impact on their teaching. Jessica and Courtney both felt that ACT scores only provide part of a picture of students' abilities and not the entire picture. They stated that they had had students who should have been in a different course, whether that was a student in developmental education who should have been in a college-level course or vice versa. Jessica also indicated that placement scores should not be the sole indicator for how successful a student will be. "I've certainly had students that looked like they were statistically going to succeed and then they do very well, and some students who on paper look like they're going to do great and they totally bomb out," she explained. Joshua approached placement more from the standpoint of enrollment practices as an open-access institution. Joshua, whose wife teaches at a local high school, stated that when his wife tries to talk to students about the importance of learning, some have replied, "I'll just go to RSU because they take anybody." Therefore, he believes not having a minimum ACT score to be accepted to the University is a de-motivator to local high school students to learn more in high school because they know that no matter what RSU will accept them.

**Purpose of developmental education.** The developmental education faculty felt that the purpose of developmental education was to provide students with an opportunity to receive a post-secondary education. They recognized that the students in their courses would not have been accepted at more selective institutions, and that developmental

education is providing them with the opportunity to become college-ready and earn a degree. Jessica and Lynn, who are both Directors of Developmental English and Mathematics, respectively, viewed their programs as providing a service to their academic departments so that the students can do well in the introductory freshmen level courses. Courtney explained that she thought the purpose of developmental education was “to get our students up to the standards where they can be successful in the main classrooms.”

The developmental education faculty also acknowledged that developmental education gives the students the tools they need to become successful, such as tutoring, scaffolding, and extra learning support. Marsha described her students as “being less aware of what it takes to pass a class and so they need more structure of what to do and when. They need more explanation about how to approach different assignments.” To Joshua, the purpose of developmental education is to help students obtain the confidence they need so that they can be successful in the programs at RSU. His favorite moments in class are the “ah-ha” moments when he knows that his students have finally grasp a concept. Joshua favored teaching developmental coursework because, “I can see such a change in them as they go through the course and they start to learn things and they start to become more confident,” he explained. For him, building students’ confidence gets to the heart of learning.

**Student characteristics.** The developmental education faculty talked about their students’ ability levels and acknowledged that there were holes in the students’ foundational knowledge Joshua explained the reason students are underprepared is “They’re lacking foundation and there’s holes so you can’t build upon it just yet.”

Jessica thought the core issue for many of the students was that they were not prepared to trust themselves enough to succeed. She said, “To trust that they can succeed to the point where they’ll actually put in the work. Like there’s sometimes that psychological barrier to their success.”

Some of the students, the faculty felt, lacked the initiative to follow through with assignments or to ask questions and seek help when necessary. “Students don’t realize it’s not just show up for class and then leave. You’ve got to prepare and then after class do your homework and look over your notes,” Lynn explained. Lynn also said she felt upset by students who did not take advantage of all the tools available to them. “I’ve never seen a school with more help for its students than RSU,” she explained. Joshua too felt frustrated by students who did not take his courses seriously. Attendance seemed to be an issue for some of the students. Joshua and Lynn mentioned that they had instituted an attendance policy in their classes that if a student is absent three times they fail the course.

The faculty acknowledged that most of these issues result from students’ lack of experience in an academic setting. Marsha said many of her students struggle because they have not spent a lot of time reading or writing. It was not required of them in high school. Similarly, Jessica mentioned that for the most part “developmental writers are largely inexperienced writers.” In her view, either the students had not done much writing or the writing that they had done was not a very good preparation for the kind of writing that is expected in college. Joshua indicated that part of students’ lack of experience with academic material is the result of changes in what grade level students are expected to hit certain academic benchmarks and lack of funding. For example, he

related an issue he had with some of his elementary school colleagues who did not use manipulatives to teach grade-schoolers more concrete ways to approach abstract mathematical ideas. The grade-school children were not cognitatively ready to comprehend some of the more abstract mathematical ideas, and Joshua felt manipulatives would have helped the students by providing concrete representation of an abstract idea. However, the elementary school teachers were reticent to use manipulatives. Part of the issue was that the school district did not have the funds to purchase manipulatives. Joshua explained that mathematics is a discipline that builds from one concept to another and when students “miss something along the way it causes [them] to not be able to do multiple things later on.”

**Issues encountered by developmental education faculty.** The developmental education faculty mentioned several issues that they had encountered while teaching in the developmental education program. However, these issues were outside of the difficulties they encountered as a result of underprepared students’ characteristics. These issues centered around the expectations of academic departments and colleagues.

The first issue that the developmental writing faculty mentioned was the lack of control over the curriculum that they initially encountered. Until 2016, students taking developmental writing had to pass an exit essay exam to pass the course. The exit exam consisted of writing a substantial essay in 1 hour and 50 minutes that was virtually error free and met the standards for a college-level essay. Marsha said, “I was surprised by the syllabus templates and the exit exam because I knew that was something we should not do. It’s unfair to judge someone about their writing ability from one single event, especially under a high pressure situation.” Jessica too said that she was frustrated by the

exit exam. She explained, “It was very hard for me to reconcile the fact that I knew I was trying to prepare them for this thing that I couldn’t possibly prepare them for and that many of them were not going to succeed.” She confessed that she had major ethical qualms over the use of a pedagogical tool like the exit exam. Now that the exit exam is gone, both Marsha and Jessica said that they feel like they have more control over the curriculum and their students’ grades.

Joshua had a similar experience regarding who was qualified to write the final exams for the co-requisite mathematics courses. He described an experience he had that some faculty in the mathematics department did not think that faculty who were not tenured would make the final exam for the co-requisite course rigorous enough. Only the Directors of Developmental English and Mathematics are tenure-track faculty. Joshua explained, “I felt insulted by that. I’m the one teaching the course. . . And if I’m not qualified to write the test, I’m not qualified to teach the course.”

The source of many issues that the developmental education faculty encountered tended to center around tenure and the fact that they were not tenured or on tenure-track. For example, Courtney had been hired as the Director of First-Year Experience program but had her directorship stripped from her when a tenured faculty member filed a grievance with the faculty union stating that academic director positions should be held by tenured or tenure-track faculty only. The tenured faculty member said she filed the complaint for Courtney’s protection, citing that the full-time instructor (FTI) has to teach 15 credit hours a semester and that the demands of that class schedule did not leave the full-time instructor adequate time for the administrative duties of the position. “It was explained to me that [the union] wanted the university to allow [the full-time instructors]



to be tenure-track. [The union] would rather us be tenure-track and not FTIs because [tenured positions] could be replaced with FTIs cheaper. So it's a power struggle," Courtney said. As director, Courtney received release time to direct the program, which meant that she did not have to teach the required 15 credit hours per semester that a full-time instructor teaches. Instead, a certain amount of credit hours was attributed toward the time she spent directing the program. When Courtney was demoted, she not only lost \$10,000 in salary but also the release time. Because the First-Year Experience and Academic Development courses are 1 and 2 credit hours, Courtney now typically teaches 10-12 courses per semester. Some are only 8 weeks, but some are the full 16 weeks of the semester. She said loves teaching her classes and her students but admitted that her schedule is exhausting.

Courtney believed that developmental education program had an undeservedly bad reputation and that she felt underappreciated by faculty in the academic departments. She shared that she does not think University College receives the credit it is due. Unlike the other colleges that consist of academic departments, University College not only houses developmental education, but also the general education program, the Student Success Center, and Career Services. "[University College] is crucial. If we don't do our jobs right, [faculty] will having nothing to deal with," she said. However, Courtney also added that she did not think the college touted its resources enough and did not do a good job of communicating what an important function University College serves to the University as a whole.

Similarly, Joshua said that he has had tenured and tenure-track faculty express to him that the University College and developmental education faculty are not official

members of the faculty. “I’ve had people come [into my office] and explain things to me like I’m a middle school student; like I don’t have the capability of understanding all these things,” he said. Although he does not have a Ph.D., he did not think that meant he was any less knowledgeable about how to teach and help students. In fact, he wondered what these faculty members are doing in their classes to help underprepared students succeed. “That’s the focus of [developmental education faculty’s] whole career is helping those students so that [faculty in the academic departments] can teach them something else,” he explained.

**Program effectiveness.** All of the developmental education faculty felt the developmental education program was effective. Jessica discussed the data that she had collected on the students in developmental writing. “Students who have English 0096 before entering English 1101 complete 1101 at the same or higher rates than students who started in 1101.” As a result, retention has gotten better. However, Jessica did admit that there is still a significant racial gap regarding retention in these courses.

