

# How Did Six Community Colleges Design Supports for Part-Time Faculty?

## A Report on Achieving the Dream's Engaging Adjuncts Project

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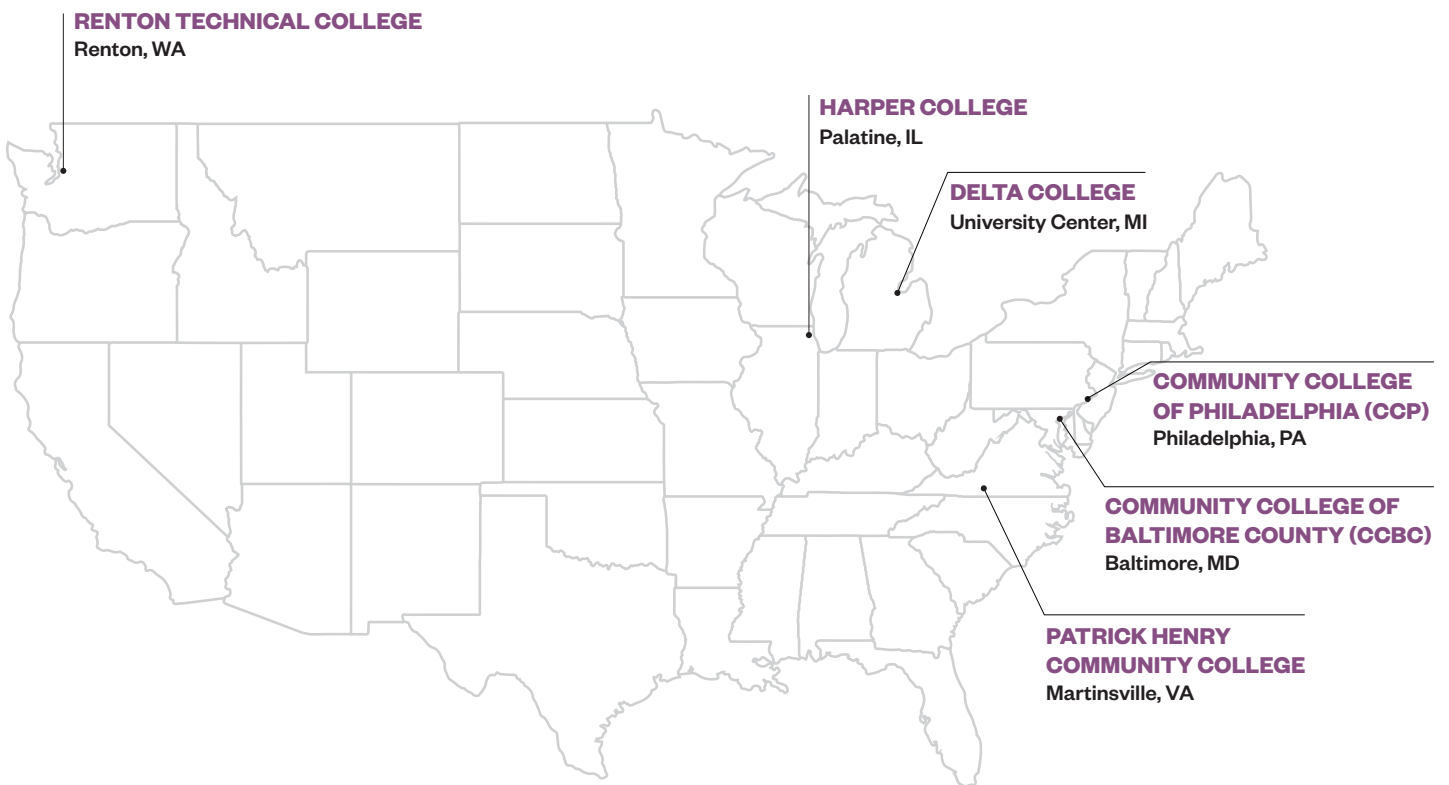
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# Colleges Participating in Achieving the Dream's Engaging Adjuncts Project



## Inside This Report

This report describes findings from a study of the Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement project, a two-year initiative led by Achieving the Dream (ATD) to develop and implement strategies to support adjunct faculty in improving student outcomes. Work in the project—guided by four design principles calling attention to (1) classroom activities, (2) professional development, (3) employment policies, and (4) the use of data—was led by teams of full- and part-time faculty and administrators at six participating community colleges. A key objective of the project was to generate information about promising, scalable, sustainable engagement strategies that could be shared across the national network of ATD colleges. Using survey, interview, and student transcript data, the Community College Research Center (CCRC) documented a range of strategies (and associated activities) that colleges designed to support and engage their adjunct faculty, examined how the strategies were implemented, and measured the effects of a set of selected activities on faculty and students.

We classify the strategies that the six colleges implemented into four broad categories:

1. **Facilitating cohort-based faculty experiences:** establishing professional learning structures that bring together small groups of faculty for a semester or an academic year. Examples include faculty learning communities and inquiry groups.
2. **Offering orientations and workshops:** providing one-time or short-term activities for faculty to learn about specific topics or to become acquainted with the structure and function of the college.
3. **Strengthening online resources:** improving and increasing information useful to part-time faculty disseminated through a website platform. In some cases, platforms were designed to accumulate existing online resources in a single location; in other cases, colleges created new content in response to specific part-time faculty needs.
4. **Improving working conditions:** placing greater emphasis both on providing recognition and reward for part-time faculty contributions and on enhancing physical resources available to part-time faculty.

Implementation of these strategies was hypothesized to improve student outcomes by increasing knowledge, motivation, and resources among part-time faculty, allowing them to engage in their work with students more effectively.

Our analysis focuses on the effects of adjunct faculty participation in cohort-based faculty experiences, orientations, and workshops (project activities associated with the first two strategy categories above). Survey and interview data indicate that part-time faculty were highly satisfied with the project activities they attended. Part-time faculty who participated in one or more selected project activities reported more knowledge of campus services (e.g., academic advising, financial aid, library resources) and more access to student performance data. Yet analysis of student transcript data does not show effects on student outcomes when aggregating across activity type. This may be explained by limitations of the study design. We do find that a one-semester faculty inquiry group at one college had a small, positive, statistically significant association with student course grades.

This project has yielded important information on the needs and experiences of adjunct faculty in community colleges and the ways that colleges can design supports to address their needs. Drawing on implementation findings presented in this report, we offer four recommendations for colleges seeking to provide supports for part-time faculty:

- **Ground decisions on adjunct faculty supports in local data on adjunct faculty needs.** Before designing strategies to support adjunct faculty, colleges should investigate the needs and experiences of their part-time instructors.
- **Embed adjunct faculty supports into existing institutional infrastructure and initiatives.** Colleges should identify places in the institution where programming and resources for adjunct faculty can be housed over the long term. Standalone events or resources may be difficult to sustain and are vulnerable to marginalization within the institution.
- **Examine college policies and practices that impact the working lives of adjunct faculty.** Colleges should identify institutional policies and procedures that could be modified or amended to improve the knowledge and resources available to part-time faculty. These include hiring practices, orientation and onboarding procedures, policies for course assignment, allocation of professional development funds, and faculty evaluation.
- **Consider intended outcomes for faculty engagement strategies and create a plan for measurement.** Colleges designing professional development opportunities or other activities should identify the intended outcomes for faculty and students. In addition to assisting with an evaluation plan, establishing explicit intended outcomes allows project leaders to use a backward design approach to refine the features of implemented strategies.

## Introduction

Two thirds of community college instructional faculty are part-time employees<sup>1</sup> (Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016). A long history of research has shown that part-time faculty endure challenging conditions with limited institutional support (e.g., Kezar, 2013; Kezar & Sam, 2013; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). As compared to their full-time counterparts, part-time faculty are less knowledgeable about college services and resources; frequently lack access to an office space, phone line, or computer; have fewer professional relationships with colleagues; and often struggle financially as a result of low pay. In addition, part-time faculty are more likely to teach students enrolled in developmental (or remedial) courses and are more likely to teach night sections, which suggests that part-time faculty are charged with supporting more academically vulnerable students (Ran & Sanders, 2020). Not unrelated to these circumstances are research findings suggesting that students taught by part-time faculty have less favorable outcomes in terms of persistence, completion, and transfer (Eagan & Jaeger, 2009; Ran & Xu, 2019; Xu, 2019; Yu, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2015).

Recognizing these challenges, the nonprofit student success organization Achieving the Dream (ATD) created a project to develop and test strategies at six community colleges to provide additional resources and supports for part-time faculty with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for students. The Community College Research Center (CCRC) served as the research partner on the project. In this report, we describe the project's goals, the faculty engagement strategies designed by the six colleges, the scope of implemented project activities, and their influence on faculty and student outcomes.

**Part-time faculty are more likely to teach students enrolled in developmental (or remedial) courses, which suggests that part-time faculty are charged with supporting more academically vulnerable students.**

## ATD's Engaging Adjunct Faculty Project and Its Evaluation

ATD supports community colleges and tribal colleges and universities to engage in evidence-based institutional improvement to promote student success. Over 250 institutions are part of the ATD network, which grants them access to coaching and learning events like webinars and workshops. ATD launched the two-year Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement project in fall 2016. Six participating colleges were charged with developing and implementing strategies to engage and support adjunct faculty in the service of improving student outcomes. ATD intended for colleges to design multiple programmatic and policy approaches that would inform the field about a range of adjunct support strategies. Throughout their planning and implementation work, colleges received feedback and support from ATD staff. They also received funding from ATD to support their efforts.

### Project Design

In 2016, ATD launched a competitive application process in which colleges proposed project strategies and activities aligned with a set of four design principles (see box).<sup>2</sup> As part of their application, colleges identified two academic departments (or in some cases, academic divisions) in which to focus their work, with the intention that successful strategies would later be scaled to other departments in the college. Colleges also formed a project team comprised of full-time and part-time faculty in their two selected departments, as well as at least one student services staff member, a department chair or dean, and a senior-level administrator. Adjunct faculty were to represent at least 25% of the project team. To select the colleges, a panel of reviewers from ATD and CCRC scored each college application using a rubric aligned with the design principles. College characteristics were also considered during the selection process so that participating colleges reflected diversity in terms of size, geography, and the presence of a faculty union.

