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LA Grad Act’s Effects on Developmental Faculty: A Case Study

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LA GRAD ACT’S EFFECTS ON DEVELOPMENTAL FACULTY: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 50 years, state legislatures have placed mandates on higher education institutions to lower attrition, thereby increasing student retention and completion. This study investigated and sought to understand the relationship between the Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas Act, or the LA GRAD Act (2010), and developmental education. More specifically, it focused on the perceptions of the mandate held by developmental education faculty who are employed at a public, urban Louisiana community college. This study utilized the four-framework approach by Bolman and Deal (2013) to decipher how developmental classrooms, academic departments, and a higher education institution as a whole fit within the parameters of the four frameworks of leadership. Four themes emerged from the data as a result: 1. A strong disconnect between administration and faculty; 2. Lack of and diminishing of needed resources; 3. Patience is mandatory in the developmental classroom; and 4. Faculty perceive themselves as working under the human resource frame; whereas they perceive administration to work under the political frame. Additionally, faculty knew the basics of the LA GRAD Act, but did not fully understand the details or standards marked for the institution. Instead they were more focused on their jobs as teachers. More research is necessary to discuss the retention and completion piece, as definitions of retention and completion were different for faculty than those set by the LA GRAD Act. Recommendations for Louisiana state legislature, administration, faculty, staff, and future research are provided.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Higher education institutions enroll over 17 million undergraduate students annually with community colleges educating approximately seven million (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). As the number of students seeking postsecondary education increases and student bodies become more diverse, understanding and measuring student success has become critical. Over the past three decades, legislators in various states have created different mandates for higher education institutions. The attempt is to lower attrition, thereby increasing student retention and completion. As a result, community college administrators maintain close communication with state legislatures. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) found 93% of community college presidents visit state legislatures annually to advocate for their institutions. One study looked at state policy on transfer students from two-year to four-year institutions in Arkansas, Florida, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, and Texas (Wellman, 2002). Wellman (2002) found each state used a different subset of seven categories of policies for transfer, which has a direct effect on how retention and completion is defined for individual institutions. These variances in definitions make it even more important for institutional leaders to maintain open lines of communication with legislators and policymakers. Moreover, the connection to state funding is paramount.

The amount of state and federal funding for public higher education has decreased considerably since 1987 (Chronicle of Higher Education25 years, 2014). In fact, one institution lost close to 65% of their state funding from 1987 to 2012. In an era of reduced financial resources, deciding how to best allocate those resources has become a challenge. Many states have turned to performance-based funding models where state officials link factors such as student enrollment, student retention, and student completion/graduation rates to state funding
Louisiana has recently moved toward retention and completion as a basis for funding according to a report by Ewell, Boeke, and Zis (2008). At this point in time, only 12 mainland states were involved in some type of performance-based funding, six were discussing how to incorporate performance-based funding, leaving 30 without any types of performance-based funding. If performance-based funding is implemented in all 50 states then it is important to determine if indeed student retention and completion rates are positively impacted.

**Statement of the Problem**

In June 2010, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal signed the Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomies for Diplomas Act (LA GRAD Act). The purpose of this legislation was to provide public higher education institutions in Louisiana monetary rewards based on certain criteria (LA GRAD Act, 2010). While the LA GRAD Act mandates specific statewide performance standards and goals, the Act also provides higher education institutions with increased autonomy and tuition flexibility. If individual institutions meet specific requirements mandated by the LA GRAD Act, they are able to increase tuition without legislative approval and are granted other limited operational autonomies for travel, obsolete equipment, inventory, and contracts for hires (LA GRAD Act, 2010). The LA GRAD Act includes four standards: student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability. These standards are weighted differently depending on institutional type and mission of the specific institution.

One proponent of the LA GRAD Act stated, “[It] will result in significant improvement in the higher education enterprise of our state. The LA Grad Act provides for performance based standards; resources and autonomy to support reform; and higher admission standards for our
four year universities” (UlyankeeFollow, 2010). Another source stated, “Through the La GRAD Act, four-year institutions can agree to achieve certain standards for authority to increase tuition” (Louisiana Developmental Education Policies, p. 2). The problem with both aforementioned statements is they do not take into account two-year institutions – namely community and technical colleges, which are part of LA GRAD Act’s six-year agreement to increase retention and completion across all higher education institutions in Louisiana. David Breneman (2012) states the focus should be on community colleges as the job market continues to grow through technical fields. Due to the LA GRAD Act, two-year institutions in the state of Louisiana are now mandated to teach all developmental courses. In 2006, about 63% of students enrolled in community colleges in Louisiana were enrolled in at least one developmental course, which was the same percentage as those directly from high school. Only 14% of these students completed their gateway courses within two years of their first-time enrollment (Complete College America, 2011). Since inception, the percentage of those enrolled in developmental courses has increased, while completion rates have stayed the same. Moreover, the LA GRAD Act will increase the percentage of students enrolling into a developmental course at a community college since two-year institutions are the only institutions allowed to offer these high demand courses.

Thus, it is important to look at the effects of the LA GRAD Act on the students, faculty, and staff of two-year institutions to see if the LA GRAD Act has increased retention and completion rates since its adoption. A typical community college classroom contains no more than 40 students and a typical developmental education classroom will average 15-25 students, with no more than 30 students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The majority of students placed into developmental education classrooms are underprepared for the college classroom academically and are socially underrepresented (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughan, 2006). Thus, one can
conclude with too many struggling students in one classroom, the students, as well as the faculty member, can become overwhelmed with understanding and explaining the material. It also creates social barriers between the students and the faculty member due to the lack of one-on-one time available between student and instructor. This can even be seen between students enrolled in the course. Therefore, investigating community college developmental faculty members’ perceptions of how the LA GRAD Act has impacted students and faculty is critical to determining the success of this legislation.

Rationale for the Study

My professional experiences led to my interest in researching the effect of the LA GRAD Act on community colleges, specifically the perceptions held by faculty who teach developmental education courses. As an instructor who taught developmental mathematics courses prior to the enactment of the LA GRAD Act, I am personally interested in how this state mandate has affected developmental education faculty at a Louisiana community college. Although student and administrative perceptions are important in any educational setting, I decided to understand the perceptions of faculty, because they are deemed experts in their academic fields and are responsible for course instruction and adherence to state mandates. Moreover, faculty members are one of the most important assets to postsecondary education when it comes to student engagement and learning (Umbach & Wawrzunski, 2005). This study plans to address faculty perceptions of how developmental education has been affected since the implementation of the LA GRAD Act. Moreover, how has the LA GRAD Act impacted student retention and completion, if at all?
Definitions of Key Terms

**Adjunct faculty** – Part-time faculty members who have at least a master’s degree with 18+ hours in their field of study (Faculty Credentials, 2006) and teach courses not fulfilled by full-time faculty members.

**Community college** – “Any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in art or the associate in science as its highest degree” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 5).

**Completer** – A student who completes/graduates from an institution of higher education (Noel-Levitz, 2008).

**Completion/Graduation** – “The outcome of how many students within a cohort complete and/or graduate from an institution. This is typically measured in two or three years for associate level programs and four, five, or six years for a bachelor level programs” (Noel-Levitz, 2008, p. 4).

**Developmental education** –

  Broad range of courses and services organized and delivered in an effort to help retain students and ensure the successful completion of their postsecondary education goals. These courses and services are generally delivered according to the principles and theories of adult development and learning, hence the term “developmental” education. (Boylan & Bonham, 2007, p. 2)

**Frame** – “A coherent set of ideas or beliefs forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 41).

**Full-time faculty** – Those who have at least a master’s degree with 18+ hours in their field of study (Faculty Credentials, 2006), teach a minimum of fifteen credit hours per week, and are responsible for other service and professional development activities.

**Human Resource Frame** – A frame centered on “what organizations and people do for one another” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 113). Collegiality and human resource will be used interchangeably.
LA GRAD Act –

A statute enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana to support the state’s public postsecondary education institutions in remaining competitive and increasing their overall effectiveness and efficiency by providing that the institutions achieve specific, measurable performance objectives aimed at improving college completion and at meeting the state’s current and future workforce and economic development needs and by granting the institutions limited operational autonomy and flexibility in exchange for achieving such objectives (LA GRAD Act, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Political Frame – A frame where “politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 183).