The developmental education faculty were hopeful that the new initiatives of the co-requisite courses and the Summer Bridge program would make the developmental education program even more successful. Lynn said she has noticed that the Summer Bridge program has improved the quality of student she has been seeing in her courses. Overall, Lynn thought the developmental education program has done a good job, but “we’re going to see better results with some of these new initiatives,” she explained. Joshua felt confident that the president of the university has a clear vision for University College, and that the president realized that the University’s retention problems are not solely the fault of developmental education. Although Marsha and Joshua liked the new

initiatives, they both worried about the future of their jobs. “I hope we never get to a place where I work myself out of a job,” Joshua said.

However, Lynn and Jessica, the two tenure-track directors, were both hopeful and confident that developmental education and University College would have a place at RSU in the future. Jessica acknowledged that things were going to continue to shift as new initiatives were continuing to be looked at and implemented. “I think there will always be a place for [developmental education] here. I’m optimistic generally about the University College and what it can do,” she explained. Lynn recognized that some faculty in the academic departments were predicting that developmental education will cease to exist with the implementation of co-requisite courses and the Summer Bridge program. However, she said, “I don’t think I personally see [developmental education] going away.”

### **Findings for Research Question Three**

The third research question asked, “How do the perceptions of the non-developmental education faculty compare to those of the developmental education faculty?” The purpose of this research question was to determine if the non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty had a shared experience with developmental education. Findings indicated that although they did share some of the same experiences as far as the impact that underprepared students have on their teaching, the characteristics that underprepared students tend to have, and the program effectiveness, some of their experiences were different. Their vision of the purpose of developmental education was slightly different. In addition, the non-developmental education faculty tended to focus on what underprepared students did not

know whereas the developmental education faculty acknowledged the knowledge gaps. Developmental education faculty expected students to lack basic knowledge because that is what places the student into the developmental education classroom. The area where the two faculty groups' experiences differed the most was the issues that the developmental education faculty encountered as a result of teaching developmental education courses. These issues did not result from the students, but from the developmental education faculty' non-developmental education colleagues. Table 4 displays the emergent themes from both the developmental education faculty' interviews and the non-developmental education faculty' interviews for comparison. A discussion of the similarities and differences between the two faculty populations' themes are presented in this section.

Table 4

*Comparison of Emergent Themes from Non-Developmental Education Faculty and Developmental Education Faculty Interviews*

<b>Non-developmental Education Faculty</b>		<b>Developmental Education Faculty</b>	
<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>
Impact on Teaching	Adjust teaching style Covering course content Students at different levels Provide extra support Re-teaching basic skills University policies regarding enrollment	Impact on Teaching	Checking for understanding Easily get off topic Covering content Placement policies
Student characteristics	Ability level Disconnect Motivation Help seeking behaviors Attendance issues	Student characteristics	Ability level Trust Initiative Attendance Help seeking Experiences with academic material

(continued)

<b>Non-developmental Education Faculty</b>		<b>Developmental Education Faculty</b>	
<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Relevant Codes</b>
Program Effectiveness	New initiatives Quality of students Success in college-level coursework Continued need	Program Effectiveness	New initiatives Worried about jobs Positive about the future
Not College-Ready	Lack of Basic Knowledge Did not learn material Not Challenged Non-traditional student Unmotivated Lack of maturity Lack of resources	Purpose of Developmental Education	Opportunity Prepare for college-level courses Provide tools
Gaps in Knowledge	Scaffolding Confidence Second Chance Equalizer Experiences with academic materials	Issues encountered by developmental education faculty	Lack of control over curriculum Ethical qualms with pedagogy Lack of respect from non-developmental education faculty

**Similarities.** One theme that emerged from both groups' interviews was the impact that underprepared students had on the faculty's teaching. Both faculty groups stated that they had to adjust the course content and what they could cover to accommodate the underprepared students in their courses. The non-developmental education faculty stated that they had to provide extra support for underprepared students in their courses to help them understand concepts that college-ready students already know. Although this type of support is something that a developmental education faculty expects to provide, to a non-developmental education faculty member, this additional support is an unexpected addition to their workload. The non-developmental education and the developmental education faculty said that they spend a lot of time checking for students' understanding. For the developmental education faculty, checking in with students' understanding is an expected part of their daily teaching. Conversely, for non-

developmental faculty who expect to have to clarify difficult concepts that any student would struggle with, checking to see if underprepared students understand basic skills concepts can slow down an entire class and be detrimental to the college-prepared students.

Both faculty groups cited university policies that affected their teaching. Even though the non-developmental education faculty said that previous enrollment policies affected their teaching and the developmental education faculty said that placement policies affected their teaching, both policies are linked. RSU's previous open-access enrollment policy only required that a student provide a high school transcript to prove he or she had graduated high school or obtained a General Education Diploma (GED) to enroll in the university and obtain a degree. However, in 2013, the enrollment policy was changed to stipulate that students under 21 had to provide an ACT or SAT test scores to be accepted. Students over 21 still did not have to provide any type of test scores, but they are required by academic advising to take an Accuplacer placement test before they can be placed in courses. Many of the students only take the ACT or SAT one time, usually in the fall of their junior year of high school. As a result, some students end up misplaced in developmental courses because they learned another year and a half of reading, writing, and mathematics since they took the ACT and scored below college-ready. In addition, in the past placement scores have been the only indicator of college-readiness and what courses students should be placed in. Although there is an appeals process, many students do not take advantage of an appeal. Therefore, placement and enrollment policies are quite intertwined and may result in issues within the classroom due to students being placed above or below their ability level.

Another similar theme that emerged from both the non-developmental education faculty's interviews and the developmental education faculty's interviews was that of student characteristics. Both faculty groups discussed students' ability levels, their attendance issues, and their help seeking behaviors. The non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty acknowledged that underprepared students had holes in their basic knowledge. Although the non-developmental education faculty were often shocked by these gaps in students' basic knowledge, developmental education faculty expect these gaps because it is their job to fill them. Both groups also recognized that the current trend in public K-12 education of standardized testing was a heavy contributor to the students' spotty foundation.

Both faculty groups discussed the frustrations they felt over underprepared students who do not take advantage of help that is offered to them. Many do not take advantage of tutoring or supplemental instruction. In addition, they often do not attend faculty's office hours. The faculty groups both mentioned the attendance issues that many underprepared students have.

The third common theme the non-developmental education and the developmental education faculty shared was how effective the developmental education program was. All of the non-developmental education faculty felt that the developmental education program had improved over recent years and was effective. In addition, Aidan, Angela, and Julie acknowledged the difficult work that the developmental education faculty do and were complimentary of their dedication. Similarly, the developmental education faculty stated that they felt the developmental education program was effective and had improved and would continue to improve in the coming years. Both groups cited

new initiatives such as the Summer Bridge program and co-requisite courses as having a big impact on students' level of preparedness for college-level courses. Although some of the developmental education faculty worried about their job security, both groups of faculty felt there would be a continued need for developmental education at the university and were positive about its future.

**Differences.** Even though both faculty groups were asked the same interview questions and had common themes that emerged from their interviews, there were definitely differences in their perceptions of developmental education and the students served by that program. One of the themes that emerged from the non-developmental education faculty's interview transcripts was related to college-readiness. The non-developmental education faculty rightly viewed the purpose of developmental education as helping underprepared students attain college-readiness. However, many of the faculty's comments seemed to center on what made the students not college-ready, such as a lack of basic knowledge, they did not learn the material, they lacked maturity, or were unmotivated. These faculty members also seemed concerned about the reasons the students graduated from high school underprepared for college. These comments focused on the students' experiences in high school, such as attending a high school that lacked resources or that did not challenge the student academically. All of the faculty seemed understanding that non-traditional students would enter the university underprepared as many of them had not used their knowledge in mathematics and writing for several years.

The non-developmental faculty also focused on how to fix the gaps in students' knowledge. Many talked about using scaffolding to teach students college-level concepts with supportive materials. Others mentioned boosting students' self-confidence in their



abilities to learn college material or just giving students the chance to have experiences with academic material in a way that they had not previously had the chance to do. In addition, many felt that developmental education should offer students a second chance to learn concepts they somehow missed in grade school or high school to put these students on equal footing with their college-ready classmates.

On the other hand, the developmental education faculty saw the purpose of developmental education as providing everyone an opportunity at obtaining a post-secondary degree. Obviously, the best way to do this was to prepare them for college-level coursework. However, the developmental education faculty were also concerned with providing underprepared students with tools to help them be successful in following courses.