**Table 1.**  
Participating Colleges

COLLEGE	LOCATION <sup>a</sup>	STUDENT ENROLLMENT <sup>b</sup>	FACULTY UNION
Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC)	Baltimore, MD (suburban)	27,292	No
Community College of Philadelphia (CCP)	Philadelphia, PA (urban)	24,443	Yes
Delta College	University Center, MI (rural)	11,644	No
Harper College	Palatine, IL (suburban)	23,618	Yes
Patrick Henry Community College	Martinsville, VA (rural)	2,958	No
Renton Technical College	Renton, WA (urban)	6,386	Yes

<sup>a</sup> Urban/suburban/rural classifications are based on campus setting as listed in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

<sup>b</sup> Twelve-month head count for academic year 2017-18. Information retrieved from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.



## Design Principles

The project design was informed by four principles calling attention to (1) classroom activities, (2) professional development, (3) institutional employment policies, and (4) the use of data. These principles informed the review and selection criteria for colleges that applied to join the project (quoted text below is from the project's request for applications), and ATD drew on them to design their coaching and support for college teams.

1. **Part-time faculty should be engaged in “sustainable and scalable improvement activities that directly tie to classroom responsibilities and leverage their existing expertise.”** Examples include course structure and curricular redesigns, course- and program-level learning outcomes and assessment development, discipline-specific pedagogical improvement initiatives, curricular alignment reforms, and other teaching and learning-related activities at the department level. In accord with this principle, colleges selected two departments in which to focus their efforts. ATD intended to help colleges design faculty engagement and learning opportunities that would be relevant to faculty's classroom experience teaching in particular disciplines.
2. **Participating colleges should “ground professional learning opportunities for adjunct faculty in pressing problems of classroom practice that can be examined collaboratively.”** This principle is derived from research showing that professional development opportunities that are collaborative, inquiry-based, and focused on particular questions of practice are more effective than decontextualized activities directed at individuals (Abigail, 2016; Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011).
3. **Adjunct faculty hiring, review, promotion, and incentives policies and practices should be aligned to support stronger connections to the institution and to encourage deep, sustained engagement in improvement activities.”** This principle acknowledges the range of institutional conditions—including last-minute hiring, short-term contracts, and limited time on campus—that can negatively impact adjunct faculty's work and the opportunities they have to contribute to reform efforts. While participating colleges were not expected to address all of these structural barriers, ATD directed colleges to consider how institutional policy and practice can be amended to facilitate adjunct engagement.
4. **Colleges were required to “collect, analyze, and use quantitative and qualitative data to track progress and implementation of improvement activities.”** Colleges were encouraged to refine their efforts based on data collected during the project.

Selected colleges began their participation by creating action plans at a project kick-off event in the summer of 2016. These action plans were revisited and revised at several points during the two-year project. The six project teams convened three additional times for learning events. At each convening, ATD structured time for teams to work together, learn from the efforts of the other colleges, and participate in large group activities and discussions relevant at that stage of the project. In addition, ATD staff provided coaching to each team in the form of site visits and calls in order to troubleshoot challenges and provide feedback and support to enhance the colleges' efforts.

## Research Activities

As the project's evaluator, CCRC collected interview, survey, and student administrative record data to address four major research questions:

1. What are the needs and experiences of adjunct faculty at the community colleges?
2. What strategies and activities do the colleges design to support adjunct faculty?
3. How are those strategies and activities implemented?
4. What effects do selected project activities have on faculty and students?

In the first year of the project, we investigated the first research question (see Bickerstaff & Chavarrín, 2018). In this report, we focus on research questions 2, 3, and 4.

To answer these questions, the research team conducted a two-day site visit to each college to interview project team members and other key stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of project strategies and activities. On these visits we conducted focus groups with full-time and part-time faculty to understand more about faculty experiences and needs. We also conducted a focus group with each project team at the project convenings in February 2017 and 2018. A total of 90 interviews and focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded using the qualitative analysis platform Dedoose.

CCRC disseminated a survey to full- and part-time faculty in each college's participating departments at baseline (fall 2016) and again at the project's conclusion (spring 2018).<sup>3</sup> Survey questions focused on employment experiences at their college, participation in project activities, and knowledge of college resources and services. In the first round, slightly more than half of the 482 respondents were part-time faculty, and the aggregate response rate for all respondents was 39%. At follow-up, there were 406 respondents, 60% of whom were part-time faculty, which represents a 29% response rate.

The six colleges also submitted administrative student unit record data for all enrolled students from academic year 2014-15 to 2017-18. The data include full student transcripts as well as the characteristics of the instructors who taught corresponding course sections. Separately, each college tracked the instructors who participated in selected adjunct faculty engagement project activities by term and submitted a list of the sections these instructors taught. We matched this information with transcript data to derive an indicator for course sections that were affected by the project activities (see Appendix A for a more detailed discussion of the method for analyzing transcript data).

In accordance with the project's fourth design principle, which focuses on data-informed evaluation and refinement, CCRC provided ongoing feedback to ATD and participating colleges based on the data collected. Researchers presented on aggregate findings at project convenings and created four customized reports for each college: one for each faculty survey and two based on college-level analysis of student transcript data before and after the implementation of project strategies and activities. CCRC and ATD intended that colleges would use these reports to inform their project implementation efforts.

## Designing and Implementing Adjunct Engagement Strategies

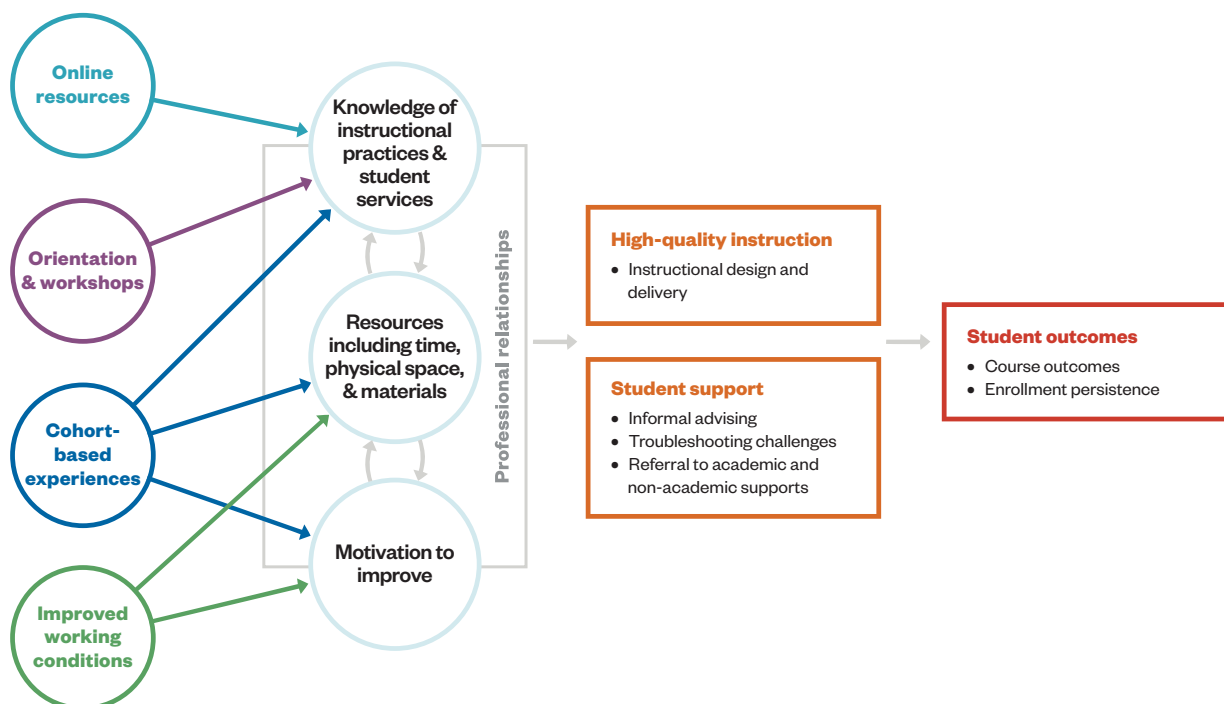
Within the framework of the design principles and the project's overall goals, college teams developed and implemented a range of strategies and associated activities for this project, which varied in structure and content across sites. In this section, we first describe the mechanisms by which these strategies were intended to improve student outcomes. Based on their design and format, we then classify the strategies into four broad categories: (1) facilitating cohort-based experiences, (2) offering orientations and workshops, (3) strengthening online resources, and (4) improving working conditions; and we provide examples of these strategies from the colleges. Finally, we draw on qualitative data to discuss considerations for implementing supports for part-time faculty. In particular, we explore the extent to which the colleges' strategies aligned with the project's four design principles.

### How Faculty Engagement Strategies May Improve Student Outcomes

Through our analysis, we identify three key factors that project strategies and activities were thought to influence: faculty knowledge, resources, and motivation. These are shown as light blue circles in logic model shown in Figure 1. Project teams intended for their activities to increase at least one of these factors in service of improving part-time faculty's capacity to deliver high-quality instruction and/or student support (orange boxes in Figure 1). Improving instruction involves instructional design and delivery tied to course learning objectives, as well as related teaching practices that integrate students into the discipline and reinforce a sense of care and belonging (Bauer, 2014; Booker, 2016). Improving student support involves informal advising, triaging, and troubleshooting based on a student's needs, as well as referral to support services like financial aid, tutoring, library services, and counseling (e.g., Hutson, 2013; Lundquist, Spalding, & Landrum, 2002). Project teams recognized that faculty may be key stakeholders in facilitating student access to support services, as even those who do not serve in a formal advising role are major points of contact for students. Yet enhancing the knowledge, resources, and motivation of adjunct instructors may be particularly challenging because, as our data show, their contingent employment status disadvantages them in these areas.

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**Figure 1.**  
Adjunct Engagement Activities Logic Model



**Knowledge.** Instructors must be knowledgeable about their field, evidence-based instructional practices, and the ways those practices can be applied to meet the particular learning goals for their course and program of study (Shulman, 1986). Many part-timers in this study are trained educators, with 50% (baseline) and 46% (follow-up) of part-time faculty survey respondents reporting that they hold a teaching credential or degree in education. These results suggest part-time faculty in the sample have a high degree of knowledge about teaching practices. However, instructors must also have knowledge of the services available to students on campus in order to identify appropriate resources and direct students to needed supports. In our survey, part-time faculty consistently reported less knowledge of campus services than their full-time colleagues. To address these knowledge gaps, college teams designed workshops, online resources, and other activities to provide faculty with information about instructional approaches and campus resources.