Retention – “The measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the same institution from year to year” (Hagedorn, 2005, p. 98).

Reframing – “Examining the same situation from multiple vantage points” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 333).

Structural Frame – A frame which reflects “confidence in rationality and faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people’s performance on the job… putting people in the right roles and relationships” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). Structural frame and bureaucratic lens will be used interchangeably.

Symbolic Frame – A frame focused on “how humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live” centered on “meaning, belief, and faith” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 244).

Research Questions

The following research questions guide this research study:

1. What do developmental education faculty members at an urban Louisiana community college know about the LA GRAD Act?
2. How do developmental faculty at an urban Louisiana community college perceive the LA GRAD Act’s impact on the developmental classroom, if any impact at all?

3. How has the LA GRAD Act influenced the retention and completion of students enrolled in developmental courses at an urban Louisiana community college?
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides readers with background information on topics pertaining to the purpose, history, and mission of the American community college. History pertaining to higher education and community colleges is given to provide important background information. Specifically, it details information on developmental education and community college faculty while shedding light on the history of key legislation. The study’s theoretical framework is also introduced along with the rationale for the use of an organizational leadership approach. Finally relevant theories and applications concerning students and faculty are presented, along with implications on developmental education.

History of the Community College

Community colleges were originally based on the junior college, or “an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade” (Bogue, 1950, p. xvii). The first junior college’s primary purpose—Joliet Junior College established in 1901 in Joliet, Illinois—was for students wanting to remain in their community to obtain credit for their first two years of college coursework and then transfer to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor’s degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughan, 2006; Joliet Junior College, 2012). Over its 100+ years of tenure, the community college has become a place for people seeking workforce development, the academically underprepared, the social and economically oppressed, honors students, veterans, dual enrollment high school students, as well as transfer students. In other words, the community college is built on the democratic notion that everyone should have a chance to obtain a higher education. In 1988, the commission on the future of community colleges released a report. In this document, the community college mission and purpose was announced to become the leader in community development (Vaughan, 2006). In fact, the community
college has a very broad and diverse mission, making it one of the most interesting and humbling
places in higher education. For this study, the community college is defined as “any institution
regionally accredited to award the associate degree in arts or the associate degree in science as its
highest degree” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 5). The purpose and mission of a community college
can change depending on the needs of the community in which the institution is located (Bailey
& Averianova, 1999). One community may need an institution that focuses more on workforce
development, whereas another may need more focus on preparing students for the nearby
bachelor’s degree granting institution. However, one thing remains constant – the focus is on the
surrounding community’s needs, which is very different from the original mission of the junior
college.

All community colleges are open enrollment institutions allowing anyone to apply and
enroll as long as they have an equivalent to a high school education and physical or virtual
classroom space is available (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughan, 2006). This does not mean the
community college will allow a student to take any course once they enroll. Each student
without appropriate standardized test scores must take a placement test and the results indicate
the student’s appropriate courses. Due to open standards, many students will place into courses
that are below college level, often referred to as developmental courses, which is explained later.

**History of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System**

While the history of community colleges in the United States dates back to the early
1900s, the origins of formal community and technical colleges in the state of Louisiana are much
more recent. In fact, the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) was
founded in 1999 and began with only six previously established institutions. Of those six
institutions, one dates back to the early 1920s as a trade school (Delgado Community College),
one was established in 1966 (Bossier Parish Community College), and the remaining four were all developed in the 1990s (Elaine P. Nunez Community College, River Parishes Community College, South Louisiana Community College, and Baton Rouge Community College). Five of the six colleges listed above were previously under the University of Louisiana System. Baton Rouge Community College was created under the Louisiana State University-Southern University Joint Management Board by the state’s 1981 consent decree, a desegregation settlement (LCTCS, n.d.). Today, LCTCS governs 13 community and technical colleges in Louisiana. In addition to the institutions listed above the following institutions, which were previously governed by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, are now governed by LCTCS: Central Louisiana Technical Community College, Fletcher Technical Community College, Northshore Technical Community College, Northwest Louisiana Technical College, South Central Louisiana Technical College, and Southwest Louisiana Community College. Louisiana Delta Community College was developed under LCTCS in 2001. Community and technical colleges in surrounding areas have begun to merge together to become one institution in order to save on operating costs due to limited and diminishing funds. The last merge occurred in 2013 in which Capital Area Technical College merged with Baton Rouge Community College.

Senate Bill 2, Act 151 (1998) and Senate Bill 1, Act 170 (1998) are the documents that establish the creation of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). Act 151 (1998) documents a wide range of information covering degrees, programs, agreements, articulation, funds, personnel, and student issues with regard to the creation of LCTCS. In addition, it served as the guide for those established institutions transferring into LCTCS; explained the role of the Louisiana Board of Regents, the Louisiana Higher Education Executive
Advisory Committee, and the Board of Supervisors for LCTCS; and named the campuses and name changes of those formerly established institutions. Act 170 (1998) is a much shorter piece of legislation amending a few pieces of Act 151. Throughout the past decade, changes have been implemented to improve the LCTC System and make it more holistic. Recently the LCTC System brought all thirteen institutions under one technological umbrella, Log on Louisiana (LoLA), to maintain a line of communication between institutions as well as consistency for transfer and data recording.

Each of these 13 institutions has a unique history of establishment and is continuing to grow in numbers, programs, and graduates. Today each institution offers a wide range of degree programs, transfer programs, continuing education, technical degree programs, developmental education, and certificates, all pertaining to the mission of the specific institution. Although each individual community college has a distinct mission based on the student population, developmental education is a common thread in all community colleges nationwide.

**Developmental Education**

Once called remedial education, developmental education is becoming increasingly more apparent in postsecondary institutions, especially in community colleges due to state mandates requiring four-year institutions to abolish all courses below college-level coursework (Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006; Fain, 2011). Developmental education refers to a broad range of courses and services organized and delivered in an effort to help retain students and ensure the successful completion of their postsecondary education goals. These courses and services are generally delivered according to the principles and theories of adult development and learning, hence the term ‘developmental’ education. (Boylan & Bonham, 2007, p. 2)

Debates over whether any college, especially four-year institutions, should offer developmental courses have been held for quite some time (Ignash, 1997). Some scholars argue developmental
education should be kept at four-year institutions since some students are academically deficient in only one academic area (Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006), while others argue any course below the college level should not be offered at any higher education institution as to not have to re-teach the information (Fain, 2011).

Students enroll in colleges at many different points in their adult lives – some directly after high school, some after working for a while, some after establishing a family, and some later in life. With so many different types of students attending college at different points in their lives and the ever-changing curricula, without developmental education, many would never reach their academic goals. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, Boylan and Bonham’s (2007) definition of developmental education, as previously stated, will be used.

Community colleges usually offer developmental courses in English, reading, and mathematics. Some offer more levels than others, but the basic material is the same. The enrollment of underprepared students continues to increase, and in some community colleges the majority of the student population has to take at least one developmental education course with the bulk of these students having to take at least one developmental math class (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005). There has been an influx of non-traditional and international students, which is another reason for the increase in the need for more developmental course offerings (Oudenhoven, 2002) and possibly the need for more English as a second language (ESL) classes. High student demands for developmental courses in the community college require an understanding of the importance of developmental education. Cejda and Leist (2006) discovered developmental education is a major internal issue facing community colleges, while funding and K-12 preparation are major external issues, which are linked through state mandates. Some scholars argue funding should not be spent on developmental education because funding was
spent when the students were in primary and secondary school (Fain, 2011). However, what does this say about non-traditional students needing a refresher course or the international student struggling with English as a second language? It is unfortunate so many students attending college directly after high school are struggling with basic math and English; however, if the opportunity for developmental education dissolves, other hard-working students become extremely disadvantaged.

Students with disabilities, mental and physical, are also an increasing student population at community colleges. As of the 2007-2008 academic year, nearly 11% of undergraduate students documented having a disability including those who had a specific learning disability, a visual handicap, hard of hearing, deafness, a speech disability, an orthopedic handicap, or a health impairment (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). At community colleges, this number is slightly higher at 12% (American Association of Community Colleges, 2014). Although these numbers are similar, students attending two-year institutions are more likely to have more than one disability as well as having more cognitive difficulties or intellectual disabilities (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). Unsurprisingly, these students struggle in academia as well as social life and sometimes need further education on fundamental information (Nichols & Quaye, 2009). The amount of students with documented disabilities is increasing and without developmental course offerings for these students, their academic and social goals will be more difficult to attain and many may not be able to attain their goals. A student who successfully completes developmental courses is more likely to successfully complete college-level courses (Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006).