Another theme that was unique to the developmental education faculty was the issues they encountered because they teach developmental education courses. These issues did not center on students' underpreparedness, but on how they were treated by their colleagues and the restrictions that academic departments placed on the developmental education faculty and the requirements for passing developmental education courses. . None of the non-developmental education faculty shared stories of colleagues suggesting they were not qualified to teach their courses or write their course materials such as a syllabus or final exam. Nor did the non-developmental education faculty ever say they had concerns about outdated pedagogy that they were required to use in determining whether or not a student passed their courses. This difference would perhaps suggest that developmental education faculty at this institution are not provided

with the same level of academic freedom and autonomy that non-developmental education faculty take for granted.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, a profile and demographic information for each study participant was provided. In addition, the findings for each research question were presented. The first research question was designed to capture the non-developmental education faculty's experiences with developmental education. The themes that emerged were the impact that underprepared students had on their teaching, the characteristics of this student population, program effectiveness, what made underprepared students not college-ready, and what gaps these students had in their knowledge. The second research question was intended to portray the developmental education faculty's experiences with developmental education. The themes that emerged from their interviews were the impact that underprepared students had on their teaching, the characteristics common among underprepared students, program effectiveness, the purpose of developmental education, and issues they had encountered with colleagues because they teach developmental education. The third research question investigated whether the developmental education faculty and the non-developmental education faculty shared their experiences with developmental education. Both the similarities and differences in their experiences were presented in this chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Discussion, and Implications

This study's purpose was to describe the experiences that non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty have with developmental education at a small, open access university. In this chapter, each research question is summarized and discussed regarding the relevant themes and findings discussed in Chapter IV. Additionally, the implications for practice and future research suggestions are described.

#### Summary and Discussion of Research Question One

The focus of the first research question was to describe the experiences that non-developmental education faculty had with developmental education at a small, open access university. Five themes emerged from the six non-developmental education faculty's interviews. These themes were the impact on teaching, the students' characteristics, not college-ready, gaps in knowledge, and program effectiveness. Following is a discussion of each theme along with supporting literature and the conceptual framework.

**Impact on teaching.** The non-developmental education faculty stated that the major impact underprepared students had on their teaching was when all the students in an introductory course were not at the same level. Angela related the experience she had teaching an introductory healthcare course in which some students would have the workbook completed before the end of the first week and others struggled to keep up with the material. This attitude was similar to that expressed by faculty in Hughes and

Clayton's (2011) study where they noted that faculty felt frustrated by underprepared students in college-level coursework.

Although none of the non-developmental education faculty felt they were watering down course content, both Aidan and Amy stated that they could not cover course content to the depth that they wanted to because of the need to make sure everyone in the course obtained the basic knowledge. Likewise, faculty in a study by Quick (2013) expressed concern that the presence of underprepared students in their courses meant they could not teach the content at the level or depth required. In addition, the non-developmental education faculty in this study admitted to changing their teaching methods to address the presence of underprepared students in their classes. Aidan stated that he gives more group work, walking around the class helping students and "trying to be goofy." Janet explained that she often provided more materials to support underprepared students in her courses. Janet and Aidan's experiences are not uncommon. For example, Quick (2013) conducted a survey of 174 faculty and found that 48% of faculty, not including those who taught in Teacher Education, had adjusted their teaching methods for underprepared students. The faculty in Quick's study felt that the adjustments to their teaching made them less effective teachers. On the contrary, the non-developmental education faculty at RSU felt that changing their teaching style from lecture to more student engagement made them better instructors. Julie expressed that dealing with former developmental writing students in her courses made her a better instructor to the student teachers she taught in an educational methods course because she could better describe the gaps in students' knowledge that she saw in the classroom.

None of the non-developmental education faculty expressed concerns about lowering standards or being pressured by administration to pass more students unlike the faculty interviewed in other studies (Bustillos, 2007; Pitts & White, 1996; Stahl, 1981) had expressed. The faculty in the studies by Butillos (2007), Pitts and White (1996), and Stahl (1981) had all worried that they would be accused of lowering standards or for failing too many students. If there was anywhere that the RSU faculty were concerned about standards, it was the lack of admission standards to the university that had recruited students who would never be successful in college for a variety of reasons and had artificially inflated the university's enrollment numbers. Conversely, they did not feel that the academic standards in their classrooms had suffered. In fact, the faculty seemed to be maintaining high standards and providing supports for the students to meet those standards, which is a technique promoted by Tinto (2004). Tinto recommends using co-requisite courses as a way of holding students to high expectations and providing support at the same time. RSU has recently implemented co-requisite courses and the faculty seem to be embracing them as a positive change.

**Student characteristics.** There were several codes relevant to the theme of student characteristics such as students' ability levels, the disconnect in some students' behavior, their motivation, help seeking behaviors, and attendance issues. All of these relevant codes are also seen in the literature reviewed earlier in this study (Bustillos, 2007; Capt & Oliver, 2012; Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010; Mulvey, 2005; Zientek et al., 2014). For example, Bustillos (2007) found that faculty in her ethnographic study believed students failed because they lacked motivation. In another study, Capt and Oliver (2012) reported that faculty characterized students as not knowing how to study or

manage their time effectively. Similarly, the faculty in Corbishley and Truxaw's (2010) study complained that their students lack the ability to study independently. Finally, the faculty interviewed in Mulvey's (2005) study and by Zientek and colleagues (2014) also noted that underprepared students lack time management, note taking, and prioritization skills. It is not surprising that these characteristics are frequently ascribed to underprepared students as these are often the contributing factors to students becoming underprepared. However, the non-developmental education faculty in this study did not seem to consider these characteristics as applying to all of the underprepared students they encountered. For the most part, the non-developmental education faculty acknowledged that the majority of the students they encountered were hard working and wanted to please their instructors. In fact, Aidan worried that his students were too deferential. When discussing these student characteristics, the non-developmental education faculty felt it was a small number of students who frustrated them by displaying a lack of motivation, not coming to class, or not seeking help.

Before the development of co-requisite courses and the Summer Bridge program and due to the enrollment policies stated earlier, the non-developmental education faculty at RSU may have felt that underprepared students had been thrust upon them as the faculty in Pitts and White's (1981) study had stated. Now, the faculty at RSU reported that the students they were encountering were better prepared. Both Aidan and Charles stated that the co-requisite mathematics courses were of great benefit to the students in their majors who would lose a semester or more to developmental mathematics coursework before they could begin courses in their majors.

Another factor that may affect the non-developmental education faculty's attitudes toward underprepared students may be that the faculty can relate to the students. In Bustillos's (2007) study, many of the faculty had been educated within 4-year, traditional higher education institutions. Therefore, the faculty had difficulty relating to community college students who may have been non-traditional, low income, or working students. However, of the five non-developmental education faculty interviewed for this study, four were from the local area, had attended local high schools, and two had also taught at local high schools. The one faculty member, Aidan, who had been educated in a Western country other than the U.S. stated that the part of the state that RSU is located reminded him of the region he had grown up in. Thus, these faculty members can understand the students' mindset and culture, which may make them more tolerant of student characteristics that faculty interviewed in other studies (cf. Bustillos, 2007; Capt & Oliver, 2012; Corbishley & Truxaw, 2010; Mulvey, 2005; Zientek et al., 2014) found intolerable.

**Not college-ready.** Although the non-developmental education faculty interviewed in this study did not give a textbook definition of developmental education, they all did seem to recognize that the purpose of developmental education was to help students meet college-level benchmarks so that they could be successful in college courses. This understanding is dissimilar to the literature (Boylan, 2002; Pitts & White, 1996) which indicated that many faculty members were unaware of the broader purposes of developmental education. Another way that the non-developmental faculty at RSU differed from the faculty interviewed in the literature was that they attempted to provide support for the underprepared students instead of referring them to other resources on

campus or worse, ignoring their deficiencies (Quick, 2013). Aidan and Amy both said they have to slow down and reteach concepts that students have forgotten or have only a fleeting grasp of. Janet said she often provides materials on Blackboard in the form of rubrics or links to writing resources that underprepared students may need.

Unlike the faculty in other studies (Quick, 2013; Stahl, 1981) who seemed to imply that a students' underpreparedness was a personal failing on the students' part, the non-developmental education faculty interviewed in this study felt that the educational system was more to blame than the students. The non-developmental education faculty clearly stated that it was a failing of the K-12 educational system that was to blame for the majority of students' underpreparedness. These faculty's feelings were consistent with those of faculty interviewed in a study by Corbishley and Truxaw (2010) who indicated that much of students' underpreparedness had to do with teachers teaching to the test and rushing students through mathematical concepts so that they can reach calculus before they graduate from high school. However, Julie and Amy both were quick to say that it was not the fault of the teachers, but that standardized testing and expecting more at a younger age were to blame.

**Gaps in knowledge.** Contrary to the existing literature (Boylan & Saxon, 2012) that indicated some non-developmental education faculty placed a stigma on students in developmental education courses, the non-developmental education faculty at RSU seem to realize that it is not necessarily a lack of intellect that has placed these students in the developmental education program. The non-developmental education faculty seemed acutely aware that a lack of resources in the local high schools were more likely to blame for students' underpreparedness than intellect or a failing of personal responsibility.