**Resources.** Second, instructors must have resources at their disposal to bolster their work. Time is a key resource for faculty, because in order to support individual students' learning and persistence, they must have time to respond to students' needs. In general, instructional improvement work is facilitated by time-intensive reflective practice, a process through which instructors examine student work, assessment data, and in-class experiences and then use that information to refine curricular materials and instructional approaches (Hora & Smolarek, 2018; Larrivee, 2000). However, despite its importance, time is a challenge for part-time faculty, both because of their limited compensation and because they may have other jobs or responsibilities. In

addition to time, resources such as high-quality instructional materials, basic physical resources like space to meet with students, and a working environment conducive to productivity and learning can support faculty's efforts to improve student success. A significant proportion of part-time faculty reported that they lack these resources. In our survey data, 29% reported having access to a personal desk in a private or shared office, and 31% reported they did not have reliable access to a private space to meet with students. In response, the colleges in the project worked to increase the availability of physical resources and provided paid opportunities for part-time faculty to participate in instructional improvement activities.

**Motivation.** Finally, faculty are likely to improve their teaching and expend efforts to support students if they are motivated to do so. Drawing on a framework of work-related basic needs, Stupnisky, BrckaLorenz, Yuhas, and Guay (2018) showed that faculty motivation is influenced by feelings of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, with relatedness defined as feeling supported by and close to others at the institution (e.g., students and colleagues). Their research also showed that feelings of motivation were associated with the use of high-quality instructional practices like collaborative and integrative learning. Faculty may also be motivated to improve if they see opportunities for advancement and feel that the college recognizes and values their work. Earlier analysis from data collected during the first year of this project found that while part-time faculty were highly committed to their teaching and their students, they were less likely to have strong relationships with their colleagues, frequently felt disconnected from their department and the institution, and generally perceived that the college did not adequately value their contributions (Bickerstaff & Chavarín, 2018). In the sections below, we discuss how some project strategies were intended to recognize part-time faculty's contributions and reward them for their efforts.

Instructor knowledge, resources, and motivation may be mutually reinforcing. In particular, our data show that newly hired part-time faculty expend significant time and energy seeking out information pertinent to their work (e.g., how to enter grades, the location of campus services, key contacts and dates). If knowledge of basic college policies and procedures become more accessible, faculty may have additional time to devote to other aspects of teaching. Likewise, adequate workspace, high-quality curricular materials, and the feeling of competence associated with having the right information to do one's job are likely to enhance part-time faculty's job satisfaction and may increase their motivation to improve. As shown in the logic model in Figure 1, professional relationships are a cross-cutting feature of these factors. In addition to feeling a sense of relatedness, faculty with strong professional relationships are able to leverage their connections to gather knowledge and information efficiently. Thus many college activities undertaken under the project were intended to build relationships among part-time faculty and between full-time and part-time faculty.

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## Categories of Adjunct Engagement Strategies

While the colleges had significant latitude in designing supports to assist part-time faculty, most strategies they undertook can be classified into four broad categories: cohort-based faculty experiences, orientations and workshops, online resources, and the improvement of working conditions. Some associated project activities were open only to part-time faculty, while others were designed to include part-time and full-time faculty and aimed to meet the common needs of both groups and to help in relationship-building.

**Facilitating cohort-based faculty experiences.** All six colleges designed cohort-based professional learning experiences that brought together small groups of faculty for either a semester or an academic year. Four colleges offered cohort models focused explicitly on improving teaching practice. Two others organized faculty cohorts to explore a wider range of issues, including non-instructional topics such as college policies and resources.

Delta College, for example, designed the Faculty Frontier Circles (FFC) program and implemented it in its math and English departments. Over the course of a semester, FFC faculty participants met regularly with their departmental colleagues to discuss curricular and teaching questions with the goal of creating resources or modules that could be shared in their department more broadly. FFCs were comprised of six to eight full- and part-time faculty, and members of the project team served as facilitators. Each group also had an online forum in the college's learning management system where they could post questions, hold discussions, and share resources. The English FFC covered topics including plagiarism and peer review of writing, while the math FFC focused on how to integrate writing into their curriculum.

In addition to the discussions, faculty who joined FFCs were invited to participate in a team-teaching partnership with a fellow cohort-member during the following semester. These team-teaching partnerships were optional, and the project team intended for them to develop organically based on shared questions and interests uncovered during the FFC. For example, two part-time English faculty members partnered to teach a technical writing class, each with strategic goals in mind. One had never taught the class before but was practiced in writing for websites. The other was experienced in teaching the course but had very little experience with blogging and online communication. Many faculty enjoyed the experience. A part-time faculty member described his experience with team teaching:

*I really enjoy it because [my partner] and I have fleshed out each other's strengths and weaknesses, and we use that to enhance our classroom environment. We don't necessarily go half and half for the lectures, but we will have specific days where I am more knowledgeable about this subject so I will do the majority of the speaking. We normally just bounce off of one another, and it has been extremely illuminating for me. And from what students have told me so far, they've enjoyed it as well.*

Variations of cohort-based experiences implemented at other colleges include a cross-department model that was implemented at Harper College for full- and

part-time faculty,<sup>4</sup> a mentoring program designed specifically for part-time faculty at Patrick Henry Community College, and High Impact Practice Infusion teams at the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC).

CCBC's High Impact Practice Infusion teams intentionally included full-time and part-time faculty. The teams were charged with creating a plan for implementing a high-impact instructional practice<sup>5</sup> into a large general education course. High-impact practices, which are thought to boost academic outcomes for students from various demographic backgrounds, include first-year seminars and experiences, writing-intensive courses, and collaborative projects (Kuh, 2008). Six teams were formed to address six different courses; each team was responsible for creating a plan to disseminate the selected instructional approach with the goal of implementing it in all course sections. This approach to cohort-based learning allowed each instructor on the team to not only deepen their own instructional knowledge and practice but also contribute to course redesign leadership within their department.

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Cohort models are aligned with the project's second design principle, which calls for collaborative examination of classroom practice problems. In addition to encouraging faculty to work together to enhance their knowledge of particular topics, cohort-based models fostered collegial relationships and gave part-time faculty opportunities to contribute their ideas and expertise. For example, one part-time faculty member described how participating in a semester-long faculty learning community was beneficial:

*My first basic need that I have is to simply feel like I am included or recognized in some way. Because when I got hired, I just chilled in the adjunct office, taught, did my office hour, and left. Really no conversation. ... But after this began, I felt like I had a voice. I felt like people valued my opinion. I felt that people recognized me on a professional level, and that was a huge morale booster as a teacher.*

**Offering orientations and workshops.** Four of six colleges offered one-time or short-term workshops, seminars, or orientation sessions intended to increase faculty knowledge of campus services, initiatives, and instructional practices. Project leads also saw these events as opportunities for faculty to build relationships with colleagues and enhance their sense of connection and belonging at the college.

For example, the Community College of Philadelphia designed the Adjunct Institute, a two-part orientation program for part-time faculty in all departments. The first part of the program consisted of a four-hour workshop held early in the semester. The goal of the workshop, which was repeated on a Friday afternoon and a Saturday morning to boost participation, was to increase participants' knowledge of college priorities, policies, and resources. During the session, college administrators and other speakers introduced a variety of college services and initiatives, including those associated with guided pathways, student learning assessment, and campus-based technology. In addition, faculty presented on several instructional topics, including student-centered teaching and transparent assignment design. At the conclusion of the first

session, participants were asked to identify a new classroom practice to implement during the semester.

The second part of the Institute was a two-hour event held at the end of the semester. In this session, part-time faculty met in small, facilitated groups to discuss the classroom practice they implemented. In interviews, faculty who participated in the Institute described a range of benefits of this program, including meeting other faculty and having an opportunity to talk with colleagues about teaching. Participants also said they appreciated learning more about the college, as described by this faculty member: “I was just excited to have an Adjunct Institute. [Before the Institute] I felt adrift; the administrators don’t tell us some of the things about our campus [and] department.”

Other examples of this type of activity include workshops on high-impact practices at CCBC and a full-day equity-in-STEM education summit at Renton Technical College that was designed by adjunct faculty and open to all college stakeholders.

**Strengthening online resources.** All six colleges also aimed to provide part-time faculty with better information and dissemination by strengthening their online resources. In some cases, online platforms were designed to compile existing online resources—including policies, procedures, forms, key contacts, and other relevant information—in one central location. Some colleges also created new text and video resources specifically in response to part-time faculty needs. Colleges used different approaches to determine the content of these resources, including drawing on the expertise of the project team and conducting faculty surveys. At Delta College, for example, members of the FFCs contributed to the development of their online resources.

Renton Technical College created an information hub for part-time faculty in Canvas, the college’s learning management system. The goal was to gather existing relevant online resources into a central location so that part-time faculty would spend less time searching the college website for information. The hub includes sections on security procedures, campus contacts, and forms, and it links to pages on human resources, parking rules and permits, policies for professional development funding, and student services such as financial aid and academic and career advising. The hub also includes links describing on-campus instructional initiatives. The Renton team conducted a survey to gather information on faculty needs and experiences and then used the responses to inform the hub’s content.

**Improving working conditions.** Four colleges enacted strategies within a final category that includes a range of activities that focus on improving part-time faculty working conditions. These include the allocation of physical workspaces and resources for part-time faculty, the hosting of recognition events designed to elevate and show appreciation for part-time faculty’s work, and policy changes relevant to part-time faculty’s employment status. For example, CCBC opened a Center for Adjunct Faculty Engagement on each of its campuses. These centers provide workstations; private meeting rooms; lockers; lending libraries; and common areas with couches, a microwave, and a refrigerator.



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Elsewhere, Patrick Henry delivered “adjunct appreciation packages” to the 97 part-time faculty participating in the college’s faculty mentoring program. The packages contained some basic office supplies and a variety of college-branded items, including a backpack and an umbrella. CCP, meanwhile, refurbished a space on campus for adjunct faculty use. During the project period, the team hosted informal adjunct appreciation events with food and music in the space, with the intention of building community and showing recognition for part-time faculty’s work. A part-time faculty member of the project team described these events:

*All adjunct and full-time people are welcome to come; there is some lunch there, and usually there’s music. We had some people from the music department actually singing and playing. So, it was really nice to have an open environment [where] people could just meet other adjuncts and meet other full-time faculty and just kind of chat with each other.*

Colleges also used policy to improve other important aspects of part-time faculty employment, with one participating college making a significant change to adjunct faculty contracts during the project period. Harper College enacted what they call Level II adjunct status, a program negotiated through the adjunct faculty union that allows faculty who earn the designation to receive a modest pay increase per credit hour, increased priority in course selection, and a guaranteed interview opportunity for full-time positions for which they meet the minimum requirements. Under the new guidelines, adjunct faculty can earn Level II status through an evaluative process that prioritizes ongoing professional learning and service to the college. Part-time faculty working toward Level II provide, among other things, a reflective portfolio that showcases their teaching practice and their commitment to improvement. This strategy aligns with the project’s third design principle, which calls on colleges to consider how hiring, review, and promotion activities support sustained adjunct engagement. This program was designed during the project period, and a cohort of 29 adjunct faculty completed the requirements and were awarded Level II status during the 2018-19 academic year.