Many states are creating incentives for those students who place into developmental courses. Florida and Colorado are placing students in college credit courses and providing
assistance through these courses as an incentive to do well. By the fall 2014 semester, Indiana will be offering credit bearing developmental courses. In Connecticut, students are restricted to one-semester of developmental coursework. In Texas, students do not have to pay for developmental education courses. In Tennessee, developmental education courses are open to high-school students. In Oklahoma and Nevada, all students in need of developmental education must take those courses at a community college (Remedial Education Reform, 2013).

**Developmental Education in Louisiana Community Colleges**

The majority of Louisiana postsecondary institutions offered developmental education courses until the LA GRAD Act was passed in 2010, which mandated all public four-year institutions to eliminate developmental education courses. Louisiana now requires all students with less than minimum standardized test scores to enroll in a community college and transfer after a certain amount of credits are obtained (Remedial Education Reform, 2013). It was not until 2010 developmental education became a major focus of higher education in Louisiana. Four major policies regarding developmental education have been created and enforced in Louisiana since 2010, two with regards to four-year institutions and two with regards to all higher education institutions in Louisiana. Included are minimum admission standards for first time freshman at four-year institutions in 2010, the LA GRAD Act in 2010, minimum requirements for placement into entry-level, college level mathematics and English in 2010, and the Remedial Education Commission in 2011.

Act 187, commonly known as The Remedial Education Commission of Louisiana (2011) was created to discover strategies and best practices with regards to remedial education in hopes to increase the number of Louisiana residents with post-secondary education/degrees. The commission consisted of a group of 16 individuals including the commissioner of higher
education; the state superintendent of education; the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; the president of LCTCS; the chairman of the House Committee on Education; the chairman of the Senate Commission on Education; the assistant deputy superintendent of the office of college and career readiness of the state Department of Education; a representative from a public postsecondary four-year institution, two-year institution, the Board of Regents with responsibilities in implementing remedial education, and the Louisiana Association for Developmental Education with experience in intervention education and remedial education; a nontraditional student attending a public postsecondary education institution; a middle or high school teacher employed in a public school located in an urban area and a rural area; a parent of a student enrolled in a public middle or high school, and a member of the Louisiana School Boards Association.

After formally meeting three times, in September and October of 2011, the commission found many interesting facts surrounding remedial education in the K-12 and postsecondary settings. First, they found “Access to higher education in the United States is widespread, but success in higher education has proven to be less common and more frequently limited by a student’s degree of proficiency in core academic skills” (Louisiana Board of Regents & Louisiana Department of Education, 2011, p. 4, italics in original), hence the need for remedial courses in open-access institutions such as community colleges. They found the problem with student success, or lack thereof, is not a new issue; however, it has become a major focus because more jobs are requiring some college or workforce development.

Second, they found the implementation of remedial education nationwide and in Louisiana is lacking and drastic changes must be made in order to increase college completion rates. In 2006, 63% of students enrolling in a two-year college in Louisiana enrolled in at least
one developmental course, and only 14% of them completed a college level course (same subject) within two-years. Those students taking more than one developmental course had the lowest college-level completion rates at 10.2%, and students enrolled in developmental mathematics had even lower completion rates than those enrolled in developmental English. In order to meet the GRAD Act standards and Master Plan goals, Louisiana will need to focus more on developmental education (Louisiana Board of Regents & Louisiana Department of Education, 2011).

Last, the commission concluded with recommendations for developmental education in Louisiana. They believe Louisiana should implement successful pieces of the nation’s leading developmental education initiatives, such as Achieving the Dream and College Complete America. They also recommend K-12 and Higher Education communicate with one another in the hopes to decrease the amount of developmental education offered in all postsecondary institutions. This will allow more funds for college-level coursework because developmental education is expensive (Louisiana Board of Regents & Louisiana Department of Education, 2011). In order to implement the recommendations given by the Remedial Education Commission of Louisiana, it is important for community college faculty engage in the success of developmental education.

Community College Faculty

Community college faculty members play an extremely important role in student retention and completion of academic coursework. Whether it is to prepare a student to enter the workforce or to prepare students for a more advanced academic setting, community college faculty must have a goal to help their students work toward their goals. Often student barriers affect faculty in the community college, especially when it comes to advising and teaching
developmental students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). "Community college instructors have a more difficult job because their students are less well-prepared" (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 93), and often students in the community college setting are extremely underprepared. "Faculty are frustrated when students enroll in courses for which they are not academically prepared; in addition to the resulting challenges for the students, instructors find it challenging to teach a wide range of skill levels within the classroom" (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011, p. 5). Due to state mandates forcing all developmental education into community colleges, faculty must be willing to work with these students. Thus, as long as community colleges provide open enrollment, faculty will have the responsibility of guiding academically underprepared students.

Individual institutions must choose whether developmental education is centralized or mainstreamed (Perin, 2002). Some literature recommends the centralization of developmental education so faculty members are devoted solely to developmental education and can keep a specific focus on these particular students. However, it can "limit [developmental] instructor's awareness of the content and expected performance of college-credit courses for which they intend to prepare students, and it may also reduce college-credit instructors' understanding of students' needs" (Perin, 2005, p. 29). Faculty believe centralization is best for the students (Perin & Charron, 2006), but a lack of funds and eligible full-time faculty is a problem many community colleges face.

A problem with full-time faculty being unwilling to teach developmental courses is that part-time faculty tend to have lower retention and completion rates causing students to remain in specific courses longer and in turn the institution earns low retention and graduation rates (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Jacoby, 2006). Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) found only four percent of full-time community college
faculty teach developmental courses. This could potentially harm students making it through developmental courses and entering college-level courses, as the faculty may not understand the students’ needs. "The bulk of remediation is provided by non-selective public institutions, the point of entry for 80 percent of four-year students and virtually all two-year students" (Bettinger & Long, 2004, p. 2). With numbers of underprepared students attending community colleges increasing and an institutional mission to serve the community, one would conclude more full-time faculty should be involved in teaching developmental courses.

In order for community college faculty to become more involved in teaching developmental courses, they must have knowledge about developmental students and how to teach them. Community college faculty tend to have a master’s degree in the academic field in which they teach (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Kozeracki (2005) makes suggestions on how to better prepare developmental education faculty. She suggests universities include pedagogy in the curriculums for master’s degrees, more support and flexibility in offerings of faculty and professional development, and more interaction of faculty in developmental education professional associations. "Access without the appropriate support is a false opportunity" (Casazza, 1999, p. 6), and developmental students and faculty need the appropriate support to reach specific goals in retaining and completing developmental students.

**A Brief History of Federal and State Mandates on Higher Education**

With over 1,100 community colleges in the United States, most Americans have access to a community college within 60 miles of their residence. Since the foundation of community colleges and technical schools, access to higher education has expanded and today over half of America’s undergraduate students enroll at two-year institution (Fry, 2009). Moreover, community colleges are “the primary access point to higher education for millions of historically
underrepresented populations, first-generation college students, and those currently in the workforce who lack the higher education needed in the 21st-century economy” (AACC, 2013). The expansive ability of community colleges comes from federal and state government legislation and mandates over the years. For the purpose of this study, a mandate is “any mandatory order or requirement under statute, regulation, or by a public agency” (Mandate, 2005). Some mandates are funded, whereas others are unfunded. A funded mandate is one in which a governing agency provides funding to another lower-level governing agency to carry out the requirements included in the mandate. Examples of funded mandates include the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On the other hand, an unfunded mandate is “a requirement set forth by a governing agency that does not provide any type of funding to facilitate the requirement” (Business dictionary online, n.d.). Examples of unfunded mandates include The Clean Air Act of 1963, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Medicaid, and The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Each of these acts are mandated by the federal government; however, the individual states are responsible for any expenses necessary to comply with regulations set forth by each piece of legislation. The following section details federal mandates, funded and unfunded, that have been placed on higher education since the creation of the first higher education institution, Harvard.