Although the faculty did acknowledge that some students in the developmental education program were underprepared due to a lack of concentration on academics in high school, they were more apt to blame the focus on standardized testing and a lack of resources as the key contributing factors to students being underprepared. In fact, Charles lamented that some students may feel stigmatized by their placement in developmental education when they could be underprepared due to a lack of maturity. For example, some students are not ready to learn certain concepts at the time they are introduced to them. Amy seconded this idea. Both as a high school teacher and as a mother, Amy noted that the new standards in K-12 education have pushed some concepts to lower grade levels when students' brains are not developed enough to understand them. She described a recent event when she was helping her third grade son with his mathematics homework. According to her, "one of the questions had to do with commutative property. When I first started teaching, commutative property was a freshman level [concept]."

Although Julie acknowledged that high school teaching has become very prescriptive, which she cites as the reason she switched to post-secondary education, Julie seemed to be the one faculty member whose perception of underprepared students was that they had not been opened up to the wonders of the academic world. To an extent, Julie is correct. However, her attitude toward underprepared students seemed to be more consistent with Horner's (2011) description of faculty's attitudes about literacy. Horner (2011) stated that teaching students in basic writing was perceived as a means for "gifting them with literacy and all the blessings presumably attendant upon its possession" (p. 10). Julie did recognize that it is fine that some students may decide that academia and a college career is not right for them.

**Program effectiveness.** The majority of the non-developmental education faculty interviewed for this study acknowledged that teaching at an open-access university meant that many students would be academically underprepared in some way. When combined with the financially strapped local school systems, the faculty understood that RSU was the only opportunity that many of the students would have to obtain a degree. This attitude seems more in line with those of faculty teaching at community colleges, which are also open-access. In studies by Boylan (2002) and Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) community college faculty viewed their role as providing educational opportunities for students who may not otherwise be accepted at a selective institution. Perhaps the reason is that RSU is an open access institution that initially started as a community college.

In addition, the non-developmental education faculty felt that the developmental education program was effective and continued to improve with the most recent initiatives such as co-requisite courses and the Summer Bridge program. Some faculty recognized that these initiatives have made their teaching easier because they have better prepared students entering their courses. The faculty's approval of developmental education seems contrary to several studies (cf. Overby, 2004; Stahl, 1981, Pitts & White, 1996) that were conducted over the years in which non-developmental education faculty doubted the effectiveness of developmental education.

The existing literature (e.g., Alstadt, 2012; Boylan & Saxon, 2012; Gardner, 2017) indicated faculty are more supportive of initiatives when they perceive them as having a greater chance of success. Although Charles stressed several times that he wanted to make sure the university was measuring and assessing the Summer Bridge

program, he was very hopeful because it seemed successful. Perhaps the non-developmental education faculty have become more supportive of developmental education over time because they can tangibly see the results of successful students in their classrooms.

### **Summary and Discussion of Research Question Two**

The purpose of the second research question was to describe the perceptions developmental education faculty had with the developmental education program at a small, open access university. Five themes emerged from interviews with the developmental education faculty. These themes included impact on teaching, purpose of developmental education, student characteristics, issues encountered by developmental educators, and program effectiveness.

**Impact on teaching.** Many of the developmental education faculty discussed strategies they used to try to engage students in the learning process or that they incorporated into their courses to make up for their academic deficiencies. Lynn spoke at length regarding different approaches she had tried from providing extra credit for students completing a worksheet within the Math Lab so that they were exposed to tutoring to discussing their study strategies with them. Courtney and Jessica both acknowledged that they work to engage their students in the learning process. Developmental education faculty commonly incorporate note taking, time management, and other learning strategies into their courses to assist their students (Capt & Oliver, 2012; Zientek et al., 2014).

More than the students themselves and the adjustments to their teaching strategies, the developmental education faculty noted that placement practices had a

definite impact on their teaching. Courtney and Jessica both felt that RSU's current placement practices misplaced students who should be in higher or lower level courses. Therefore, they perceived that more reliable and valid placement methods are needed. Faculty in studies by Hughes and Clayton (2011) and Nora (2009) also wanted more reliable methods of placement that would help identify students' needs and provide a plan for completion, not just provide an entry point for coursework. The developmental education faculty at RSU stated that students in their courses who were misplaced in a lower course based on a single set of ACT scores often became unmotivated and saw their time in the developmental education classroom as pointless.

**Purpose of developmental education.** Like the faculty interviewed by Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002), the developmental education faculty at RSU felt the purpose of developmental education was for them to guide the students through the coursework in order for them to improve their skills enough to become college-ready. According to Joshua, "Developmental education is the idea that everybody can learn but not necessarily at the same pace." Additionally, Joshua felt the purpose of developmental education was to complement what students already know with what they do not and to teach them strategies for how to be successful. "It's a catch up and enriching at the same time," he explained. Similarly, Marsha felt that everybody should have an opportunity no matter what kind of background they come from. She said, "Our job is to give them as many tools as we can to help them be able to navigate what's going on and we want people to succeed." Lynn described developmental education in this way, "We are not an island. We're a peninsula. We're leading to the math. You're preparing them for college level."

Deil-Amen and Rosenbaum (2002) were critical of an approach to developmental education that focused on providing educational opportunity to students no matter what their skill levels. The researchers felt it gave students unrealistic expectations of their skills. However, the developmental education faculty interviewed for this study stated that the students they encountered are more likely to need to build confidence in their skills. As a result, the faculty felt it was part of their job to help the students increase their confidence. In fact, Joshua stated that he prefers to teach developmental education because he can see the changes in the students as they go through the course. “They start to learn things and they start to become more confident. And I think that’s a big part of instilling education is instilling confidence in the student that they are able to learn and they can succeed,” he explained.

**Student characteristics.** Joshua, Lynn, and Marsha, all admitted to being frustrated by students who seemed to be wasting their time and did not want to do the required work to succeed in their courses. Lynn said that some students did not realize that they had to do work outside of class and prepare for the next class. In addition, the developmental education faculty also acknowledged that some of their students lack self-regulatory behavior, have trouble with attendance and time management, and do not have intrinsic motivation. The developmental education faculty’s experiences are similar to that reported by developmental education faculty in studies by Mulvey (2005) and Zientek and colleagues (2014). The faculty in both of these studies noted that students in developmental education courses often did not expect to spend time outside of class studying and that they did not have the maturity level for all of the responsibilities that college demands. Faculty in other studies (Egan et al., 2014; Quick, 2013) said that

working with underprepared students were a source of stress. However, overall, the developmental education faculty at RSU mostly felt their students worked hard and wanted to improve their skills. Lynn especially felt it was her duty as a developmental education faculty member to help her students succeed.

Developmental education faculty in some of the existing literature (cf. Adams, Gearhart, Miller, & Roberts, 2009; Lesley, 2004; Robinson, 2009; Zeas, 2013) perceived their students as not caring about their courses and showing hostility toward the instructor out of resentment for being placed in a developmental education course. They described their students as bitter, resentful, or hostile. Contrary to the experiences of the faculty in these studies, the developmental education faculty at RSU did not share similar descriptions of the students that they encountered in their classrooms. In fact, Jessica said that she had encountered such students at another institution she had taught at; however, she had not encountered those types of students at RSU.

**Issues encountered by developmental education faculty.** According to the literature (Datta, 2010; Horner, 2011; Robinson, 2009), developmental educators who teach in centralized developmental education programs are often isolated from their non-developmental education peers. Although the faculty at RSU teach within a centralized program, they are still connected to the academic departments. For example, Jessica, who is the Director of Developmental English, is jointly appointed between the English Department and University College. In addition, her office is within the English Department and her tenure committee is made up of English faculty members. Joshua's office is within the academic department, which is only separated by a door from University College. The English and Mathematics Departments still have quite a bit of

influence on the curriculum of the developmental education courses that feed into their college level courses. Finally, the developmental education faculty are often asked to teach college-level courses, especially during the spring semesters when the need for developmental education coursework is much lower. As a result, there is a level of collaboration and familiarity that is not often experienced by faculty in centralized programs. The centralized programs described in some of the existing research studies (Bustillos, 2007; Datta, 2010; Overby, 2004; Pitts & White, 1996) indicated that developmental education faculty are isolated from the non-developmental education faculty and neither faculty group are aware of the goals and objectives of each other's programs. However, this relationship between the non-developmental education and the developmental education faculty at RSU have not kept the developmental education faculty from feeling stigmatized.