## Planning Engagement Strategies in Accord With Design Principles

Here we describe findings related to how colleges planned engagement strategies in accordance with the project’s four design principles, which focus on (1) classroom activities, (2) professional development, (3) employment policies, and (4) the use of data. Specifically, we find that each of the colleges chose to undertake several strategies that were data-informed and responsive to adjunct faculty needs and experiences. The colleges also determined that there were benefits to situating some adjunct support work within academic departments while making other efforts campus-wide.

All four of the design principles relate to the importance of being responsive to adjunct faculty’s needs and experiences when implementing engagement strategies. To ensure that the chosen strategies were well-aligned with faculty’s job experiences and responsibilities, colleges included part-time faculty on the planning teams. At two colleges, an adjunct faculty member was the team leader, and at all six colleges, adjuncts

comprised at least one fourth of the project team and played a leadership role in designing and implementing the strategies. In interviews, college stakeholders described the value of bringing adjunct faculty into institutional decision-making and leadership roles. For example, one administrator said the part-time faculty who served on the project leadership team taught them what “adjunct faculty may not know about or may know about.” An administrator at another college appreciated the rare opportunity to have “the adjuncts, the faculty, the VP, and the deans in one room at one time.”

Relative to the fourth design principle, beyond elevating the perspectives and voices of part-time faculty, all colleges used local data to inform the implementation and refinement of their selected strategies. To this end, several colleges administered one or more surveys to gather the perspectives of a large number of part-time faculty. For example, Renton Technical College surveyed faculty to solicit input on topics to be included in their online resource platform; CCP surveyed department chairs to learn more about current and past practices for engaging part-time faculty within departments; and CCBC conducted a survey on faculty’s knowledge about high-impact practices to inform their programming and outreach. In addition to collecting their own data, teams responded to data collected by CCRC as part of the broader project. One key takeaway from CCRC’s analysis of student outcomes was the slight negative effect of part-time faculty on student persistence across semesters (Ran & Sanders, 2020). In response to this finding, Patrick Henry reviewed the course registration information that was available to adjunct faculty. Then, during peak registration times, the college provided targeted resources to improve faculty’s ability to assist students.

Relative to the project’s second design principle, professional development research shows that programming is more likely to impact instructors if it is grounded in the realities of their classroom life and their pressing problems of practice. This project was thus designed so that engagement strategies could be situated within two academic departments, rather than across the entire institution, as departments could be responsive to the particular curricular, pedagogical, and contextual needs of faculty. The focus on two academic departments<sup>6</sup> was a critical design feature of this project, and departments were intended to be sites of incubation and refinement in preparation for broader scaling. Analysis of interview and focus group data with adjunct faculty show that the department is an important site of part-time faculty experiences at the institution, and most part-time faculty interactions are with their departmental colleagues. As one part-time faculty member explained, “I know the supervisor and the secretary, but I don’t know anyone else. ... I don’t know very much about the school itself.” In addition, stakeholders at several colleges reported differences across departments, bolstering the notion that faculty support strategies should be customized. One college, for example, had hoped to replicate a longstanding cohort-based faculty inquiry model in a second department but found that faculty needs and expectations in the second disciplinary area were too different to garner buy-in for it.

Yet, a department-based engagement approach may not be efficient for disseminating information about college-wide policies and resources, institutional initiatives like guided pathways or learning outcomes assessment, advising policies and practices, and



**I know the supervisor and the secretary, but I don’t know anyone else. ... I don’t know very much about the school itself.**



student support services. To engage a larger group of part-time faculty, most colleges devised at least one support strategy that was implemented at the institutional level. For example, CCP's Adjunct Institute, Harper College's Communities of Practice program, and Patrick Henry's mentoring program were designed for faculty in all departments. Similarly, the colleges that designed on-campus spaces or online resource platforms for adjunct faculty intended them to be for faculty in all departments. The inclusion of an administrator on the college planning team often helped support the implementation of these institution-wide approaches.

The project's third design principle articulates a vision of adjunct support that is facilitated by institutional policies and practices around hiring, promotion, and incentives. Few strategies implemented as part of this project reflected this third principle, perhaps due to the project's focus at the department level, where these policies are rarely determined. Harper College's Level II adjunct status is one notable exception. Other possible opportunities to improve institutional policy and practice that stakeholders identified include hiring and onboarding processes and rules and procedures for securing funds for professional development.

## Participation in and Scaling of Project Activities

While colleges were to begin implementing strategies at a relatively small scale in two academic departments, the project also aimed to lay a foundation for scaling. In this section, we discuss what proportion of faculty participated in a set of selected engagement activities and what proportion of students were “affected by”—were in sections taught by—faculty who participated in those activities. We also discuss how college teams addressed challenges in recruiting part-time faculty to participate in the activities, as well as efforts that were made in scaling and sustaining project aims beyond the grant period.

### Students Affected by Faculty Participation in Project Activities

To understand the extent to which the college strategies reached faculty and their students, we asked colleges to track faculty participation in workshops, orientations, and cohort-based programs. It is important to recognize that at all colleges, participation in these selected activities does not reflect the full scope of adjunct participation in all of the enacted project strategies—additional faculty accessed improved online resources, visited a new adjunct room or resource center, or were impacted by changes to college policy. However, we tracked participation in workshops, orientations, and cohort-based programs in part because the parameters of “participation” in these activities is relatively clear. We do not know if faculty accessed a website or a resource center once or multiple times, and we do not have good ways of measuring whether faculty directly felt the impact of new policies. We assume that event-based activities like workshops and cohort-based experiences, which were intended to serve as professional development, may be

intensive enough to affect student outcomes. The six colleges reported to CCRC the course sections for each term that were taught by part-time and full-time faculty who had participated in at least one of these activities (it is possible, depending on the college, that an individual faculty member could have participated in more than one). These “affected sections” were matched with course transcript data to understand the characteristics of students and faculty who were affected by these selected project activities.

Using the affected section data, we find that relatively small numbers of students at each college were taught by faculty who participated in selected activities. This is not entirely surprising, given the project’s focus on two academic departments. At three of the colleges, in any given semester, fewer than 5% of students were enrolled in sections taught by faculty who participated in the project activities. At the other three colleges, between 10% and 47% of students were affected in each semester beginning in the second year. All but one college showed at least some increase in the proportion of affected students over time, reflecting how teams scaled up their efforts during the project period (see Appendix Table B1). Because colleges often made the strategic decision to design activities for both full- and part-time faculty, we sought to measure the proportion of participating faculty who were part-time. We found that, overall, slightly fewer than half of affected sections were taught by part-time faculty, with a range of 27% to 77% (see Appendix Table B2).

Compared to faculty who did not participate in the project, participating full-time and part-time faculty were more likely to be female (by 14 percentage points), more likely to be Black (by 4 percentage points), and more likely to have a master’s degree (by 6 percentage points). In addition, affected sections were more likely to be offered during the day (by 6 percentage points), suggesting that faculty teaching sections at night were less likely to participate in project activities (see Appendix Tables B3 and B4).

**Affected sections were more likely to be offered during the day, suggesting that faculty teaching sections at night were less likely to participate in project activities.**

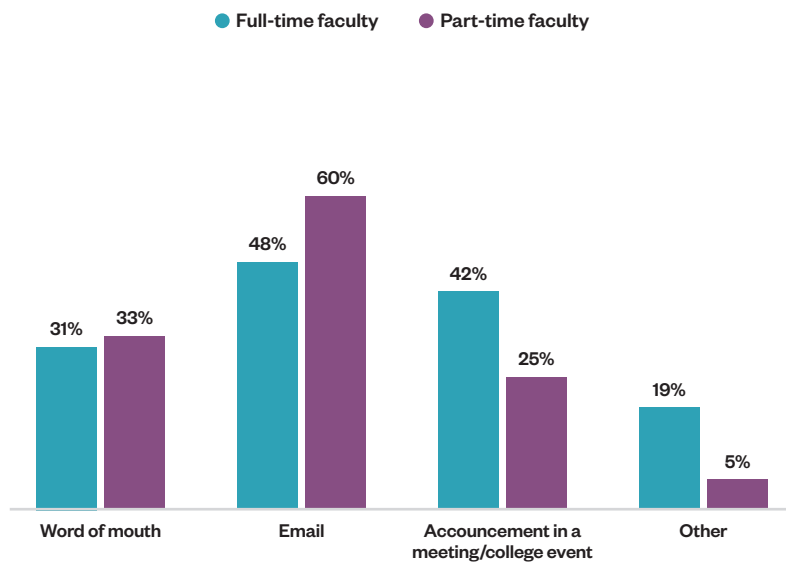
## Recruiting Part-Time Faculty

We used the faculty survey to learn more about how and why faculty did or did not participate in the college engagement activities. Among the 406 respondents to the spring 2018 faculty survey, 38% of full-time faculty and 31% of part-time faculty in the colleges’ selected departments reported participating in at least one of the project activities.

