

# FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

DOCTORATE IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

CELEBRATING  
**10**  
YEARS



## DCCL Dissertations: Making an *IMPACT!*

### WINTER 2021

## CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF DCCL DISSERTATION RESEARCH

### More to Celebrate!

In June 2020, in the first issue of this publication, we announced the beginning of our year-long celebration of the DCCL Program's 10th Anniversary. We're using our anniversary as a motivation for celebrating and highlighting the dissertations produced by our inspiring DCCL students.

In this 3rd quarterly issue, the dissertations we'll be highlighting cover several topics: From institutional initiatives supporting student success and programs specifically focused on workforce preparation, to broader institutional strategies and approaches supporting innovation and organizational change. We're excited, once again, to share the impactful work of our DCCL graduates!

### Institutional Initiatives and Strategies for Student Success

In 2015, Cohort 3 students Kathy Bruce and Nancy Sutton became DCCL's first pair of students to attempt a co-authored, co-researched dissertation. Since then 3 other pairs have embraced the collaborative process, a challenge that requires a great deal of hard work, a thick skin, and an almost super-human ability to read each other's minds. Bruce and Sutton's study examined the role of community college employees' engagement in student success programming, and how this involvement affects their institutional commitment and their potential impact on student success.

Lori Gonko (C2) similarly examined the role that community college support staff had on student success by studying perceptions of college students, support staff, and administrators. Her study indicated that support staff play a vital role in assisting students, ensuring the success of institutional initiatives, and helping students meet their educational goals. Providing training and professional development opportunities can enhance these efforts and provide a more inclusive campus culture.

Amber Holloway (C4) also examined institutional structures and their effects on student success. Holloway analyzed institutional approaches that may be limiting student success and identified 5 categories of potential inhibitors: assumptions, attitudes, policies, procedures, and information gaps. By understanding the students' perspective about their institution's structure and approaches, leaders can focus on problem areas and address them to improve student success.

*(read about more Institutional Initiatives on page 2)*

*Last quarter, we discussed the impact of the 2005 work by the Lumina Foundation on DCCL's research philosophy emphasizing data-driven decision making, applying "a culture of evidence," and being the catalyst for open, honest conversations about change.*

*DCCL has developed and supported this philosophy, stressing that effective leaders must not only use data as the foundation for their decision making, they must encourage and support the exploratory, ever-questioning mindset of a researcher.*

*Whether they are responding to immediate, crisis-driven events—such as the pandemic's effects on education in spring 2020—or seeking to understand a long-standing deeply-ingrained issue—such as racial injustice and ethnic disparities in education—effective leaders must rely on evidence.*

*DCCL dissertations not only study important topics, they raise issues and open conversations. Let's Talk!*

Want to read more? Find and download DCCL dissertations: <http://fir.ferris.edu/>

## Institutional Initiatives to Improve Student Success (continued)

Dan Herbst (C4) focused on ways institutions can improve access to student services from enrollment and advising to financial aid and completion by developing one-stop enrollment service centers. Herbst developed a model for a collaborative, integrated center that uses staff input and task analysis to design effective accessible workspaces and processes.

Institutional policies and practices affecting student success have been the focus of several DCCL dissertations. Tina Hoxie (C1) and Renica Minott, (C3) both examined institutional academic probation policies and practices. Hoxie studied the effect of her institution's academic probation process on student persistence, finding the strongest correlation between the required intervention workshops and student persistence. Minott completed a comparative study of academic probation policies and practices at four community colleges and identified best practices, ranging from intrusive one-on-one communication and interventions to structured probation levels and ongoing institutional evaluation of at-risk populations.

Steve Nunez and Erik Huntsinger, both from Cohort 3, relied on institutional data to understand trends in student success and persistence. Nunez examined academic and demographic data from incoming freshmen to identify potential predictors of academic success in college. He examined 5 demographic variables and 16 academic variables and found that race and gender (white females) and educational intent (students intending to transfer to a 4-year institution) were the most significant predictors of success. Huntsinger examined institutional data at a microscale (individual course level) to identify predictors of student persistence and success. He found that 16 factors were related to student success in an individual course, including previous coursework, history of course withdrawals, as well as their GPA and the specific instructor.



(from top: Bruce, Sutton, Gonko, and Herbst; Hoxie, Minott, Huntsinger, and Nunez)



## Institutional Initiatives to Improve Student Success



## Workforce Preparation



(from top: Donham, Reynolds, MacGregor, and McGuinnis)

## Workforce Preparation: Developing Programs to Respond to Market Needs

Historically, the mission of community colleges has been tied to workforce development and meeting current and future market needs. Ten DCCL dissertations have focused on aspects of workforce preparation, including curricular development, internships and apprenticeships, as well as developing opportunities for collaboration and employer partnerships.