**Federal Mandates on Higher Education**

There is a longstanding history of federal mandates in American higher education. In fact, the higher education system is what it is today due to federal legislation. The Morrill Act of 1862, also known as the Land Grant Act, “stands out as path-breaking legislation that signaled the entrance of the federal government into public policy dealing with the creation of the land-grant colleges” (Thelin, 2004, p. 74). This federal legislation created over 70 institutions,
primarily agricultural and mechanical colleges to educate those interested in “‘useful arts’ [such] as agriculture, mechanics, mining, and military instruction” (Thelin, 2004, p. 76). The Morrill Act of 1862 paved a way for people interested in practical jobs instead of just pure scholarship, part of the main mission of today’s community college. In 1890, the second Morrill Act was enacted, geared toward former Confederate states, in an attempt to exclude race as an admission requirement (Anderson, 1988; Soloman, 1985; Thelin, 2004). Although minority groups are still at a disadvantage today in certain educational settings, federal and state legislation has sought to dissolve these issues throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

**Colonial Era, 1600s-1784**

In the American colonial era, the late fifteenth century through the mid eighteenth century, the first college was charted in 1636, known today as Harvard. Eight other colleges, William and Mary, Yale, Princeton, Colombia, Brown, Dartmouth, Rutgers, and Pennsylvania, were also chartered during this time and are now considered some of the most prestigious universities today because they have stood the test of time (Thelin, 2004). These American college personnel took characteristics of English and Scottish higher education traditions and values to create the American colonial university. “One could argue that the creation of refinement of this structure – the external board combined with a strong college president – is a legacy of the colonial colleges that has defined and shaped higher education in the United States to this day” (Thelin, 2004, p. 12).

The mission of institutions in the colonial era was limited to strict scholarship and did not include a curriculum for those interested in applied fields such as engineering or police work. “Going to college was not a prerequisite to the practice of the learned professions” (Thelin, 2004, p. 31). More important, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, colonial colleges
were linked to their colonial government and were not classified as public or private as they are today. Instead one could recognize their governing board in their respective names because most colonies only had one institution that was represented by their colony. In addition, the college president was the sole proprietor for the college and was often required to hold some type of political position to advocate to obtain money for their institutions. Government was not separate from collegial institutions; it was inside the institution. Therefore, colonial government controlled higher education institutions.

The late eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century, also known as the new national period, “was a period of extreme innovation and consumerism, with virtually no government accountability or regulation” (Thelin, 2004, p. 41). Throughout this era, universities, academies, seminaries, scientific schools, normal schools, and institutes were established. Curricula expanded to applied fields including medicine, law, engineering, military science, commerce, and agriculture. In addition, education institutions expanded and were built to educate minority populations such as Blacks and women in the early nineteenth century. A strong distrust for national government and separation between the north and south created issues for American higher education.

**New National Era, 1785-1860**

During the new national period, colonies became states and “the chartering of colleges and other educational and literacy institutions now fell under the auspices of state governments, not of national or federal domain” (Thelin, 2004, p. 43). In other words, the state government obtained control of educational institutions inside their specific states. It became much easier to obtain a charter, thus the creation to more higher education institutions with little to no guarantee of state government funding. Also, the first state college, a college operating under a state
charter, was founded, The University of Georgia, in 1785, setting the foundation for many colleges and universities today. Within the chartering of state colleges a variety of colleges were founded as listed previously, religion was separated from many higher education institutions, and student interests became a focus.

In 1819 the *Dartmouth v. Woodward* case created a distinct separation between public and private institutions of higher education. In his ruling, John Marshall favored Dartmouth and ruled states could not interfere with private institutions. Therefore, states were unable interfere with any private higher education institution’s business and were unable to mandate these institutions to do anything. In addition, administration at private institutions was unable to attain state monies for their institutions. However, state monies were not an issue considering the limited amount provided by the federal and respective state governments at this time.

Federal and state governments did not provide stable and appropriate financial support and institutions relied on monies from religious institutions, especially those affiliated with a Protestant denomination. Although considered an old way of running a collegiate institution, small towns were chartering colleges for students who came from Protestant backgrounds, which was new to American higher education (Potts, 2000). Financial aid became a major incentive for education during this time period. Eventually smaller, local colleges used missionary scholarship funds to attract students to attend their collegial institutions with an understanding that the student would serve an underserved area after graduating as repayment (Allmendinger, 1974). In addition to financial aid incentives, student life also became important to those involved with higher education.

Administrators began to focus on student interests, both curricular and extracurricular. Students would come together and enjoy out-of-class activities along with attending classes.
Although administration would try to control all student activities, students would still participate in events that were not supported by the college. Resources were very limited during this time and the majority of students had to do everything for themselves including find nearby off-campus housing, buy their own food and toiletries, and become completely independent. For these reasons young college men would create clubs and societies with other young men with similar interests to have something to do and keep one another in check. However, cliques between college students were formed. For example, there were the “college men” or “insiders” – men in college from wealthy, prestigious backgrounds, and the “outsiders” – “students who were usually from modest economic backgrounds and were not offered membership in the established enclaves” (Thelin, 2004, p. 67). Although there was a separation between the two groups, each man could find their place in some society of interest. Although socioeconomic issues have existed since the creation of the human race, American higher education really began to see effects of socioeconomic status and diversity during the next forty years.

**Federal, State, and Local Obligations, 1861-1900**

The civil war era in American history is significant for many different people involved. In fact anyone living in America during the time of the civil war was affected in some way. Whether gaining access to freedom, losing loved ones in the war, or being affected monetarily, if you were living in America during this time, you were affected by some aspect of the war. Higher education was going through significant changes during this time period as well. Throughout the late nineteenth century federal, state, and local government became more involved in higher education and legislation began to place mandates regarding higher education institutions especially in dealing with money.
The Land Grant Act, as mentioned earlier, is an extremely important piece of federal legislation for higher education. Although giving land to build facilities was not new to higher education, it was unique in that the federal government worked with state government to sell lands for building an institution with a distinct purpose. Due to so much emphasis on the Morrill Act of 1862, other state and local mandates directed at higher education institutions at this time were and are often overlooked, and are left to the reader¹. In 1890, the second Morrill Act was enacted, geared toward former Confederate states, in attempt to exclude race as an admission requirement (Anderson, 1988; Soloman, 1985; Thelin, 2004). Although minority groups are still at a disadvantage today in certain educational settings, federal and state legislation has sought to dissolve these issues throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Eleven years after the second Morrill Act was sign into law, the first public community college was established in Joliet, Illinois by Stanley Brown and William Rainey Harper (Joliet Junior College, 2012).

Age of the Junior/Community College

Since the creation of the first community college, all community colleges have been affected by federal and state mandates, resulting in positive and negative outcomes for these open access institutions. In 1907, California passed legislation allowing high schools to offer college courses representable of the first two years at a university. However, it was not until 1917 California legislation allowed public secondary schools to begin forming public junior colleges, and by 1921 California legislators began establishing community college districts. By 1925, in addition to California, Texas, Oklahoma, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, and Michigan established at least one community college (Vaughan, 2006).

¹ See Thelin (2004), Anderson (1988), and Soloman (1985) for more information regarding federal and state mandates during this time.
In 1920, the U.S. Commissioner of Education called a meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, which resulted in the founding of the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC), known today as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC provides a forum for discussing community college issues and serves as the point of contact for the nation’s federal and state agencies, the office of the president of the United States, state governors, international governments, scholars of higher education, the news media, business, and others who wish to learn more about community colleges (Vaughan, 2006, p. 28).

In 1930, the AACC published the first issue of its journal, *The Junior College Journal*, allowing community college scholars and practitioners the opportunity to publish specifically about community colleges. Although community colleges were being formed in many states, it was after World War II when community colleges began to increase in numbers.