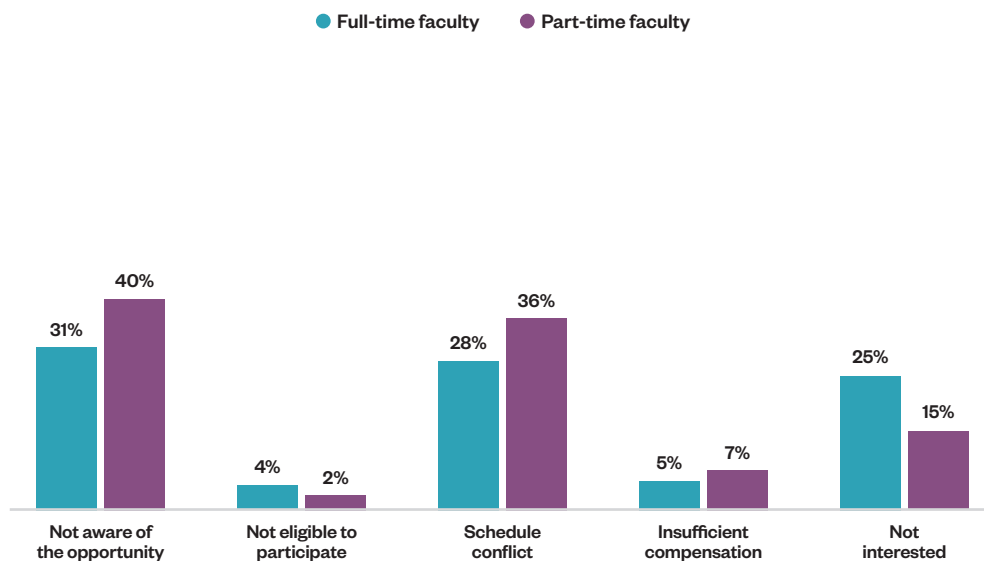
As shown in Figure 2, about half of the full-time faculty who participated in at least one activity learned about the project activities through email or an announcement in a meeting, and one third of them found out about them through word of mouth. For part-time faculty, 60% learned about the activities through email. It is not surprising that a higher proportion of part-time faculty learned about the events via email, since they spend less time on campus, are less likely to attend meetings, and are less likely to have interactions with colleagues where they might learn about events through word-of-mouth. While many part-time faculty were successfully recruited via email, large proportions of adjuncts (and full-time faculty) reported being unaware of the project activities. Among those who did not attend, 40% stated they were not aware of the opportunities, versus 31% for full-time faculty (see Figure 3).

Awareness may have been lower among adjunct faculty because of the challenges associated with email communication. Interviews with part-time faculty reveal that this is particularly true for faculty teaching at multiple institutions. One part-time faculty member reported, “I am inundated with emails about things that may be important, but I don’t really know how important.” To address this challenge, some colleges revisited their approaches for emailing part-time faculty. One college created an institution-wide, part-time faculty listserv to be updated with active adjuncts who are teaching each semester. In another case, adjuncts received a weekly digest of campus-wide announcements to provide a single streamlined source of information.

**Figure 2.**  
How Participating Faculty Learned About the Project Activities



**Figure 3.**  
Non-Participating Faculty Reasons for Not Attending Project Activities



Schedule conflicts presented another major challenge for part-time faculty recruitment. Thirty-six percent of part-time non-participants reported that they had schedule conflicts, versus 28% for full-time faculty. Project leaders told us during interviews that part-time faculty recruitment was a major concern when designing in-person activities and cohort-based programs. To address this hurdle, project leaders were attentive to the times they offered activities, with some colleges offering the same programming at multiple times to accommodate different schedules; frequently, workshops, orientations, and other meetings were offered in the evening or on weekends. Despite these efforts, stakeholders raised concerns about asking part-time faculty to come to campus on days they would not normally be there. For example, one project leader described the barriers to holding a one-hour workshop: “They will have to drive to campus, they will have to park, [and] by the time they sign-in and get refreshments, you only have 45 minutes of content.” Project teams explored ways to use technology to mitigate these challenges—by, for example, video recording workshops or allowing for virtual participation—but these strategies were not widely used during the project period.

**Project leaders told us during interviews that part-time faculty recruitment was a major concern when designing in-person activities and cohort-based programs.**

All colleges offered participating part-time faculty stipend payments for at least some of the project activities. Among survey respondents who did not participate in project activities, insufficient compensation was a concern for only a small proportion (7% of non-participating part-time faculty). Given the inequities in full- and part-time faculty compensation, these stipends were largely seen by project teams as necessary to fairly honor the time investment of part-time faculty who served on planning committees and participated in meeting-intensive cohort-based activities. Harper College’s Communities of Practice program is an exception; part-time faculty who joined the Communities of Practice program did not receive an individual stipend, but Harper provided funding for the program as a whole to use on professional development activities, such as conference attendance. Participation in the Communities of Practice program was also a primary way for adjunct faculty to become eligible for Level II status and the associated pay increase.

A final consideration for part-time faculty recruitment was the mix of high- and low-touch supports implemented at all colleges. Our interview and survey data show that adjunct faculty are divided in their desire for engagement activities that require regular meetings or an intensive time commitment (Bickerstaff & Chavarín, 2018). Therefore, low-touch options like online resources were seen as a necessary strategy to reach faculty who either could not or did not wish to engage in face-to-face activities. The Patrick Henry team designed their mentoring program with these time-constrained faculty in mind. All part-time faculty were assigned a full-time faculty mentor, and mentors reached out to their mentees via email at designated times during the academic year. But the program was explicitly intended to be driven by the individual adjunct faculty member’s needs; full-time faculty were available to meet, but face-to-face meetings were not required.

## Scaling and Sustaining Project Activities

With coaching and supports from ATD, all college teams were guided to consider how to scale up and sustain their efforts. Specifically, in the second year of the grant, project teams worked on communication plans to draw connections between their engagement strategies and broader institutional initiatives. To show the value of their work to college administrators, college teams also sought data on how their efforts affected student outcomes and other metrics, including adjunct faculty retention.

As described above, all of the colleges had some degree of success reaching increasingly more students over the course of the two-year project period. For example, CCBC scaled their high-impact practices infusion model from two highly enrolled courses in two departments to six courses in six departments during the project period; Patrick Henry was able to assign all of their part-time faculty a full-time faculty mentor; and Harper College offered five Communities of Practice in the project's first year and 17 in its second.

Despite these successes, stakeholders at most colleges identified obstacles to scaling and sustainability. Given resource constraints, the costs associated with project activities, and with stipends in particular, were a primary concern. While some administrators at larger institutions felt financially supported and were less worried about expenses, others described uncertainty about whether project activities would continue: "Because we're in [an enrollment] decline and because money is always a thing [to be worried about], there's a lot of friction right now between what administration says we have money for and can do and what faculty think we should be doing with our money."

However, even institutions with fewer resources could scale some strategies, because not all project activities required substantial ongoing expenses. Strategies focused on providing adjunct resource centers and improved online information platforms, for instance, required high up-front costs that were offset by the grant and then had limited ongoing costs. Similarly, while CCBC's High Impact Practices Infusion project required intensive work during the project period to select, design, and disseminate information about the high-impact practices, costs for ongoing training were anticipated to be lower.

Some stakeholders also identified a lack of perceived alignment between project activities and institutional priorities as a challenge related to scaling and sustainability. For example, one project team member described challenges in communicating the value of their work to executive-level administrators:

*I'm not exactly sure if [this project] gets talked about as much as we would like it to. While it does get brought up, it is not at the forefront of things. I think guided pathways has been the dominant focus because [an executive-level administrator] has been really wanting to have things in place as soon as possible because we want to be able to positively impact students as soon as we can. And so that has been the major push over the last several months.*



**There's a lot of friction right now between what administration says we have money for and can do and what faculty think we should be doing with our money.**



Locating this work within academic departments may have exacerbated the marginalization of some project activities, particularly relative to large-scale institutional priorities like guided pathways.

With the support of ATD and in an effort to boost sustainability, colleges identified ways to embed the project strategies into existing institutional infrastructure and other initiatives. Centers for teaching and learning (CTLs) at CCBC and Harper College, for example, provided the administrative infrastructure for project activities from the beginning of the grant, largely by appointing CTL staff as project leads for the adjunct engagement activities. Other colleges also explored how to engage their CTLs to sustain project activities. For example, after the grant ended, a center's staff could continue the work of faculty team members who had received grant-funded released time or stipends to organize and administer the workshops, orientations, and cohort-based experiences. They could also create and maintain the online tools and resources.

## **The Effect of Project Activities on Faculty and Students**

In this section, we use the faculty baseline and follow-up survey information and student transcript data to examine the effects of the project activities on part-time faculty and their students. We compare survey responses of three groups of part-time faculty: (1) those who completed the baseline survey at the project's launch, (2) those who participated in one or more selected project activities (i.e., in cohort-based faculty experiences, orientations, and workshops) and who completed the follow-up survey, and (3) those who did not participate in the activities and who completed the follow-up survey. In addition, we occasionally make comparisons with full-time faculty respondents. The use of two comparison groups ([1] and [3], rather than just one group) strengthens our ability to infer whether the project activities influenced faculty experiences. Neither comparison group is itself ideal. Because faculty self-selected to participate in project activities, participants and non-participants may have had different characteristics and motivations. And changes in responses between baseline and follow-up could have been driven by a number of factors, including other activities or initiatives at the college. Therefore, we use both comparison groups to mitigate the weaknesses of each. To understand the potential influence of project activities on students, we use student transcript data matched with affected sections, as described above, to compare the outcomes of students enrolled in course sections taught by participating faculty (those in the affected sections) with students enrolled in non-participating-faculty-taught courses.

Overall, our efforts to measure the effects of participating in the selected project activities are limited in two ways. First, in most cases, we do not attempt to measure the effects of specific project activities. We report largely on aggregate outcomes because individual faculty may have participated in more than one project activity and because sample sizes for many activities are quite small. (Later in the section, we describe how we estimated the effects of four larger-scale project activities using the transcript data,



but all other analyses focus on faculty who participated in any workshop, orientation, or cohort-based program.) These aggregate results likely mask important variations across the different purposes and formats of the engagement activities implemented at the six colleges. Second, the timeline for program implementation was different across colleges, with some beginning or scaling their efforts in earnest during the project's second year. Thus, while we track student transcript data for up to two years after the project began, any lasting effects on instructional practices and student learning may need a longer time period to be observed.

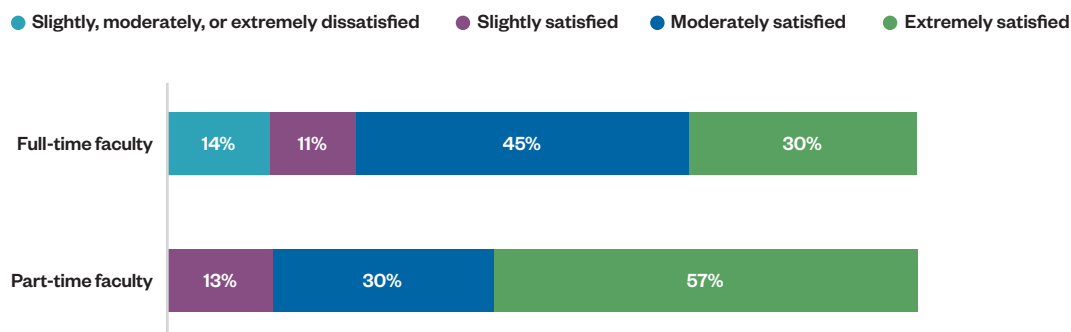
## Faculty Outcomes: Sense of Connection to Departments and Satisfaction With Project Activities

Consistent with the logic model shown above (Figure 1), faculty who have stronger relationships with others, feel valued by and connected to their institution, and are more satisfied with their job may be more motivated to engage in activities to improve their practice. Faculty satisfaction may also lead to greater employee retention, and faculty with strong professional relationships may be more able to access knowledge they need to be successful in their roles. Therefore, faculty connectedness and satisfaction are important outcomes for this project.