Each one of the developmental education faculty members related stories in which they had been made to feel that either their students or they were less than the college prepared students and non-developmental education faculty. These instances included an exit exam that the developmental education faculty described as unfair and outdated, a required standardized syllabus for developmental writing courses, implications that developmental education faculty were not qualified to write final exams, or that they are not official members of the university faculty, and a demotion due to a lack of tenure-track status. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), there are three psychological needs that must be fulfilled for people to feel self-determined. These needs are autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Briefly, autonomy means that people feel that they are free to act of their own will and that no outside force is controlling their

behaviors. Relatedness means that one feels supported and a sense of belonging.

Competence means that a person feels that they have an effect on their environment and can obtain the outcomes he or she desires.

The instances related by the developmental education faculty in their interviews point to all three of the basic psychological needs being thwarted. When non-developmental education faculty in a separate academic department dictate that the developmental education faculty must use an exit exam or a standardized syllabus, the developmental education faculty may feel a lack of autonomy in their courses and teaching. Autonomy is something non-developmental education faculty take for granted. In addition, when a developmental education faculty's qualifications for writing a final exam or to direct a program are questioned, the developmental education faculty member may feel he or she is being viewed as less competent than non-developmental education faculty colleagues. Finally, when non-developmental education faculty imply that the developmental education faculty are not official members of the university faculty due to their lack of tenure and the student population that they teach, the developmental education faculty may feel a lack of relatedness to their colleagues and the campus community.

Deci and Ryan (2000) emphasized that all three of these needs must be fulfilled for a person to feel whole and supported. When even just one of these needs is not met or is thwarted, it results in the person suffering psychologically and possibly physically and may lead to alienation. Although none of the developmental education faculty members interviewed for this study expressed any ill-effect from these encounters, it is important



to note the possible effects to these faculty members' well-being if these sorts of incidents continue to happen.

The need for developmental education faculty to feel as much autonomy, relatedness, and competence as their non-developmental education colleagues highlights the importance of equality among the faculty in higher education. Boylan and Saxon (2012) emphasized that developmental education faculty must be treated in the same way that non-developmental education faculty are. This treatment includes the same job status, rank, and salary as well as the autonomy to choose materials, write their own syllabi, and to give input on the developmental education program. Unfortunately, it seems from the experiences of the developmental education faculty at RSU that they are not being treated as equals to the non-developmental education faculty. Neither the administration that could make the positions tenure-track and set the salaries nor their colleagues who question the developmental education faculty's place within the university are giving them equal treatment.

**Program effectiveness.** The developmental education faculty were the first to admit that developing an effective program at RSU has been a process. Lynn related that she has had the experience as a marshal at graduation and not seeing a lot of her former students from developmental mathematics. "I would watch all of these students go by and unfortunately would not see a lot of students that I had. I would wonder 'My goodness, where are they?'" she explained. Marsha felt that past difficulties with program effectiveness had to do with a lack of instructional consistency among the adjunct instructors. Part of this discrepancy, Marsha thought, was due to a lack of training. She said, "[The adjuncts] didn't really understand using models and talking to

students at their level.” In addition, she believed that once the exit exam was eliminated two years ago that the program quickly increased in effectiveness. “It was a big distraction. That test is not going to predict how that student is going to do on a writing assignment because [that test] is not the kind of assignment that people have in college,” Marsha stated.

During her interview, Jessica stated that she felt the entire writing program needed to be redesigned, but that the state standards for course uniformity among the state universities for more course transferability greatly restricted the changes that could be made. However, Jessica did shared information that had been collected on the students exiting the developmental writing program after the exit exam was eliminated. The information indicated that the students who had been through developmental writing were as successful or even more successful in freshman composition as college-ready students. This information is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Overby (2004) who discovered that the students who had taken developmental coursework at her institution did as well or outperformed college-ready students.

In recent years, many institutions across the country have redesigned their developmental education courses due to pressure created by special interest groups like Complete College America (Boylan, Calderwood, & Bonham, 2017). Rural State University with prompting from the state has also redesigned its program. As a result, RSU has created co-requisite courses that allow students to obtain college credit and remediation at the same time. Therefore, there are fewer and fewer traditional, standalone developmental courses offered each semester. Because new initiatives are in their infancy and some are still in the pilot stage, it is impossible at this point to know

whether or not they are effective beyond the anecdotal information that the instructors are seeing students who pass the co-requisite courses move on to college-level work and succeed. As Boylan and colleagues (2017) noted, reform efforts are having “a positive impact on retention and completion” (p. 12); however, these reforms only focus on getting students through developmental coursework and the gateway courses. The barriers that may have made a student underprepared to begin with, such as poverty, family problems, and language barriers, do not disappear because the student successfully completed these courses. As a result, redesigning the program will not provide the necessary additional support to these students that they will need to navigate the remainder of their college career. Although the non-developmental education faculty like the new initiatives and believe they are beneficial to the students, Marsha and Joshua were both fearful that they may not have jobs soon. On the other hand, Jessica and Lynn were optimistic about the future of University College and the developmental education program. Perhaps the next niche the developmental educators at RSU should explore is how to support underprepared students through to graduation.

### **Summary and Discussion for Research Question Three**

Research question three was designed to determine if the non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty had shared experiences with developmental education. As a result, this section focuses on discussing the similarities and differences between the two faculty groups' experiences and making connections between the faculty's experiences and the conceptual framework. No studies could be found that compared non-developmental education faculty's experiences with developmental education to developmental education faculty's experiences. Therefore,

this study provides a unique perspective for others to consider for future research in this area.

Three common themes did emerge from the interviews with both groups of faculty: impact on teaching, student characteristics, and program effectiveness. However, the other themes were not similar. The non-developmental education faculty focused on the students not being college-ready and the gaps in students' knowledge. On the other hand, the developmental education faculty focused on the broader purposes of developmental education and the issues they have encountered as developmental educators.

**Similarities.** Although the overarching emergent themes of impact on teaching, student characteristics, and program effectiveness are all similar, when examining the relevant codes within these themes, there are differences in how the faculty experience developmental education. The relevant codes that emerged from the non-developmental education faculty's interviews were that they had to adjust their teaching style for underprepared students in their classes; they could not cover all of the course content; students in introductory courses were at all different levels, which made the instruction difficult; they had to provide extra support; and often had to reteach basic skills. Even though the non-developmental education faculty did not seem concerned that underprepared students had this type of impact on their teaching, they do not expect to encounter these issues when teaching a college-level course. For example, Julie talked about students in her freshman composition course who had previously been in developmental writing. She said that these students often did not do the reading and were lost in class. Of course, Julie had every right to expect the students in her classes to do

the work assigned. However, rather than being unmotivated or not caring, the likelihood is that these students did not understand how to approach the reading or felt overwhelmed by it. A non-developmental education faculty member like Julie would not expect to have to break the assignments down to this level for her students. On the other hand, a developmental education faculty member would fully expect to have to explain to his or her students how to approach a homework assignment.

All the relevant codes that emerged from the non-developmental education faculty's interviews regarding this theme are issues that any experienced developmental education faculty would expect when teaching underprepared students. These relevant codes included a lack of experience with academic material, which would indicate a need for the instructor to explain how students are to approach assignments. Therefore, although both faculty groups acknowledged that underprepared students had an impact on their teaching, the difference was that non-developmental education faculty did not expect to have to deal with these issues in their classrooms while these issues were a daily part of the work that developmental education faculty do.

Perhaps the differences in expectations of the two faculty groups and their perceptions of underprepared students and the impact that these students have on their teaching is rooted in the source of each faculty group's motivation. In the instance of non-developmental education faculty encountering underprepared students in their courses, the non-developmental education faculty member may feel a lack of autonomy. At least three of the non-developmental education faculty members indicated in their interviews that teaching at an open-access university meant that they would also teach underprepared students. In addition, some of the non-developmental education faculty

cited past enrollment policies as creating issues for them in the classroom. In both of these instances, the faculty cannot control the open-access mission of the university nor the enrollment policies; therefore, they may feel a lack of autonomy or control in keeping underprepared students out of their courses.

The satisfaction of all three psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness), which are part of self-determination theory, the conceptual framework of this study, directly impact motivation (Trépanier et al., 2013). It is assumed that the non-developmental education faculty feel intrinsically motivated to teach college-prepared students due to their love of teaching and a shared interest in the discipline. However, due to the issues that accompany teaching underprepared students and their possible feelings that this is more a function of teaching at an open-access university, the non-developmental education faculty may feel extrinsically motivated when teaching underprepared students. More specifically, the non-developmental education faculty may feel extrinsic motivation with external regulation.