Military men were returning home with little to keep them occupied. They needed jobs to support their families, but many had little education to effectively live the civilian life. The federal government answered by passing the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act (GI Bill of Rights) in 1944, which allowed for those Americans who participated in military service to attend a college or university through federal financial aid. The community college was and is still being affected by allowing veterans the opportunity to attend college though the GI Bill. It promotes equal access to those who struggle financially, directly impacting diversity and the community college mission (Vaughan, 2006). In addition to the GI Bill, in 1947, the President’s Commission on Higher Education for Democracy published the Truman Commission Report. Those involved in the commission made several recommendations including abandoning European educational curriculum, doubling college attendance by 1960, extending public education through the first two years of college, and expanding federal financial involvement,
each of which would have an effect on the community college. Thus the creation of the term, community college –

a network of publicly supported two-year institutions . . . that should be within reach of most citizens, charge little or no tuition, serve as cultural centers for the community, offer continuing education for adults as well as technical and general education, be logically controlled, and be part of their state’s and the nation’s higher education system. (Vaughan, 2006, p. 29)

The Truman Commission Report is a significant piece of legislation that had major impacts on the community college as we know it today.

**College Growth, 1960 – 1999**

The 1960s and 1970s mark a significant time for those involved in the higher education system. The Higher Education Act of 1965 is a lengthy piece of national legislation that established general provisions for higher education, including topics of teacher quality enhancement, institutional aid, and student assistance (Higher Education Act, 1965). The document is amended based on necessary changes depending on the societal needs of the time. It was reauthorized in 1968, 1971, 1972, 1976, 1980, 1986, 1992, 1998, and 2008 each time with amendments and additions. Due to the enactment of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and each reauthorization, all public American higher education institutions have access to attain grant monies, create necessary programs, and provide an appropriate learning experience for all involved in the higher education system. Due to this incredible piece of legislation, some colleges have state of the art facilities for an enhanced learning experience, programs for the underprepared, and programs for easier transition into collegiate life. Although the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided a better experience for higher education personnel and students, certain information was not available to students and in some cases private information was shared inappropriately.
Another important piece of federal legislation, established in 1974, was the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of important documents, including student education records for those students who attend schools receiving certain funds from the U.S. Department of Education. Under FERPA, students have the right to access, demand disclosure of, and amend educational records kept by the school, as well as file complaints when FERPA is violated (FERPA, 1974). As a result of FERPA, students are able to keep certain information private allowing for a more positive educational experience. Although student records were kept private, students with disabilities were at a disadvantage until 1990, when the American with Disabilities Act was passed.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provided Americans with disabilities, physical and mental, mandates to prohibit discrimination against them because of their disabilities in public and private sectors, employment, communication, and accommodations. It is much like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination against race, sex, religion, and national origin. Today 11 percent of all postsecondary students possess some type of disability (AACC, 2014). In addition, faculty and staff may display disabilities and need appropriate accommodations as well. Thus, the ADA has had a major impact on the higher education setting (Rothstein, 1991). Due to the open access nature of the community college, both the ADA of 1990 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have major implications for the community college today, especially in dealing with diversity on the community college campus. One of the major consequences of such a diverse institution is the need for necessary resources for different groups of people.

One other noteworthy piece of legislation necessary to discuss which affected all higher education institutions is the Jeanne Clery Act of 1990. This act required institutions to collect
and disperse data to the public regarding campus policies with regards to criminal activity, security of and access to campus facilities for faculty, staff, and students, and current campus law enforcement. It also required each institution provide a description of programs designed to inform students and employees about campus security, when they were offered, and how to prevent crimes. In addition, statistics on different types of crimes and other important information about campus safety were to be recorded and distributed annually (Jeanne Clery Act, 1990). This piece of legislation has been amended several times throughout its tenure to ensure necessary information is being distributed for ever-changing populations at colleges and universities that participate in the program.

As one can see, federal mandates are a key to keeping higher education institutions on track with the economy, changing times, and one another. They provide necessary resources and information to students, parents, institutional employees, and the general public. Without the specific mandates discussed above, many students would not have the chance to obtain higher education today, or would be at a disadvantage. In addition, potential students would not know which institution would be best for them to attend. However, federal government is not the only entity to provide legislation for institutions; state government has authority as well. This study focuses on one public institution in Louisiana, so it is important to discuss Louisiana state mandates with regards to higher education.

**Louisiana State Mandates on Higher Education**

Each state has its own ways of dealing with public higher education institutions. Louisiana is no exception because when it comes to state laws French influence and Napoleonic Law Code make Louisiana unique. Many states are struggling with obtaining funding for higher education including Louisiana. Therefore, is important for the state board to provide reachable
and necessary goals along with objectives to obtain these goals in an efficient and timely manner. Although the Louisiana legislature has struggled with obtaining and providing funding for higher education in the state, the fight continues to obtain much needed resources for higher education in Louisiana.

The master plan for postsecondary education, provided by the Louisiana Board of Regents, is an umbrella for all public higher education institutions in Louisiana. In 2011, revised in April of 2012, the Board of Regents sent a document to all public higher education institutions with three goals along with objectives to meet those goals throughout a set time period. The goals included to “Increase the Educational Attainment of the State’s Adult Population to the Southern Regional Education Board States’ Average by 2025” (Board of Regents, 2012, p. 14), “Foster Innovation Through Research in Science and Technology in Louisiana” (p. 33), and “Achieve Greater Accountability, Efficiency and Effectiveness in the Postsecondary Education System” (p. 38). The creation of other state mandates, such as the LA GRAD Act and the WISE Fund, has been instrumental in fulfilling these goals.

Louisiana has struggled with keeping up with the national economy due to its many natural disasters, specifically hurricanes. Since 1527, Louisiana has suffered from the devastation of almost 100 hurricanes, costing the state billions of dollars in restoration (Roth, 2010). With all the devastation Louisiana has suffered, they need a strong workforce to keep the economy competitive in the state. Other workforce needs are required as well. Act 803 was established “relative to public postsecondary funding to meet the workforce needs; to establish the Workforce and Innovation for a stronger Economy Fund” (House Bill No. 1033, 2014, p. 1) along with many other provisions for the state. The WISE fund was “a special fund for the purpose of funding degree and certificate production and research priorities in high demand
fields through programs offered by Louisiana’s public postsecondary education institutions to meet the state’s future workforce and innovation needs” (House Bill No. 1033, 2014, p. 1). Many of the community college missions in the state of Louisiana focus on workforce development, thus making the WISE fund an important piece of legislation relevant to this study.

As one can see the legislature in Louisiana has provided some resources to all public higher education institutions. All higher education institutions are important; however, this study focuses on one public community college Louisiana, thus it is important to look at state mandates on community colleges throughout the country.

**Relevant Federal and State Mandates Enacted on Community Colleges**

In reference to two-year institutions, many government programs, reports, and acts were enacted with direct effect on the community college since the end of World War II. Some include the passage of the GI Bill in 1944, the Truman Commission Report in 1947, the Higher Education facilities Act in 1963, the Higher Education Act of 1965, the establishment of the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (Pell Grant) in 1972, the commission on the future of community colleges in 1988, the hope scholarship and lifetime learning tax credits established in 1988, the Workforce Investment Act and the Perkins Act in 1998, the New Expeditions Report in 2000, and the creation of the community-based job training grant program in 2004.

**American Graduation Initiative**

Although there have been several federal mandates on community colleges throughout its 100+ years of tenure, the American Graduation Initiative of 2009 sticks out as an important call to action as President Obama pointed out how important community colleges are to the American economy. On July 14, 2009 in Warren Michigan, President Obama pointed out the significance of community colleges on the American economy through the American Graduation
Initiative and stated “Not since the passage of the original GI Bill and the work of President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education… have we taken such a historic step on behalf of community colleges in America” (Obama, 2009, p. 1). In his speech, he sets forth a plan to obtain the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020, by reforming and strengthening community colleges. His agenda included expanding Pell grants and college tax credits, reforming the student loan program, simplifying FASFA, helping unemployed workers gain necessary skills for the workplace, expanding the Perkins loan program, and helping families save money for college. In addition, he calls for five million community college graduates by 2020, a creation of the community college challenge fund, funding of strategies to promote community college completion, updating community college facilities, and creating an online lab to help potential students increase their skills (Obama, 2009).