Using the survey data, we first compare rate-of-agreement survey responses on several statements related to adjunct faculty experiences within their respective departments. We largely find that the overall association between participation in project activities and adjunct faculty's relationships with colleagues and collaborative experiences within their departments are not statistically significant (see Appendix Figure B1). (We do find that participants were more likely to report that they were encouraged to collect information on the effectiveness of their teaching compared both to baseline survey respondents and to non-participants.) These largely null results may be partially explained by the fact that many event-based activities (i.e., orientations, workshops, mentoring programs) were cross-departmental (see the full results from these survey items in Appendix B).

Secondly, we find that adjunct faculty reported high rates of satisfaction with the project activities they attended. To understand the extent to which the program activities aligned with part-time faculty needs, we compare the follow-up survey responses from part-time and full-time project participants. As shown in Figure 4, 76% of participating full-time faculty stated that they were moderately to extremely satisfied with the project activities, while 87% of part-time faculty reported the similar levels of satisfaction. We find that high levels of satisfaction were consistent across different project activities and across the six community colleges. When part-time faculty non-participants were asked why they did not participate in project activities, 15% reported "not interested," as compared to 25% of full-time faculty non-participants (see Figure 3). Taken together, these data suggest that the project activities were well-designed to meet part-time faculty's needs.

**We find that high levels of satisfaction were consistent across different project activities and across the six community colleges.**

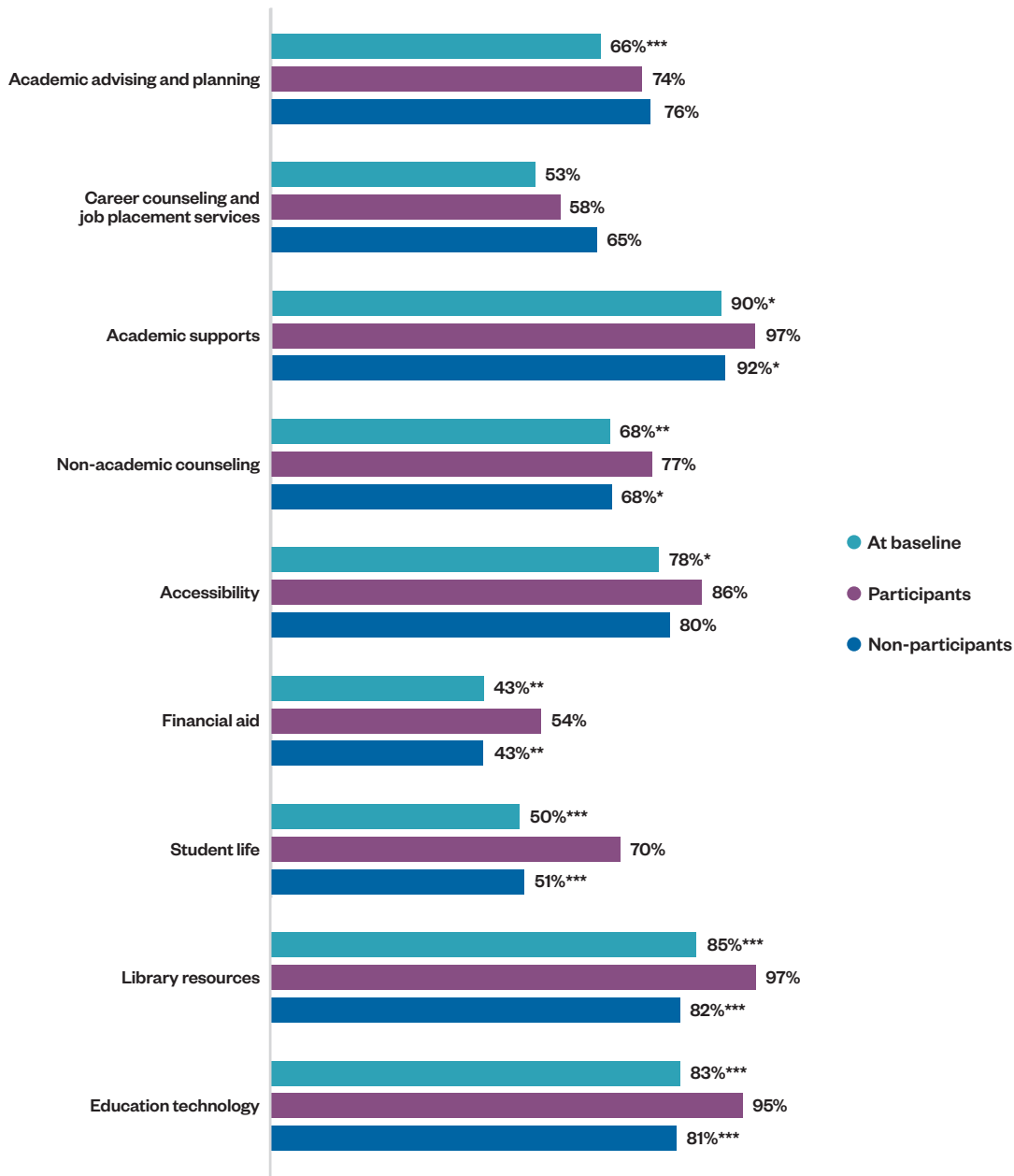
**Figure 4.****Project Activities Satisfaction Rate Among Faculty Participants**

## Faculty Outcomes: Knowledge of Student Services and Referring Students to Such Services

This project and others have shown that part-time faculty are less knowledgeable about college resources and supports for students and refer fewer students to student services as compared to their full-time counterparts (Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018; Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2014). As shown in Figure 5, we find statistically significant differences in almost all categories of self-reported knowledge of campus services when comparing part-time faculty who participated in the project activities with part-time faculty at baseline and non-participating part-time faculty. Those who participated in project activities were between 7 and 20 percentage points more likely to report being “somewhat knowledgeable” or “very knowledgeable” of academic advising; academic supports (e.g., tutoring, writing center); non-academic counseling; accessibility resources; financial aid; student life; library resources; and educational technology (e.g., learning management systems, curricular software). We find no statistically significant differences between part-time faculty participants’ knowledge of career counseling and that of baseline respondents or non-participants.

**Figure 5.**

**Proportion of Part-Time Faculty Who Were Knowledgeable of Campus Services**



Note. We conducted pairwise statistical testing of means between part-time faculty baseline survey respondents versus part-time faculty follow-up survey respondents who participated in project activities, and between part-time faculty follow-up survey respondents who did and did not participate in project activities.

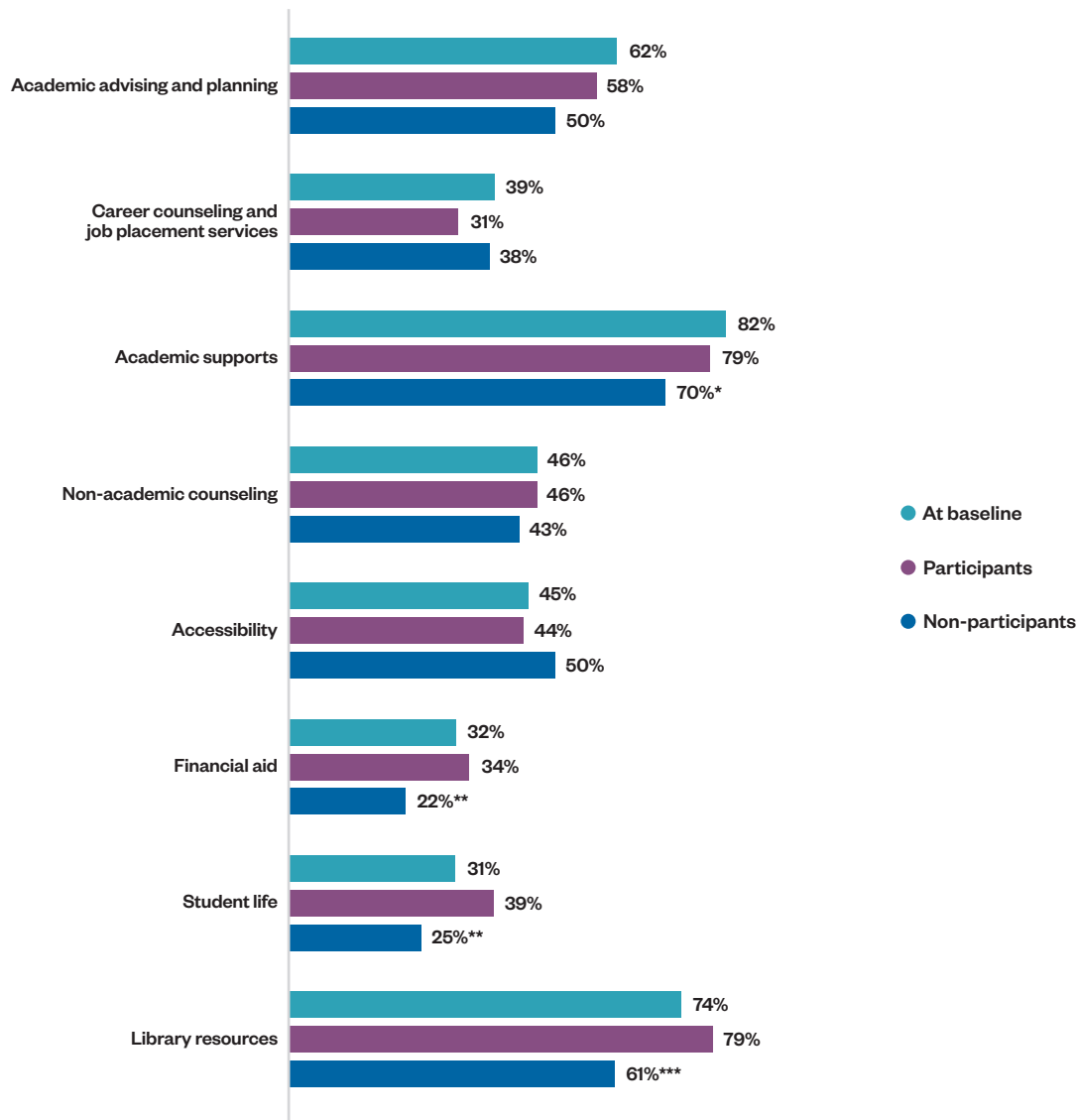
\*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level.