Deci and Ryan (2000) identified a continuum of motivation that ranged from intrinsic motivation, which is the most desirable type of motivation, to extrinsic motivation to amotivation or no motivation. Within extrinsic motivation there is external regulation (the least autonomous type of motivation), introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. These varying types of extrinsic motivation are not all negative. As a person feels more autonomy and internalizes the goals of the external influences, he or she can obtain integrated regulation, which is nearly as powerful as intrinsic motivation. With external regulation of extrinsic motivation, a person is driven by external forces, in this case, university policies, to act. As a result, their motivation

for teaching these students becomes extrinsic; they are externally motivated to teach and interact with these students due to University policies and receive no rewards, such as pay raises or recognition, for teaching underprepared students because it is an expectation of the University administration. It should be noted that the non-developmental education faculty may feel the varying degrees of motivation when teaching underprepared students depending on how fully the faculty member has internalized the goals of the University. In the worst instances, a non-developmental education faculty member may feel amotivation, or a lack of motivation, when teaching underprepared students. None of the non-developmental education faculty interviewed for this study exhibited amotivation.

On the other hand, it is assumed that since the developmental education faculty have chosen to teach underprepared students as their career that they feel intrinsically motivated when teaching them. Three of the four developmental education faculty interviewed stated that they chose to work with underprepared students out of a need to help students succeed. Therefore, they feel self-determined in their choice, which indicates intrinsic motivation. In addition, the developmental education faculty's willingness to attend professional development opportunities, try new teaching techniques, and teach redesigned courses indicates that they have an internal need to learn and grow, which also points to intrinsic motivation.

The second similar theme that emerged from the interviews was that of students' characteristics. Although both faculty groups did seem frustrated by some of the characteristics that underprepared students commonly exhibited, such as students' ability levels, a lack of help seeking behaviors, and attendance issues, there again was a

difference in how the groups experienced these characteristics. Neither faculty group liked some of these behaviors; however, the non-developmental education faculty seemed baffled by these students' actions, more than likely because they had never experienced academia in the same way that these students had. The first interview question asked both faculty groups if they had been prepared for college and what had motivated them to become a college professor or developmental education faculty member. All of the non-developmental education faculty said that they were academically prepared for college. In addition, they all expressed that their motivation for becoming a college professor was from a love of their discipline and/or for learning and academic pursuit. Although the developmental education faculty also said that they were academically prepared, they discussed struggling in school and feeling out of place in academia as an undergraduate. In addition, most of the developmental education faculty stated that they started teaching developmental education classes because they wanted to help students.

As a result, the non-developmental education faculty more than likely identify these student characteristics as being counterproductive to the students' ability to be successful in their courses. In addition, they may interpret these actions as a student not caring about his or her education or, as Julie described, that the students are lost. However, the developmental education faculty more than likely understand that these students' behaviors are the result of the students not trusting themselves or not trusting their instructors due to a series of bad experiences with education that resulted in them becoming underprepared. Consequently, it is the developmental education faculty's role to gain the students' trust and to give the students experiences with academic material that help build their confidence. These are characteristics that non-developmental



education faculty expect their students to walk into the classroom possessing and which they do not expect to have to build in their students.

The final theme that was similar among the two faculty groups was the effectiveness of the developmental education program. Both faculty groups felt the new initiatives in developmental education were positive and would have a positive impact on students. However, the non-developmental education faculty were more likely to approve of these initiatives because they were experiencing a better prepared and better-quality student in their classrooms than they had seen in the past. Therefore, they felt these initiatives were making their teaching lives better. Even though the developmental education faculty saw the new initiatives as being beneficial to the students, the full-time instructors (Marsha and Joshua) worried that they were eliminating their own jobs by teaching in the Summer Bridge or the co-requisite courses. Only the two tenured directors who would have positions within the academic departments if developmental education was eliminated were hopeful about the future of the program.

**Differences.** The themes that emerged from the non-developmental education faculty centered around students not being college-ready and the gaps in the students' knowledge. The non-developmental education faculty's experiences focused on the causes for students not being college-ready and the actions the faculty had to take in the classroom to help bridge the gap in the students' knowledge, such as scaffolding, building confidence, and giving the students experience with academic materials. On the other hand, the themes that emerged from developmental education faculty's interviews that were different than those of the non-developmental education faculty were the general purpose of developmental education and the issues encountered by the

developmental education faculty. Regarding the purpose of developmental education, the developmental education faculty were basically justifying the need for developmental education and their positions. They discussed how developmental education gave students who otherwise would not have been admitted to a selective institution the chance at a university education. They prepared underprepared students for college-level courses by providing tools, such as learning support, learning strategies, and coping mechanisms to help the students become successful.

The major difference that the developmental education faculty discussed was the issues they encountered regarding a lack of control over the curriculum, ethical issues they had had with some of the pedagogy, and a lack of respect from their non-developmental education peers. This difference creates a chasm between the two faculty groups' experiences. The non-developmental education faculty never discussed not having control over the curriculum taught in their courses. None of them expressed concerns about how they were being asked to teach their courses. None of the non-developmental education faculty shared experiences about having their qualifications questioned.

Overall, the two faculty groups did not have a shared experience of developmental education at RSU. Although on the surface the two groups seem to have shared some experiences, upon further examination, how they experience developmental education is vastly different. The primary difference seemed to be the expectations of each group. The issues that the non-developmental education faculty experienced with underprepared students were not issues they expected to face in their classrooms. However, the developmental education faculty experienced these issues with students as

part of their daily work and part of the purpose of developmental education. Due to these differing expectations, the non-developmental education faculty's experiences with developmental education were different from the developmental education faculty because of the very nature of their work. Non-developmental education faculty's primary experiences are with college-ready students. As a result, their perceptions of underprepared students are focused on the gaps in the underprepared students' knowledge and the additional and more creative instruction these deficits require from the non-developmental education faculty. Conversely, developmental education faculty's experiences are different because filling the gaps in the students' knowledge through additional and more creative instruction is the primary purpose of their jobs.

### **Implications for Practice**

Both faculty groups interviewed in this study had concerns about student characteristics. Although the developmental education faculty expect some of these characteristics because they are often the nature of the underprepared student, the non-developmental education faculty do not expect to have to deal with some of the underprepared students' self-defeating characteristics. As a result, professional development for non-developmental education faculty at open-access institutions should be conducted to help faculty teaching introductory courses learn strategies for assisting these students. This professional development is especially needed because as Boylan et al. (2017) pointed out in their study these characteristics do not suddenly go away when underprepared students matriculate to college-level coursework. In addition, some of this professional development should be offered by developmental education faculty.

Holding professional development opportunities for non-developmental education faculty conducted by developmental education faculty will potentially solve two problems. First, sharing more data and information about developmental education and its students will raise awareness among the non-developmental education faculty regarding developments in the profession both on the national level and within individual institutions. If the non-developmental education faculty are made more aware of the data and successes of developmental education programs, then they are more than likely going to be supportive of developmental education. The second issue this type of professional development will help solve is by raising the profile of the developmental education faculty within their institutions. When non-developmental education faculty are unfamiliar with their developmental education colleagues, they are more likely to be skeptical of developmental education faculty's qualifications and expertise. Also, it is perhaps more difficult for the non-developmental education faculty to be skeptical of their developmental education colleagues when they know them personally.

It is also important that non-developmental education faculty support equal rights within the campus community for their developmental education colleagues. They should advocate with administration for developmental education faculty to have equal pay, rank, and title as the non-developmental education faculty. Additionally, much like Boylan and Saxon (2002) recommend that administration does not tolerate negative talk about developmental education and its students, it is up to non-developmental education faculty to do the same among their peers within the academic departments. As Courtney pointed out in her interview, without developmental education, the non-developmental education faculty would not have any students to teach. A large part of valuing

developmental education means recognizing and supporting the hard work of the developmental education faculty.

Therefore, it is imperative that both the administration of institutions that offer developmental education courses and the non-developmental education faculty value the opportunity that these courses provide for students. In an era where some type of post-secondary credentialing is needed for a person to earn a livable wage, the doors of higher education have opened to students who otherwise would not have had access to a post-secondary degree. These students include low-income and underprepared students. At an open-access institution such as RSU, administration should recognize that programs, such as developmental education, which may seem like a drain on university resources are an essential function of supporting these students. In fact, if the university wants students in developmental education to continue to be successful once they exit their developmental courses, then additional supports need to be put into place to ensure these students' success. As Boylan et al. (2017) point out, the life issues, behaviors, and other challenges that brought them to developmental education to begin with do not suddenly disappear because they have passed their developmental coursework and moved on to the gateway courses. As a result, administration should recognize that this population of students will need robust interventions from professional academic advisors and/or academic coaches, which will require additional funding of these services. Mentoring is another area this student population would greatly benefit from and for which administrators need to allocate funds and support.

It was uplifting to see that the non-developmental education faculty interviewed for this study were supportive of the idea that underprepared students could be admitted

to RSU with a dream and with hard work that dream could become a reality.