Marilyn Donham (C4) developed a business certificate program specifically for professionals in specialty trade fields to enhance essential small business and entrepreneurship skills. Ritch Reynolds (C6) built on partnerships with regional 4-year institutions to develop a transferrable 2-year program in sports management, responding to both market needs and existing highly successful 4-year programming opportunities.

Two Harper Cohort students, Melissa MacGregor and Katy McGuinnis, studied aspects of workforce preparation—apprenticeship and internship programs. MacGregor researched recently implemented Registered Apprenticeship programs to determine the factors that led to successful program implementation. Her work led to an “employer partnership model” to assist community colleges wishing to develop similar programming.

Katy McGuinnis addressed a need at her institution by developing an Internship Implementation Guide designed to help community colleges establish consistent, standardized internship programs with linked academic coursework, established business/industry connections, and grounded institutional practices for expanding internship opportunities for students.

### Workforce Preparation (continued)

Understanding employer needs and perceptions are the foundations for effective workforce programming. Sue DeCamillis (C1) discussed the employee skillsets that employers seek to better serve a global marketplace, examining the ways that community colleges can better prepare students when they enter the workforce.

Mark Dunneback (C6) studied one mechanism that workforce programs use to maintain industry connections— advisory boards. His study examined the perceived benefits and best practices of programs using advisory boards to maintain relevancy and accountability as well as effective board structures and membership.



(DeCamillis and Dunneback)



(from top: Gordon, Wilson, Newton, Maxa, and Heinrich)

Vikki Gordon (C3) analyzed the appeal of manufacturing programs and careers through the eyes of high school students. She studied the perceptions of students about their career options and long-term opportunities to help community colleges understand how to market programs more effectively.

A recent team of Cohort 8 students, Tomeka Wilson and Shani Newton, examined the barriers that can limit underrepresented minorities from pursuing education programs and careers in STEM. Their work focused on defining the barriers and identifying best practices to help institutions address and mitigate these to increase access and success for students.

Vicky Maxa (C2) studied the interventions her institution implemented to increase completion rates for students in Job Training Programs. She identified the factors that contribute to the high levels of success of these students, many of whom are from low-income, high-risk populations.

Peggy Heinrich (C5) developed a model for an Integrated Education and Training (IET) program to help underprepared adults complete career and technical education programs more effectively and efficiently. IET programs target students who may not have completed high school or may be non-native English speakers and provide them with occupational skills training and adult education services.

### Organizational Culture and Institutional Change

Another group of DCCL dissertations examined institutional practices and their effect on organizational culture and transformational change.

Jessica Papa (Harper Cohort) interviewed community college presidents from across the U.S. to identify perceptions of their college's mission and its emphasis on 5 dimensions of human agency (critical thinking, lifelong learning, equity and cultural diversity, citizenship and community service, and personal development) and 5 neoliberal themes (job competitiveness, economic development, globalization, workforce development, and market focus). Papa also examined the presidents' perceptions of the mission's impact on their role in guiding the work of the college.

Nancy Moore, also from the Harper Cohort, compared the processes used to implement Guided Pathways at two community colleges, focusing on the change strategies used and the impact of these strategies on faculty commitment to the process and its implementation. Key to successful implementation were transparency and open communication.

Three dissertations examined institutional assessment practices and their effect on organizational effectiveness. Amanda Bylczynski (C7) studied best practices for assessing the work of student affairs divisions, including identifying appropriate measures, student learning outcomes, assessment tools, data collection methods, and reporting mechanisms. She used these best practices to develop a handbook for assessing supportive services and co-curricular education.



### Organizational Culture and Institutional Change



(from top: Papa, N. Moore, Bylczynski, and Coates)

Deb Coates (C2) used a collaborative process with faculty teams to develop an assessment plan, template, and feedback rubric for assessment of student learning. During the development process and following implementation of the assessment template, Coates surveyed faculty to determine their attitudes about the new template and about the overall assessment process. While faculty resistance was still present following the implementation, the template and the collaborative development process appeared to lessen resistance.

Jennifer Hegenauer (C6) also researched faculty perceptions about assessment of student learning, examining attitudes about classroom and program assessment practices and their value. Hegenauer's study revealed several key findings: first, while assessment is valuable, consistent documentation is lacking that would ensure continuous improvement. Also, institutional support, collaboration, consistent messaging, and training are key to successful institutional assessment.