Not much has been published with regards to the American Graduation Initiative; however, perceptions of the American Graduation Initiative vary widely across the country. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) believed the American Graduation Initiative to be exciting and promising, and felt “proud that our contributions and potential have been recognized in such a dramatic fashion” (AACC, n.d., para. 5). Jane Park (2009) pointed out the difference between open and online resources, and reminds the public of how important it is to share information and not just put the information online. On the other hand, Kuntz, Gildersleeve, and Pasque (2011) believe the speech created a bias toward one form of higher education and takes away American freedom to decide on an institution of higher education. They argue their point through conservative modernization which effects conservative educational changes through social influences and logic of abstraction claiming that America cannot work solely on workforce development as other jobs are important requiring other forms
of higher education. They also argue that race, a major concern in America, is completely disregarded in the American Graduation Initiative. Although there are varied opinions concerning the American Graduation Initiative, researchers should be ready to investigate the results after 2020.

**Relevant State Mandates on Community Colleges**

Although federal mandates are important with respect to community colleges, each individual state, as well as individual communities, have much power with regard to public community colleges. Senior community college administrators are in constant contact with state legislators fighting for their respective institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). As state legislation has control over individual public community colleges, it is important to discuss state mandates on community colleges throughout the past decade. Without these relevant mandates, certain institutions may still be struggling in certain areas or even may have had to close its doors. This section discusses relevant state mandates specifically in California and New York.

New York opened its admission standards to all public high school graduates in 1970, and Proposition 13 in California was passed in 1978, which demanded greater public accountability when distributing educational funds (Vaughan, 2006). Before 1970, strict admission requirements for entrance into New York colleges created barriers for those who were underprepared or underprivileged. Upon opening its admission standards, all New York public high school graduates were given the opportunity to attend college and remediation became institutionalized in higher education institutions (City University of New York, n. d.). With the implementation of Proposition 13 enacted in 1978 in California, more fiscal accountability was given to public education institutions. “Community colleges have been in the forefront in adapting strategies for ensuring the most effective use of public funds in an era of fiscal
constraint” (Vaughan, 2006, p. 45). Proposition 13 allows community colleges in California appropriate funds as necessary.

In addition to Proposition 13, Assembly Bill 1725 was enacted in 1988 to make numerous changes in California Community Colleges with regards to governance, missions, functions, employees, and programs. Provisions included community support, vocational and technical education, and remedial education and other noncredit bearing educational courses. Assembly Bill 1725 was an important piece of legislation for California Community Colleges at the end of the 20th century providing goals throughout the turn of the century into current times. A major part of this piece of legislation was the 75/25 ratio, requiring 75 percent for credit courses be taught by full-time faculty, which is unique to the state of California to this point in time (Hebert-Swartzer & McNair, 2010). Every state has unique and state mandates pertaining to higher education and Louisiana is not an exception.

**Relevant Louisiana Mandates Involving Community Colleges**

Every state has standards for its public education institutions, including public community colleges. As previously stated many states are trending towards mandating institutions to meet certain criteria to obtain funding and other autonomies. The LA GRAD Act (2010) is Louisiana’s legislature’s way of mandating all its public colleges and universities to increase retention and completion by way of performance-based funding. Other pieces of state legislation are also being put into place as a result of diminishing funds for education. This section provides readers with an understanding of mandates that have an effect on Louisiana community colleges, specifically.
Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomies for Diplomas (LA GRAD) Act (2010)

Funding for educational resources continue to diminish as a result of the slowing economy. Individual public higher education institutions must fight for limited resources. As previously stated, the LA GRAD Act is a statute enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana to support the state’s public postsecondary education institutions in remaining competitive and increasing their overall effectiveness and efficiency by providing that the institutions achieve specific, measurable performance objectives aimed at improving college completion and at meeting the state’s current and future workforce and economic development needs by granting the institutions limited operational autonomy and flexibility in exchange for achieving such objectives. (LA GRAD Act, 2010, pp. 1-2)

In addition to identifying four standards of institutional performance, the Board of Regents detailed a color-coded system to evaluate institutions’ progress toward stated outcomes. Below details the coding system as cited in a Board of Regents document released in 2011:

**GREEN:** Institution has passed the Student Success Objective and two or three other GRAD Act performance objectives. Result: This allows the institution to retain tuition authority for the next academic year and makes the institution eligible for autonomies.

**YELLOW:** Institution has passed the Student Success Objective and only one other GRAD ACT performance objective. Result: This allows the institution to retain tuition authority for the next academic year and makes the institution eligible for autonomies.

**ORANGE:** Institution has passed only the Student Success Objective. Result: This allows the institution to retain tuition authority for the next academic year, but not eligible for autonomies.

**RED:** Institution has failed the Student Success Objective or has failed all performance objectives. Result: The institution loses the ability to raise tuition in the next academic year or seek autonomies. This designation will also require the institution to submit through their
Management Board a remediation plan to the Board of Regents outlining the specific action to be taken to get the institution "back on track" to achieve its Student Success Performance Objective.

In July 2014, the Louisiana Board of Regents cited 30 institutions passed with a designation of green, no institutions were given a designation of yellow or orange, and three institutions were given a designation of red by not meeting the set standards for student success. All participating institutions met required standards in regards to articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability, many with 100 percent. In addition, each community college part of LCTCS was designated green, including the institution in which this research study is focused. Close to half of all institutions participating in the LA GRAD Act six-year agreement are classified as community or technical colleges specifying the importance of the LA GRAD Act with respect to these two-year institutions.

**House Bill 419/Act No. 187 (2011)**

As discussed earlier, Act No. 187 was passed in 2011 to create a Remedial Education Commission which formally met a total of three times. The committee’s major findings prompted the Louisiana legislature to pay closer attention to remedial education in the state of Louisiana because of its high demand. Although four-year institutions in Louisiana do not offer developmental education courses due to the LA GRAD Act (2010), community colleges must offer these high demand courses to meet the goals of other state mandates that have passed since the Remedial Education Commission met in 2011. One senate bill and a master education plan for Louisiana Technical and Community Colleges part of the LCTC system were enacted after the Remedial Education Commission meeting directly affecting Louisiana community colleges.
and indirectly affecting remedial education at Louisiana community colleges including Act 360 and Our Louisiana 2020.

Senate Bill 204/ ACT 360 (2013)

Act 360 was provided specifically for institutions within the Louisianan Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). It gave “Authority of [the] board to execute agreements related to the finance of capital improvements and enhancements” (Senate Bill No. 204, 2013, p. 1). Each institution was provided an amount of funds between 2.25 million and 34 million dollars to purchase and/or make improvements to facilities to improve workforce and technical education. Approximately 251 million dollars was appropriated for institutions within LCTCS to enhance workforce and technical education, the main focus of Louisiana community and technical colleges at this point in time. According to Moves Magazine (2014), “ACT360 will allow community and technical colleges to modernize facilities and provide the training necessary for our graduates to gain access to not only good jobs, but also some of the best jobs in the state” (p. 2). Act 360 allowed for the construction of 29 new facilities including 25 projects for workforce development; three facilities to support one-stop student testing, career, and service centers; and one project related to safety (Moves Magazine, 2014). Training facilities for a variety of workforce and technical jobs were created to help students receive a top education in their respective fields. Each institution appropriated funds to multiple projects to enhance student educational experiences and mimic real world practices.

Many of these projects indirectly affected developmental education because many programs require college level math and English courses to apply and be accepted. Many community college students place in developmental courses and thus must make it through the developmental sequence and college-level courses to apply for their respective workforce and
technical programs such as nursing, veterinary technology, along with various others. All students need fundamental resources to receive a quality educational experience. The appropriations for these state-of-the-art facilities give students a quality educational experience. The programs created due to major appropriations also allow for optimistic goal setting, like those involved in Our Louisiana 2020 (2014).

**Our Louisiana 2020: Building the Workforce of Tomorrow (2014)**

In 2014 Monty Sullivan, the President of LCTCS, and the Board of Supervisors distributed a list of six goals for the 13 institutions in the Louisiana Community and Technical College System to be completed by the year 2020. The goals include doubling graduates to 40,000 annually, double the annual earnings of graduates to $1.5 billion, quadruple student transfers to four-year institutions to 10,000 annually, double the number of students served to 325,000 annually, quadruple partnerships with business and industry to 1,000 annually, and to double foundation assets to $50 million (Sullivan, 2014). The number of graduates include those receiving associate degrees, technical diplomas, certificates, and industry based certifications with a focus on high demand jobs. Facilities were created under Act 360 (2013) as discussed earlier, which should help with meeting these ambitious goals. Articulation agreements between two and four-year institutions have been established in the past couple of years to ensure easy transfer. Although these goals are ambitious, with the help of state legislation and private industry, each of the six goals can be met in their set timeline.