Unfortunately, not all non-developmental education faculty have that opinion.

Specifically, at RSU, many of the veteran faculty members remember just a few years ago when the only thing required for admittance was a high school diploma. Admittedly, encountering barely literate students in their classrooms was an immense challenge.

However, things have changed and the developmental education program is changing and evolving.

During the interviews, both the developmental education faculty and the non-developmental education faculty related stories of students who had started the university in developmental education courses and had successfully graduated and were gainfully employed. Some of these students even ended up working as tutors in the subjects that they had originally taken a developmental course in. To overcome some of the issues of the past, both the developmental education program and the non-developmental education faculty need to promote and talk about the success stories. Although quantitative data are what most legislators, administrators, and faculty want to hear about when discussing success and graduation rates, the qualitative data of the students' personal stories are just as important and sometimes even more compelling than the numbers. Sharing students' stories allows faculty, administrators, and staff across campus to recognize the student whom they may have encountered during the students' journey at the institution and acknowledge the part they played in the students' success.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Many of the non-developmental education faculty mentioned in their interviews that teaching underprepared students in their introductory courses made them focus more

on active learning, which made them more engaged instructors. Future research may focus on determining the instructional methods of faculty in open-access institutions versus those at selective institutions. An exploration of whether one population of instructors are more likely to lecture rather than use active learning techniques may reveal information about instructor expectations of students' at open-access institutions versus selective institutions.

In addition, there needs to be more research that focuses on learning from the experiences of developmental education faculty within higher education. Many studies focus on developmental education faculty's experiences with students. To this date, I was unable to locate any studies that focused primarily on developmental education faculty's experiences within the educational community. It is important to understand the experiences of developmental education faculty because they are the ones who deliver the coursework and have the closest relationships with underprepared students. As Datta (2010) pointed out, the developmental education faculty are the face of developmental education to the students. Understanding the feelings and job satisfaction of developmental education faculty could be central to recognizing the role they have in higher education.

Additional new research on faculty's experiences should compare the experiences of developmental education faculty versus non-developmental education faculty. For example, a quantitative study that asks for each faculty group to share salary, ranking, and title in itself would be enlightening. Further research to compare if both of these faculty groups have a shared experience with developmental education would be valuable. However, a study that focused on non-developmental education faculty's

experiences within the campus environment compared to the developmental education faculty's experiences would perhaps give insight regarding how each group perceives that they are valued within higher education.

Similarly, a survey that asks each faculty group to share insight about their job satisfaction and the amount of support they feel from colleagues and administration would also be important. In comparing the experiences of each faculty group, it is hoped that light will be shed on the inequities between these two faculty groups in higher education. Each faculty group has their own set of pressures; therefore, such a study may give depth to understanding the contributing factors that make faculty feel fulfilled by their jobs. Job satisfaction is not a common concern within academia; thus, this type of study would be unique research.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of non-developmental education faculty and developmental education faculty regarding developmental education at a small, open-access university. The experiences of the non-developmental education faculty focused on the impact that underprepared students had on their teaching, the underprepared students' characteristics, the fact that the students were not college-ready, the gaps in the students' knowledge and the program effectiveness of developmental education. The developmental education faculty's experiences centered on the impact underprepared students had on their teaching, the purpose of developmental education, the characteristics of underprepared students, issues encountered by developmental educators, and the program effectiveness.



Although the two faculty groups' had some similar themes emerge from their interviews, the way in which the faculty experienced developmental education was different. Due to the function of each faculty groups' positions, non-developmental education faculty did not expect to encounter some of the issues such as gaps in the students' basic knowledge and motivational issues that they often experienced with underprepared students in their classes. On the other hand, because developmental education faculty's function is to teach underprepared students, they did expect to encounter these challenges. The common themes that emerged from the interviews initially seemed like the non-developmental education faculty and the developmental education faculty had a shared experience with developmental education. However, upon further consideration the data indicated that they do not have a shared experience.

This study is unique because no existing research studies that compared the experiences of non-developmental education faculty to developmental education faculty could be located. Therefore, it fills a gap in the literature that was not previously explored. As a result, this research could serve as a starting point for other researchers to conduct their own studies. As this study was limited to one 4-year public institution, future studies might explore 2-year institutions or 4-year private institutions. Also, this study may benefit developmental education faculty, non-developmental education faculty, and administrators by providing insights into the experiences that faculty have with developmental education. Further, it is hoped that this study will help validate the experiences that developmental education faculty and non-developmental education faculty may have when teaching underprepared students. This validation may allow them to understand that they are not alone in their daily work to provide access to higher

education to a population of students who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to earn a degree. Finally, it is hoped that both groups of faculty will know that the work they are doing is needed, important, and valued.

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about student success and placement in developmental mathematics courses.

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## APPENDIX A

## IRB Approved Document



**Institutional Review Board**  
**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**  
 2405 Avenue I, Suite E, Huntsville, TX  
 77341-2448 Phone: 936.294.4875  
 Fax: 936.294.3622  
[irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu)  
[www.shsu.edu/~rgs\\_www/irb/](http://www.shsu.edu/~rgs_www/irb/)

DATE: October 3, 2017

TO: Glenna Heckler-Todt [Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Nara Martirosyan]

FROM: Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB

PROTOCOL #: 2017-09-36449

PROJECT TITLE: *Faculty Perceptions of Developmental Education: A Phenomenological Study [T/D]*

SUBMISSION TYPE: INITIAL REVIEW

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: October 2, 2017

**EXPIRATION DATE:** **October 2, 2018**

REVIEW TYPE: EXPEDITED

REVIEW CATEGORIES: 7

The Sam Houston State University (SHSU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received **Expe dited** Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this

procedure which are found on the Application Page to the SHSU IRB website.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. **Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of October 2, 2018. When you have completed the project, a Final Report must be submitted to ORSP in order to close the project file.**

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 936-294-4875 or [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu). Please include your project title and protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Donna Desforges

IRB Chair, PHSC

PHSC-IRB



Dear Colleagues,

I am conducting a research project in fulfillment of my dissertation for my doctorate in Developmental Education Administration from Sam Houston State University. This project, titled Faculty Perceptions of Developmental Education: A Phenomenological Study, involves interviewing faculty who teach developmental education courses as well as faculty who do not teach developmental education regarding their experiences with developmental education at a small, open access university. The interviews will be 60-90 minutes long and the participants will be given the opportunity to review the verbatim transcript of their interview for accuracy.

I am looking for participants who meet the following criteria:

Faculty who have NEVER taught developmental education courses should meet these criteria:

- Be either tenured or tenure-track faculty
- Never taught developmental coursework, but has taught underprepared students in the college-level courses you teach
- Have taught for at least 2 academic years at this institution.

Faculty who teach developmental education should meet these criteria:

- Be either a full-time instructor (FTI) or be tenured or tenure-track faculty.
- Currently teach developmental education.
- Have taught for at least 2 academic years at this institution.

There are no known risks in participating in this study. All participants will be given pseudonyms as will the institution. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the data collection process. The audio recordings and interview transcripts will be stored in an encrypted file on my personal computer that only I will be able to access. The files will be on my personal home computer located at my home residence. The computer will be kept in a room that will be locked. Any paper copies will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my residence. The transcript data and audio recordings will be password protected and will be destroyed after one year. In addition, the site of the research has been given a pseudonym in the dissertation proposal and each participant during transcription of the interviews will be assigned a pseudonym as well.

Results of the study will be written into a dissertation and may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Participant identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law. All documents will be stored at my residence for a period of 1 year, at which point the documents will be destroyed.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please either respond to this email or call me at 740-351-3277.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Glenna Heckler-Todt



My name is Glenna Heckler-Todt, and I am a doctoral student in the Developmental Education Administration program at Sam Houston State University. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to participate in a research study regarding your experiences with developmental education. You have been asked to participate in this study because you either teach college-level courses and routinely have underprepared students in your courses, or you currently teach developmental education courses.

The research is rather straightforward, and I do not expect the research to pose any risk to any of the participants. If you consent to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for about 60-90 minutes regarding your experiences with developmental education and underprepared students as they relate to your position at the university. With your consent, your interview will be voice recorded. Later, I will use the voice recording to transcribe verbatim our interview. After which, you will be given the chance to review the transcript for accuracy, requiring another 30 minutes of your time. Any data that is collected from this interview will be used only for the purposes of completing this study. The data collected will be destroyed after one year. Participants will not be paid or otherwise compensated for their participation in this project.

Your participation is voluntary. If you should decide not to participate in this study, your decision will not affect your future relations with the researcher or with Sam Houston State University. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue at any point in the research without affecting that relationship. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me at any time; my contact information is listed below. If you are interested, the results of this study will be available at the conclusion of this project.