Tracy Labadie, also of Cohort 7, studied assessment practices from the perspective of faculty engagement — and their emotional journey during the assessment process. Labadie examined faculty engagement in the assessment process, identifying the factors that both limited and supported participation and motivation.

Fiona Hert (C1) and Leslie Kellogg (C4) studied institutional program review processes and their effectiveness in ensuring quality academic and workforce programming. Hert's comparative case study of program review and program cost models at two community colleges examined the integration of these processes into budgeting and strategic planning processes and the role of leadership in the processes.



(from top: Hegenauer, Labadie, Hert and Kellogg)

Kellogg's study focused on program prioritization practices, evaluating the state of prioritization work at community colleges in order to share best practices, success factors, and pitfalls to avoid. Her research identified two high priority areas that would improve prioritization efforts: (1) enhancing and improving institutional research and financial data capacity at the institution — collecting and making the right data available, (2) expanding the scope of prioritization work to include all academic disciplines, programs, and services, including student services, administrative functions, and auxiliary services.



(Engle and Moses)

Finally, institutional approaches to accreditation were the focus of study for two DCCL dissertations. Chris Engle (C1) and Bruce Moses (C4) studied the effect of accreditation on institutional change. Engle's study researched the effectiveness of the AQIP Accreditation Model, stressing continuous quality improvement, on leaders' ability to effect institutional change. He examined committee interactions, levels of involvement from across the college, and the role of leadership in these efforts.

Moses, too, examined the effectiveness of the AQIP model by interviewing community college presidents who participated in the AQIP accreditation process. Moses discussed their experiences in developing a culture of continuous quality improvement and the opportunities the process provided these leaders to sustain improvement outside of the accreditation process.

### Improving Institutional Processes and Services

Another group of DCCL dissertations focused on institutional processes and services and identifying ways to improve them to enhance institutional effectiveness and meet student needs.

Cheryl Hagen (C5) developed tools to assist community colleges meet the compliance, safety, and security issues tied to Title IX federal mandates and improve the campus climate. The tools include methods for identifying current campus understanding of the requirements and the campus culture and a training program that reinforces the role of faculty, staff, and students in taking a proactive approach to campus security and safety.



(Hagen, Crawford, and Gilmore)

## Improving Institutional Processes and Services (continued)

Andrew Crawford (C6) addressed the problem of sexual violence and assault on college campuses by developing a manual and comprehensive training, education, and prevention program specifically for community colleges.

Hunter Gilmore (C4) also examined campus safety concerns by studying campus security programs, supplementing an in-depth case study of one institution's program with best practices from several additional community colleges.

Stacey Stover (C7) also studied institutional processes with a focus on identifying best practices and institutional satisfaction with CRM and SEM systems in community colleges. She examined the effect of these systems on an institution's enrollment and ways that institutions can improve their use of the technology.

Victoria Akinde (Harper Cohort) examined the evolving role of libraries on community college campuses and innovative efforts undertaken by several community college libraries to meet student resource and

academic needs, including rethinking space configuration, adapting new technology, and enhancing staff training.

Glenn Cerny (C4) investigated the processes used at his institution to maintain effective collaborations and partnerships with local businesses. He conducted a case study to determine the type of environment, attributes, academic integration methods, and leadership characteristics necessary to create sustainable collaborations.

Amy Kaminski (Harper Cohort) examined institutional processes from the employees' perspective, studying their interpretation of the term "customer service" and its impact on their work and interactions with students. Kaminski's study questioned the transition individuals make from being "customers" to being "students" once accepted and enrolled. This transition was seen to affect both the levels and kinds of service provided by most campus offices. Kaminski's study included a video of her interviews with several study participants to delve more deeply into the research questions.

Brenda Sipe (C6)'s examination of institutional processes and approaches focused on two institutions' successes in applying design thinking and innovative practices. Her findings included the strong connection between innovation and transformational leadership, the vital role of a foundational support structure, and the importance of ongoing descriptive communication. Sipe also noted that institutional identity and values supporting innovation were essential, from a focus on student success, data-driven metrics and inquiry, to openness and flexibility, employee appreciation, individual employee responsibility, and high levels of autonomy and risk taking.



(from top: Stover, Akinde, Cerny, Kaminski, and Sipe)

Join us next quarter for Issue 4, highlighting dissertations on developing leaders, leadership competencies, and voices of leadership.

Plus, watch for a wrap up of all new dissertations from 2020-21!

## CONNECT WITH US!

DCCL produces several publications, including a quarterly newsletter for program alums and the monthly *Perspectives* — a compilation of leaders' views of critical current issues. Access all of our **Publications here**, or contact [cleadership@ferris.edu](mailto:cleadership@ferris.edu) to be added to our mailing list.



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