**Summary of History and Key Federal and State Mandates**

From reviewing the history of community colleges in the United States and in Louisiana, along with investigating key legislation, it is clear community colleges are critical to the success of higher education. Each year student enrollment increases and for nearly each legislative
session, gubernatorial election, and presidential competition, initiatives, policies, and mandates are considered that would impact community colleges. This study focuses on one specific state mandate in Louisiana, which aims to increase student retention and completion for two-year community and technical colleges. The LA GRAD Act was selected because of its broad impact on community college faculty, staff, and students and the fact that it has entered its fourth academic year since inception, which is more than half way through the initial six-year agreement. Over those years, system administrators, campus presidents, and institutional personnel have worked to meet the stipulations outlined in the act. Each year institutions must meet required benchmark scores in order to indicate progress on the four performance objectives. Legislation, institutions, divisions, departments, and individuals are all involved in establishing and maintaining LA GRAD Act standards, therefore organizational leadership is extremely important in successfully passing the standards laid out by the LA GRAD Act.

Conceptual Framework

This study is framed on Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theory of organizational leadership and how developmental classrooms, academic departments, and an institution collectively fit within the parameters of the four frameworks of leadership. Moreover, how the concept and process of reframing interacts within those organizations. Bolman and Deal (2013) describe four approaches or frames to organizational leadership, including the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame. A number of factors dictate which frame(s) guide an organization including institutional history, climate, and population. Given this study is set at a community college, it is particularly important to consider the organizational framework as two-year institutions are very unique organizations. Though the mission is fairly straightforward—meet the educational and workforce needs of the community and neighboring
businesses—the ways in which organizational leaders and administrators accomplish that mission vary. Institutional objectives and learning outcomes along with the community needs play an important role in administration, faculty, and staff goals in meeting the institution’s individual mission. Each individual working for or planning to work for any institution should know the frame(s) in which his/her institution and department operates in order to carry out the institutional mission. The following sections identify the four frames, provide an example of each frame in action, details how the frames interact with one another, and establish how each frame pertains to this research.

**Structural Frame**

The structural frame stems from Max Weber’s (1924/1947) theory of bureaucracy and reflects “confidence in rationality and faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people’s performance on the job … putting people in the right roles and relationships” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). In the structural frame, each person has a defined responsibility. The expectation is that his/her responsibility is part of fulfilling their responsibility in order to get the job done. All institutions work under a structural frame in some aspect. Most higher education institutions have an organizational chart explaining who reports to whom and what their responsibilities are for their specific position. In addition a policy, procedure, or handbook is provided with the expectation employees will follow the outlined policies and follow the structure of the organization accordingly.

There are several assumptions involved in the structural frame including established goals and objectives, divisions of labor, coordination and control, and rationality (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). Institutions and organizations operating under a
structural frame struggle when there are structural deficits such as an incomplete task or someone working on a task in which he/she is not suited to accomplish. “The structural perspective argues for putting people in the right roles and relationships” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). For an organization to operate successfully under the structural frame, rationality must be at the center of every decision (Manning, 2013). Bureaucratic institutions are analogous to institutions that operate under a structural frame. Larger organizations with many different parts tend to work under a structural framework, where each division, department, and individual does their jobs and report to the proper management so the overall business will run successfully (Birnbaum, 1988), which can be compared to a machine or factory (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Manning, 2013; Morgan, 2006). Although most organizations have some type of structure or protocol for members to follow, not all organizations need a formal structure to operate successfully.

**Human Resource Frame**

The human resource frame centers on “what organizations and people do for one another” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 113). Organizations that operate under a human resource frame are interested in human needs, which in turn will impact the institutional needs. Motivation comes from what the individuals of the institution need such as money, praise, and opportunity. The human resource frame has grown in popularity with the “realization that misuse of human resources depresses profits as well as people” (Bolman & Deal, 2014, p. 129). Thus, entire departments are created to focus on human needs.

The major assumption of organizations that operate under the human resource frame is the organization and its members need each other. The organization benefits the individual members and the individual members benefit the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2013).
Organizations that operate successfully under a human resource frame or collegial structure tend to be smaller in numbers with less diversity (Birnbaum, 1988; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). An organization operating under a human resource frame is like a family; people work together to get the job done. Although members have a specific job, they will help others to get their jobs done, if necessary. It can also be compared to a circle (Manning, 2013) where the structure is one of equality rather than hierarchical.

One could argue the structure of the developmental classroom and community college classroom should be collegial (Birnbaum, 1988) or human resource (Bolman & Deal, 2013) in general as physical numbers are relatively small. Literature suggest engagement between students, faculty, and staff throughout the community college setting happens through the implementation of (a) learning communities, (b) faculty and staff advising, (c) peer tutoring, and (d) supplemental instruction (Barbatis, 2008; Casazza, 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Malm, Bryngfors, & Morner, 2011; McCabe, 2003; Tinto, 2003; Topping, 1996; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). All these initiatives assume “people and organizations need each other… when the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 117). However, not all organizations have the accessibility, member numbers, or resources to operate under the human resource frame and must operate under a different frame.

**Political Frame**

Politics is at the center of every organization in which resources are limited and/or money is involved (Kuk, Manning, & Amey, 2010). The political frame is situated under the belief that “politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 183). All organizations, especially public higher education institutions, deal with politics. Resources are limited, and those with
power are able to obtain necessary resources and delegate those resources under the political framework. For this reason, most community college administration will have a presence at congressional meetings to advocate for their institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). “The political frame does not blame politics on individual foibles such as selfishness, myopia, or incompetence. Instead, it proposes that interdependence, divergent interests, scarcity, and power relations inevitably spawn political activity” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 188). Under the political frame politics is not bad, but instead necessary to get the job done (Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010).

Political frame assumptions include an organization with diverse individuals and interests, a focus on allocating scarce resources (which can produce conflict and a strong desire for power), and decision-making through negotiations among shareholders (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In a community college setting, or any higher education setting, administration, faculty, staff, and students advocate for the things that matter to them as a group. Faculty senates, Student Government Associations (SGA), staff senates, and upper level administrative units are all examples of organizations that tend to operate under the political frame. Upper level administrative units often use bargaining to obtain revenue for their institutions, faculty and staff senates will meet to discuss issues related to pay or shared governance, and the SGA meets to discuss student rights and needs. In the end, those with the most power will have the final say in making decisions (Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). Organizations operating under the political frame are like jungles, the strongest and the fittest with the most power are the ones to survive (Manning, 2013). Discussions and debates are “processes of interaction, in which the power to get one’s way comes from neither norms nor from rules but is negotiated” (Birnbaum, 1988, p.
Competition, directly related to politics, is mainly responsible for institutional reactions surrounding state mandates. An increase in sales tax and tuition have been discussed in several states (Arnone, 2003; Hebel, 2011; Kelderman, 2011, 2012). In fact, institutions “must rely on others for some of their necessary resources” and are therefore becoming “concerned about or interested in the activities or behaviors of others” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 132), which is a characteristic of a political system. If higher education institutions are “to make a decision [relating to money] at all, they must rely on politics” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 134).

Some state mandates across the United States have been successful in increasing retention and completion rates by making changes in policy, while others have had limited or no impact (Arnone, 2003; Hebel, 2011; Kelderman, 2011, 2012; Sander, 2012). One institution in Tennessee replaced all remedial mathematics courses with a credit-bearing preliminary course, which had a 60% completion increase in required mathematics courses (Kelderman, 2012). However, other institutions in Tennessee and across other states are struggling with raising completion rates of minority and low-income students due to tuition increases despite the state mandates (Hebel, 2011; Kelderman, 2012). The University of Akron has a program in place where students can take a tutorial and if they feel prepared they can try to test out of the class for a set amount of money. However, if they fail the test, the student can apply the money toward taking the class (Sander, 2013). Community colleges in Colorado have instated several programs to increase retention and completion using grant monies (Baker, 2012). Each example presented above are political in nature as they are incentives for students to work harder to get
through remedial and gateway courses and in turn bring more money to the college for additional and enhanced resources.