Feel free to contact me with questions about this research at [gsh009@shsu.edu](mailto:gsh009@shsu.edu) or 267- 218-3324. You may also contact the faculty sponsor for this dissertation, Dr. Nara Martirosyan at [nxm021@shsu.edu](mailto:nxm021@shsu.edu) or by phone at 936-294-2493. If you have questions about your rights as research participants, please contact Sharla Miles, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at Sam Houston State University, [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu) or 936-294-4875.



Please select one of the options below.

- ☐ I understand the above and consent to participate.
- ☐ I do not wish to participate in the  
current study.

Please check the box below indicating you consent to being audio recorded for participating in this research.

- ☐ I understand that by agreeing to participate in this study I will be audio recorded during the interview stage of the research.

SHSU Developmental Education  
Administration Sam Houston State  
University  
Huntsville, TX 77341  
Phone: (252) 902-6509

Sharla Miles  
Office of Research and Sponsored  
Programs Sam Houston State  
University  
Huntsville, TX 77341  
Phone: (936) 294-4875  
Email: [irb@shsu.edu](mailto:irb@shsu.edu)

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions

#### *Questions for Non-Developmental Education Faculty:*

1. Please give me some background information about yourself, such as your educational background, if you are a First Generation college student, were you prepared for college as an undergraduate, how long have you taught at RSU, and any other information you feel may be pertinent to our conversation.
2. What motivated you to become a college professor?
3. Please describe the student population at this institution.
4. Please define the term developmental education.
5. Please describe the purpose of developmental education within the university.
6. Please describe what it means for a student to be underprepared.
7. Please describe your experiences with developmental education at this institution.
8. Please describe what impact underprepared students have on your teaching.
9. Please explain how university policies regarding developmental education has an effect on your teaching.
10. Please describe how effective the developmental education program is at preparing students for college-level coursework.
11. What do you see as the future of developmental education at this institution?

#### *Questions for Developmental Education Faculty:*

1. Please give me some background information about yourself, such as your educational background, if you are a First Generation college student, were you

prepared for college as an undergraduate, how long have you taught at RSU, and any other information you feel may be pertinent to our conversation.

2. What motivated you to become a developmental educator?
3. Please describe the student population at this institution.
4. Please define the term developmental education.
5. Please describe the purpose of developmental education within the university.
6. Please describe what it means for a student to be underprepared.
7. Please describe your experiences as a developmental educator at this institution?
8. Please describe the impact that underprepared students have on your teaching.
9. Please explain how university policies regarding developmental education has an effect on your teaching.
10. Please describe how effective the developmental education program is at preparing students for college-level coursework.
11. What do you see as the future of developmental education at this institution?

## VITA

### Glenna Heckler-Todt

#### EDUCATION

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Doctorate Developmental Education Administration</b>                      | <b>2018</b> |
| Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX                                 |             |
| <b>Masters of Arts Degree in English Literature</b>                          | <b>1997</b> |
| De Paul University, Chicago, IL  |             |
| <b>Bachelor of Arts Degree in English with a minor in Political Science.</b> | <b>1992</b> |
| Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, IL                                  |             |

#### PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Certification as a Developmental Education Specialist</b> | <b>2014</b> |
| Kellogg Institute, Appalachian State University, Boone, NC   |             |

#### ADMINISTRATION EXPERIENCE

**Shawnee State University, Portsmouth, Ohio**  
**Director of Advising and Academic Resources**  
**Student Success Center, 2015-Present**

*Overarching Responsibilities:*

- Supervise all aspects of the Student Success Center, including advising, accessibility services, College Credit Plus, Title III grant, testing, tutoring, supplemental instruction, workshops, computer labs, and student employment in the center.
- Supervise Assistant Director of Advising and Academic Resources, 3 professional academic advisors, 2 Accessibility Services Coordinators, 2 Administrative Assistants, and 10+ student employees.
- Attend senior Academic Affairs leadership meetings conducted by the Provost.
- Initiate projects assigned by the Provost or Dean of University College.
- Implement programs and policies that promote student success.
- Liaise with other non-academic units and colleges within the university, departments, and faculty.
- Liaise with area K-12 partners, such as school superintendents, principals, guidance counselors, teachers, students, and parents.
- Supervise University College advising and registration of new students during orientation.
- Manage the Student Success Center budget of approximately \$450,000 and the Title III grant budget of approximately \$1.5 million.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Shawnee State University, Portsmouth, Ohio**  
**Senior Lecturer in Developmental Writing, University College, 2011-2015**  
 English 0095 Basic Writing I: Mechanics (8 sections)

English 0096 Basic Writing II: Paragraphs and Essays (23 sections)  
 English 1101: Discourse and Composition (6 sections)  
 English 1105: Composition and Argumentation (1 section)  
 University 1101: Academic Development (3 sections)  
 University 1100: First Year Experience (1 section)

**Montgomery County Community College, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania**  
**Senior Part-Time Lecturer, English Department 2004-2013**

English 010 Basic Writing I: Sentences (6 sections)  
 English 011 Basic Writing II: Paragraphs (14 sections)  
 English 101: Composition I (8 sections)  
 English 101: Composition I ONLINE (15 sections)  
 English 102: Composition II ONLINE (1 section)

**Professional Tutor, Developmental Studies Lab 2005-2011**

Tutored and taught self-paced sections of Basic Writing I & II

**Joliet Junior College, Joliet, IL**

**Adjunct English Instructor, English Department 1996-1997**

English 101: Composition (4 sections)  
 English 010: Sentences (1 section)

**Morton College, Cicero, IL**

**Adjunct English Instructor, English Department 8-week course 1996**

English 101: Composition (1 section)

**McHenry County College, Crystal Lake, IL**

**Adjunct English Instructor, English Department 1997**

English 101: Composition (2 sections)

**William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, IL**

**Adjunct English Instructor, English Department 1997**

English 101: Composition (1 section)

**ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

**University Faculty Senate, At-Large University College Representative**

Shawnee State University, 2014-2015

- Help to shape academic and educational policies as well as other areas of faculty concern by representing the University College Faculty.
- Served on Ad Hoc Curriculum Initiation Committee and collaborated with other faculty to craft language about whom at the university can initiate curriculum changes.

**Developmental Composition Oversight Committee**

Shawnee State University 2014-2015

- Recommended and contributed to changes in the exit exam for developmental students.
- Evaluated and recommended a new textbook for both English 0096 and English 0095.

- Contributed to policy changes and curriculum decisions for the developmental composition classes.

#### **Shawnee Educational Association, Advisory Board**

Shawnee State University 2014-2015

- Chair, Contractual Status of Full-time Instructors Committee

#### **Co-editor Ohio Association of Developmental Educators Newsletter 2013-2014**

- Wrote Spotlight Column.
- Edited and proofread newsletter.

#### **Developmental English Sub-Committee**

Montgomery County Community College, 2010-2011

- Helped revise the English 010 final exam.

#### **Developmental Studies Lab (DSL) Transitioning Committee**

Montgomery County Community College, 2010-2011

- Helped create the plan to transition the DSL from a multimedia classroom offering self-paced developmental course to a supplemental instruction and developmental coursework tutoring center. The DSL is now known as the Foundational Studies Lab.

#### **English Department Textbook Committee**

Montgomery County Community College, 2010-2011

- Helped choose textbooks for the Developmental and Composition level courses.

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

Heckler-Todt, G.S.; Cantrell, H.; Monihen, L.K. (2018). Learning to Share: The Advantages and Disadvantages of a Shared Advising Model. Presentation at the Ohio Academic Advising Association Conference, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

Heckler-Todt, G. S. (February, 2016). Faculty perceptions of developmental education: A literature review. Paper presented at Curriculum Camp, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Heckler-Todt, G. S. (February, 2016). The Flipped Classroom Model in Developmental Composition. Paper presented at Curriculum Camp, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Heckler-Todt, G. S. (2013, November). *Embedding college success skills in developmental writing*. Presentation at the Ohio Association for Developmental Educators Conference, Columbus State College, Columbus, Ohio.

#### **MEMBERSHIPS**

Ohio Association for Developmental Educators

Ohio Academic Advising Association  
National Academic Advising Association  
National Association for Developmental Educators  
National College Learning Center Association  
College Reading and Learning Association  
Association of Deans & Directors of University Colleges & Undergraduate Studies

#### OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

##### **Freelance Corporate Editor, Aurora, IL 1997-2003**

- Edited and revised business documents for Curry & Young Writing Consultants, a firm that teaches business writing to corporate clients.
- Wrote Personal Legacy Statements for the clients of an Estate Planner.
- Wrote newsletters, press releases, brochures, etc. for small business clients.