In addition to being asked about their knowledge of campus services, faculty were asked if they referred any students to these services during the previous term. As shown in Figure 6, we find mixed results for self-reported student referrals. Higher proportions of part-time faculty who participated in the project referred students to financial aid, student life, and library resources at least once, compared to non-participants (by 9 to 18 percentage points). Faculty who participated in

the project also reported higher likelihoods of referring students to these services compared to baseline results, but the differences were not statistically significant. Yet we do not find associations between project participation and greater referral to academic advising, career counseling, academic and non-academic supports, and accessibility. One reason for the weaker relationship between participation and referrals (versus participation and knowledge of services) may be the retrospective nature of the questions that asked them about referrals during the previous semester (fall 2017), which was the time period when many faculty were actively engaged in workshops, orientations, and cohort-based programs.

**Figure 6.**

**Proportion of Part-Time Faculty Who Referred Students to Campus Services at Least Once During Prior Term**



*Note.* We conducted pairwise statistical testing of means between first-round part-time faculty versus second-round part-time participants, and second-round part-time participants versus second-round part-time non-participants.

\*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level.

## Student Outcomes

To understand if students enrolled in course sections taught by participating faculty experienced different outcomes than their peers, we use student transcript data matched with affected and unaffected course sections. As described above, affected sections are those taught by faculty who attended workshops, orientation events, and cohort-based programs as part of this project. Engagement with improved online resources, changed policies, and upgraded physical spaces on campus, which reflect other strategies undertaken through this project, are not considered in this analysis, as event-based activities are assumed to be more likely to affect student outcomes. Using student transcript data, we look at two sets of key outcomes: course outcomes and enrollment persistence. Course outcomes include three measures: whether a student persisted to the end of the course rather than withdrew, the student's grade on a 4.0 scale, and whether the student passed the course. Grades and pass rates are calculated only for students who persisted to the end of the course. Enrollment persistence refers to whether a student returned to the college and enrolled in at least one course in the following term. (Students who earned a credential during the first term are considered to have persisted.)

To assess the effect of the selected project activities on students' academic outcomes, we compare outcomes for students whose instructor participated in project activities with those of students whose instructor did not participate, controlling for students' demographic characteristics, financial aid receipt, and prior academic preparedness. A detailed description of the method for this analysis can be found in Appendix A. To adjust for differences across courses, we include course fixed effects in the model and only compare outcomes for students enrolled in different sections of the same course. To account for variations of sections within the same course, we also include controls for section characteristics, such as the number of students enrolled in the section and when it was scheduled (with indicators for night and weekend classes). Through this analysis, we find that the effects on student outcomes at the aggregate level are close to zero (see Appendix Table B6).

Because the project activities varied in terms of goals and intensity, we use a similar analysis to examine four activities that may have been more likely to influence student outcomes because of their explicit focus on instruction. Through this analysis, we find that the Faculty Frontier Circles (FFC) program at Delta College showed a small, positive, statistically significant association with course grades (see Appendix Table B7). We found no significant effects for other three project activities. Over the course of a semester, FFC program participants regularly met with a group of departmental colleagues to discuss instructional issues. Some FFC participants extended their involvement for a second semester through a team-teaching partnership. This intensive, disciplinary, cohort-based structure may have been more likely to directly affect student course performance than other faculty engagement activities.

It may not be surprising that we were unable to detect widespread effects on student performance through this study. Previous research on faculty engagement has similarly not shown student-level effects, even when showing positive effects on faculty. This disconnect in outcomes between faculty versus their students is sometimes explained in terms of faculty development efforts not being sufficiently tied to specific intended

improvements in student performance or because appropriate measures for student performance are absent (Guskey, 2002). Condon, Iverson, Manduca, Rutz, and Willett (2016) have argued that researchers should carefully align student outcome measures with the goals and purposes of a given faculty development intervention. Using such an approach, they showed that faculty development on writing instruction was correlated with improvements in student writing. In this study, the varied nature of the engagement strategies did not allow for a careful alignment between them and the student outcome measures available in student transcripts. The relatively brief follow-up period for this two-year project presents an additional potential obstacle in identifying effects on students. It may take more time for the professional relationships, satisfaction, and knowledge garnered by faculty participants in the selected project activities to translate into improved instructional practice or enhanced student support. Finally, it is also possible that few of the project activities were intensive enough to result in changes to student outcomes. Previous research has shown the importance of ongoing, long-term supports for faculty (Fowler, Macik, Sandoval, Bakenhus, & MacWillie, 2016), and evidence indicates that one-time workshops or orientations may have a limited effect when not paired with other resources (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). This suggests that, while our analysis does not account for the cumulative effect of engaging in a series of relevant activities over multiple terms, the project teams' strategy of implementing multiple kinds of support that faculty can access at various points in their career is a good one.

**It may take more time for the professional relationships, satisfaction, and knowledge garnered by faculty participants to translate into improved instructional practice or enhanced student support.**

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In response to widespread reliance on part-time faculty in community colleges and the ways adjuncts are disadvantaged through their employment arrangements, Achieving the Dream created and embarked upon the Engaging Adjunct Faculty in the Student Success Movement project. The project supported six diverse community colleges as they developed and implemented strategies to engage and support adjunct faculty and thereby improve student outcomes. This work was guided by four design principles and led by a team of full- and part-time faculty and administrators at each college. Generating information about promising, scalable, sustainable engagement strategies that could be shared across the national network of Achieving the Dream colleges was a key objective of this project.

Each college implemented a variety of adjunct engagement strategies based on the needs of their part-time faculty, which we classify into four broad categories: facilitating cohort-based faculty experiences, offering orientations and workshops, strengthening online resources, and improving working conditions. These strategies were hypothesized to improve student outcomes through increased faculty knowledge, motivation, and resources to do their work effectively.

Survey analysis shows that part-time faculty were very satisfied with activities initiated through the project, and those who participated in one or more selected activities—cohort-based experiences, orientations, and workshops—reported greater knowledge of several campus services and higher rates of student referral to some of these services. Yet, the outcomes of students who were taught by participating and non-participating adjunct faculty were virtually the same. While participation in one college's faculty inquiry group was associated with a small positive increase in student grades, we found no effects of participation in the selected activities on student outcomes in the aggregate. But it is also the case that our method, measures, and period of follow-up time to examine associations between the variety of project activities and student performance were limited. It is also possible that few of the project activities were intensive enough to result in changes to student outcomes.

Drawing on findings presented in this report, we close with four recommendations for colleges interested in undertaking adjunct faculty engagement reform:

### **Ground decisions on adjunct faculty supports in local data on adjunct faculty needs.**

Before designing strategies to support adjunct faculty, colleges should investigate the needs and experiences of their part-time instructors. Survey data from this project has shown that part-time faculty vary in terms of their professional goals and experiences (see Bickerstaff & Chavarin, 2018), as well as in their availability and interest in participating in on-campus meetings and cohort-based activities. Adjunct faculty profiles differed across the six participating institutions, and some colleges saw differences in adjunct faculty needs across departments. Colleges can use surveys and focus groups to determine the needs of their part-time faculty, and administrative data can reveal which courses adjunct faculty are more likely to teach, the times of day they are teaching, and the performance of students in sections taught by part-time faculty. Some groups of part-time faculty—including new hires, faculty teaching in the evenings or on weekends, and faculty teaching at satellite locations—may be more disadvantaged in terms of knowledge and resources than others. Rather than creating a one-size approach to faculty support, colleges may find that customized or tailored

events or activities can more effectively meet part-time faculty needs. Colleges would be well-served by designing a mix of high- and low-touch options so that part-time faculty can access intensive professional development when their schedules allow and can rely on low-touch supports (i.e., online resources, mentors) when they do not.

**Embed adjunct faculty supports into existing institutional infrastructure and initiatives.** Colleges should identify places in the institution where programming and resources for adjunct faculty can be housed over the long term, as standalone events or resources may be difficult to sustain and are vulnerable to marginalization within the institution. In this project, colleges identified several potential places to house supports for adjunct faculty. A college's center for teaching and learning or an equivalent unit on campus charged with faculty development may offer orientations, workshops, or cohort-based approaches that are designed with adjunct faculty needs in mind. In addition, student success initiatives, including developmental education reform, advising redesign, and guided pathways should be examined to consider the extent to which adjunct faculty are appropriately engaged and supported during the planning and implementation phases. CCBC's high-impact practices infusion project provides a model for part-time faculty engagement embedded in reform initiatives.

**Examine college policies and practices that impact the working lives of adjunct faculty.** In addition to programming like workshops or meetings, colleges should identify institutional policies and practices that may provide opportunities to improve the knowledge and resources available to part-time faculty. These include hiring practices, orientation and onboarding procedures, policies for course assignment, allocation of professional development funds, and faculty evaluation. As seen at Harper College, these policies can be configured to prioritize professional engagement and learning, while also providing a pathway to greater job security and higher pay. Understanding how current practices affect the professional lives of part-time faculty may require an investigation across multiple college functions ranging from human resources to individual academic departments. The impact of these practices may not be immediately evident to administrators and full-time faculty. Therefore, a cross-functional task force with strong representation of adjunct faculty—much like the teams developed for this project—may uncover opportunities for both modest and ambitious changes that could measurably improve the working lives of part-time faculty.

**Consider intended outcomes for faculty engagement strategies and create a plan for measurement.** Colleges designing professional development opportunities or other activities should identify the intended outcomes for faculty and students. A growing field of scholarship advocates for moving beyond measures of faculty participation and satisfaction in professional development and toward measures aligned with the learning goals for faculty and the related student outcomes (e.g., Condon et al., 2016; Haras, Taylor, Sorcinelli, & von Hoene, 2017). This project included several outcome measures, but we were unable to align our instruments to the goals of specific college activities. Given the nature, purpose, and duration of the intervention, colleges should also consider if it would be reasonable to expect an improvement in student outcomes. In addition to assisting with an evaluation plan, using a backward design approach and explicitly identifying the intended faculty and student outcomes of the engagement strategy will help colleges refine the features of their activities.



## Endnotes

1. In this report, we use the terms *adjunct* and *part-time* interchangeably to refer to faculty who are classified by their institution as part-time, contingent employees.
2. The call for proposals was disseminated to colleges in the ATD network with leader college status, which are those that have been in the network for three or more years and have shown improvement in student outcomes.
3. Selected items from the faculty survey can be found here: <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/understanding-part-time-faculty-community-colleges.html>
4. More information on Harper's model can be found here: <https://harper-academy.net/communities-of-practice/>
5. More information on high-impact practices can be found here: <https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>
6. In some cases, colleges selected broader academic divisions.

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## Appendix A: Method for Student Outcome Analysis

Here we describe the method used to estimate the effects of adjunct faculty participation in project activities on student outcomes for all enrolled students from academic year 2014-15 to 2017-18. The data include full student transcripts at the course-section level, linked with students' demographic characteristics and credentials or degrees obtained within the college. The transcripts also include the characteristics of the instructors who taught corresponding course sections, such as their gender, race/ethnicity, highest degree attainment, and whether they were employed full-time by the college.

In the first set of analyses, we use a course fixed effects model to assess the variations in student outcomes across course sections taught by participating versus non-participating adjunct instructors within the same course. The model is as following:

$$Y_{icsj} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Participant}_{csj} + \beta_k X_{icsj} + \beta_s C_{csj} + \rho_{cj} + \varepsilon_{icsj} \quad (1)$$

where  $Y_{icsj}$  is the course outcome for student  $i$  enrolling in course  $c$ , section  $s$ , at college  $j$ . The key variable of interest is  $\text{Participant}_{csj}$ , which equals 1 if the course section was taught by an instructor who participated in at least one of the selected project activities. The vector  $X_{icsj}$  is a set of controls for student  $i$ 's individual characteristics, including a set of dummy variables for racial/ethnic groups (with White as the reference group) and indicators for female; age at time of course enrollment; Pell grant eligibility; the amount of Pell grant received; high school GPA; and whether the student was placed as college-ready in writing, reading, and math. The vector  $C_{csj}$  is a set of controls for course section  $s$  at college  $j$ , including indicators for night sections (starting after 5 p.m.), weekend sections, delivery mode, and the number of students enrolled in the section. By including course fixed effects  $\rho_{cj}$ , we only compare students enrolling in different sections within the same course  $c$  at college  $j$ . This allows us to adjust for the fact that instructors in some courses were more likely to participate in the project activities than instructors in other courses. Appendix Table B6 presents the results from this set of analyses.

To capture the spillover effects of faculty professional development within a department, which occur when non-participant instructors experience any effects from the project through communications or interactions with colleagues who participated in any activities, we performed a second set of analyses using a difference-in-difference model:

$$Y_{idtj} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{PD Department}_d + \beta_2 \text{Post}_t + \beta_3 \text{PD Department}_d * \text{Post}_t + \beta_n X_i + \rho_t + \delta_j + \varepsilon_{idtj} \quad (2)$$

where  $Y_{idtj}$  is the course outcome for student  $i$  enrolling in department  $d$  in college  $j$  during semester  $t$ . The variable  $\text{PD Department}_d$  equals 1 if the department started to offer faculty professional development activities since the fall semester in 2016.  $\text{Post}_t$  equals 1 for 2016 fall or later semesters. The variable of interest is  $\beta_3$ , the coefficient of the interaction terms between  $\text{PD Department}_d$  and  $\text{Post}_t$ . It measures the difference of student outcomes in departments selected for the project before and after the project activities implementation, while using students taking courses in departments without project activities as the comparison group. We conducted the analyses over the six colleges in the aggregate, as well as for individual project activities. Appendix Table B7 presents the results for Faculty Frontier Circles program at Delta College.

## Appendix B: Supplementary Tables and Figures

**Table B1.**

Proportion of Students in Affected Sections by College and Term

	CCBC	CCP <sup>a</sup>	DELTA COLLEGE	PATRICK HENRY	RENTON TECHNICAL COLLEGE	HARPER COLLEGE
Fall 2016	1%	6%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Spring 2017	3%	2%	0%	10%	3%	10%
Fall 2017	5%	4%	4%	47%	22%	12%
Spring 2018	5%	2%	5%	41%	16%	13%

<sup>a</sup> CCP's signature program for this project, the Adjunct Institute, was delivered in fall 2016 and repeated in fall 2017.

**Table B2.**

Proportion of Affected Sections Taught by Part-Time Faculty

OVERALL	CCBC	CCP	DELTA COLLEGE	PATRICK HENRY	RENTON TECHNICAL COLLEGE	HARPER COLLEGE
45%	27%	47%	60%	77%	60%	28%

**Table B3.**

Faculty Characteristics

	NON-AFFECTED SECTIONS	AFFECTED SECTIONS
Female	52%	66%
Race/ethnicity		
White	75%	73%
Black	12%	16%
Hispanic	4%	3%
Other racial/ethnic groups	9%	8%
Highest degree attained <sup>a</sup>		
Bachelor's degree	8%	5%
Master's degree	62%	68%
Doctoral degree or equivalent	27%	26%

<sup>a</sup> Two percent of course sections were taught by instructors with either less than bachelor's degree or other types of degrees or credentials.

**Table B4.**

Course Schedule by Type of Section

	NON-AFFECTED SECTIONS	AFFECTED SECTIONS
Daytime class (starting before 5 p.m.)	70%	76%
Night class (starting after 5 p.m.)	30%	24%

**Table B5.**  
Student Characteristics by Type of Section

	NON-AFFECTED SECTIONS	AFFECTED SECTIONS
Female	58%	56%
Eligible for Pell grant	44%	45%
Amount of Pell grant received	\$1,375	\$1,738
Dual enrollment	10%	19%
Placed as college-ready in		
Math	45%	48%
Writing	66%	68%
Reading	76%	76%

**Table B6.**  
Estimated Effects of Affected Sections on Course and Enrollment Outcomes: All Activities

	(1) PERSIST TO END	(2) PASS	(3) COURSE GRADES	(4) ENROLLMENT PERSISTENCE
Affected section	-0.007 (0.004)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.000 (0.023)	-0.003 (0.005)
Observations	1,294,312	1,181,607	1,181,607	1,137,853
Student characteristics	YES	YES	YES	YES
Course section characteristics	YES	YES	YES	YES
College-course fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES

Note. College-by-course fixed effects are controlled in all models. Standard errors are clustered at the college-course level. The unit of analysis is student-by-course-section. Robust standard errors in parentheses.  
\*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level.

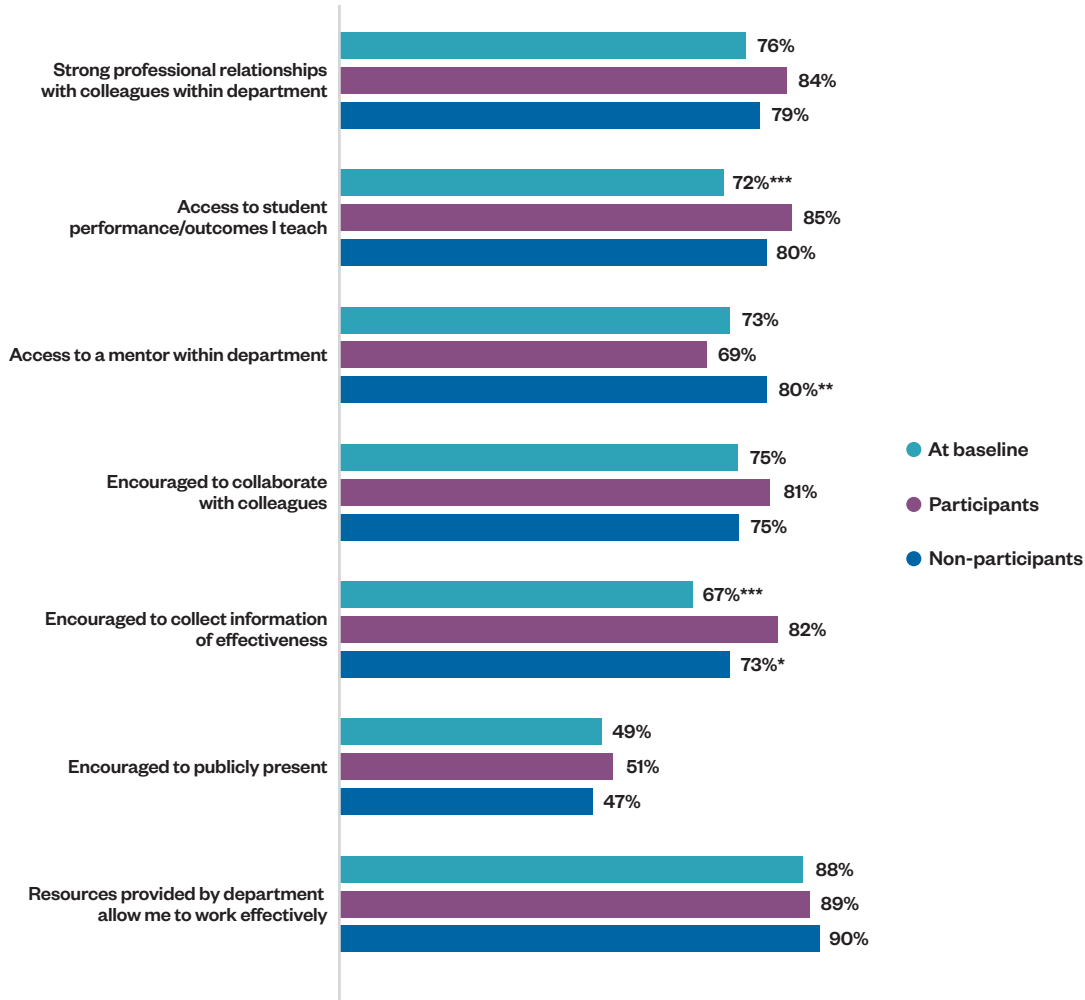
**Table B7.**  
Estimated Effects of FFC on Course Outcomes

	(1) PERSIST TO END	(2) PASS	(3) COURSE GRADES
Affected section	0.001 (0.004)	0.003 (0.008)	0.094** (0.037)
Observations	198,229	183,080	183,080
Student characteristics	YES	YES	YES
Course section characteristics	YES	YES	YES

Note. College-by-course fixed effects are controlled in all models. Standard errors are clustered at the college-course level. Robust standard errors in parentheses.  
\*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level.

**Figure B1.**

**Proportion of Part-Time Faculty Who Agreed With Statements About Departmental Engagement**



*Note.* We conducted pairwise statistical testing of means between part-time faculty baseline survey respondents versus part-time faculty follow-up survey respondents who participated in project activities, and between part-time faculty follow-up survey respondents who did and did not participate in project activities. Affirmative responses include the range from somewhat to strongly agreeing with survey statement.

\*\*\* significant at 1% level; \*\* significant at 5% level; \* significant at 10% level.

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