**Symbolic Frame**

Although politics can be seen, at some level, in most organizations, symbols are sometimes the heart of an organization. The symbolic frame focuses on “how humans make sense of the chaotic, ambiguous world in which they live” centered around “meaning, belief, and faith” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 244). One example of the symbolic frame in action is tribal colleges. These colleges are focused on culture and traditions. Sororities and fraternities are also examples of organizations that work under the symbolic frame. When a fellow brother or sister sees another wearing their letters or symbols, there is an automatic bond created among them. The same thing occurs between those who attend the same college or university. Slogans such as “War Eagle” and “Roll Tide” are examples of symbolism in organizations. Propaganda materials created for organizations often express the organization’s culture to the rest of society.

Assumptions surrounding the symbolic frame include the meaning behind the organization, the experiences depend on perceptions, symbols eliminate confusion, and the culture is the main focus (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Student clubs are examples of organizations operating under a symbolic frame. Club members will often hold ceremonies for membership, create logos for easy identification, and meet to discuss their perspectives with regards to the club. Students who are involved in clubs tend to form relationships with one another and are more involved in the “process” of being a member rather than being concerned with the “outcome” of being a member. Club members change often due to graduation, transfer, and departure, which cause changes in leadership. This change in leadership can lead to changes in
the organizational frame; however, the symbols and traditions tend to protect the organization’s mission.

**Reframing**

It is important for a person involved in any organization, especially those involved in leadership of an organization, to be aware of each individual frame as well as understand how they work together in a multiframe approach. All participants in an organization “need to understand that any event or process can serve several purposes and that participants are operating on different realities” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 321), especially as members of the organization change. Perspectives between individual members of an organization, members of particular groups inside the organization, and organizations as a whole change depending on leadership of the organization, outside stakeholders, group and individual goals, along with other dynamics. “The essence of reframing is examining the same situation from multiple vantage points” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 333). A successful organization is one in which leadership can effectively reframe their viewpoint and see it through another lens.

Higher education administrators must be able to reframe when dealing with fellow administrators, faculty, and staff within their institution, members of their governing board, and legislators. Whereas higher education administrators will use a political frame when dealing with legislation and their respective board to allocate for needed resources, they are more likely to use a structural frame when dealing with those involved inside the institution. They have more of an opportunity to operate within a human resource frame when meeting with other higher education administrators, and will use their institutional symbol when dealing with the public operating under a symbolic frame. Mid-level managers, such as deans and department chairs, must also be able to reframe on a daily basis because of the interactions between upper
administration and faculty and staff conducting operations under their authority. Faculty and staff tend to operate under a political frame in senate meetings, when discussing the needs for their students and classrooms, but will operate under a different frame in their individual departments and classrooms depending on the atmospheric elements within and surrounding the department and classroom. Individual departments and classrooms have their own cultures within the institutional culture, which can shape the way in which the classroom is handled.

**Conclusion**

Many scholars (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010; Gumport, 2012; Manning, 2013) discuss the importance of multi-perspectives in organizations, especially in terms of leadership. Bolman and Deal (2013) have the most comprehensive and modern multi-perspective theory of organizational leadership – reframing. They consider four frameworks – structural, human resource, political, and symbolic – and claim that each one on their own is incomplete, but work together to explain the reality of organizations today.

Although this study is framed using Bolman and Deal’s (2013) organizational theory, there are other organizational theories to compare participant responses, such as Birnbaum’s (1988) theory of cybernetics and Manning’s (2013) organizational theory. “In a cybernetic system, organization subsystems respond to a limited number of inputs to monitor their operation and make corrections and adjustments as necessary; organizational responses are not based on measuring or improving their output” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 198). Although some areas of organization are more concerned with inputs, this study is concentrated more on the output with emphasis on performance-based funding, making Birnbaum’s (1988) theory of cybernetics a poor choice for this study. It is also older and less contemporary than Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theory of reframing. Although Manning’s (2013) organizational theory is specifically focused
on higher education, she tends to bring many of Bolman and Deal’s (2013) frames into her work. Moreover, there are several other topical areas in neighboring fields of study such as management, public affairs, and sociology. The following section details other important and related organizational and sociological theories. Collectively, these theories allow readers to gain insight on other important issues surrounding higher education and community colleges specifically.

**Other Relevant Literature**

As the previous section on organizational leadership detailed, it is important to view organizations through multiple points of view. It is especially important for leadership personnel to view situations though multiple perspectives. However, literature on the organization and administration of community colleges is not the only pertinent literature to this research study. Faculty and students are two extremely important populations to this research study. Therefore, the following sections outline other relevant literature specifically pertaining to student persistence, faculty engagement, and student engagement.

**Student Persistence**

Keeping students going in a higher education setting can be challenging for faculty, staff, and students themselves. Often when asked about persistence, “preparation, ability, and motivation” (Crissman Ishler, & Upcraft, 2005, p. 27) are the adjectives that come to mind. When discussing persistence, many higher education researchers look at persistence from the first to the second year. As discussed earlier, students who place into developmental education often become discouraged for many reasons making student persistence challenging for the community college developmental student. Low-income community college students tend to have a more difficult time persisting due to large amounts of debt accumulated throughout their
educational experiences (Mamiseishvili, & Deggs, 2013). Although there has been an increase in the amount of student loans awarded, it was not shown to affect student persistence. Instead the tuition cost affected student persistence negatively (Cofer & Somers, 2001). However, McKinney and Novak (2012) found community college students who filled out and submitted the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) application were more likely to persist. Although student persistence is difficult to obtain in community colleges, faculty and student engagement can help to retain students.

Faculty Engagement

Faculty and student engagement is directly tied to student retention and completion (Barbatis, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Barbatis (2008) found:

The persisters reported strong family and peer support, a sense of responsibility, appreciation for dedicated and caring faculty, and a belief that an education can be a liberatory means to achieve their goals. The non-persisters did not report having the same sense of purpose, goal orientation, determination, obligation to meet family expectations, peer support, campus involvement, positive faculty experiences, and time management skills. (p. vi)

Due to the nature of developmental education, it is a priority for faculty to engage students inside and outside the classroom. A student can attend class everyday with the thought of success, but instead fail the course by not engaging in class through discussion and not engaging outside of class through study groups and homework. According to Tinto (1998), the amount of time spent on homework is considered an academic predictor of student success.

Faculty who choose or are chosen to teach developmental level courses and other non-credit courses can be disrespected by peers and held at lower standards than instructors teaching college-level courses (Perin, 2002). Disrespect can cause internal conflicts between faculty members leading to larger conflicts within departments. It can also cause problems between faculty and student relations, which is important at the community college level. To reach
retention and completion goals mandated by the state, students must not only understand the material, but retain the material that is a prerequisite for college-level coursework. Several initiatives have been and are currently taken and proven to be successful for developmental students.

**Student Learning & Engagement**

First, learning communities have been initiated in certain community colleges (McCabe, 2003; Tinto, 1998). “Learning communities, in their most basic form, begin with a kind of co-registration or block scheduling that enables students to take courses together, rather than apart” (Tinto, 2003, p. 1). By having the same students together throughout their developmental sequence, study groups, friendships, and support groups have the opportunity to form to help students have a better chance at obtaining an academic goal. Tinto (1998; 2003) would suggest linking developmental classes to other college-level classes such as math to science and English to history and have the same students taking classes together. These students can keep each other accountable for course work, study outside of class together, and attend campus events together. Although learning communities have affected students positively and are cost effective, there must be faculty and student collaboration for learning communities to be successful (Tinto, 2003).

Another initiative is in class peer tutoring. Peer tutoring is defined as “more able students helping less able students to learn in co-operative working pairs or small groups carefully organi[z]ed by a professional teacher” (Topping, 1996, p. 322). In class peer tutoring is peer tutoring completed in the classroom. Although peer tutoring is an older form of learning, in class peer tutoring is newer to the community college setting. A student who succeeds through the course will sit through the course to help other students taking the course. It not only helps those
who are taking the course for credit, but it allows the tutor to learn as well. These tutors help those students who need more one-on-one attention and who are less likely to reach out to their instructors or other resources on their own.

Supplemental instruction (SI) is another technique used to help retain and complete students. Although not used frequently in the developmental classroom setting SI has become popular with college-level coursework. “A defining feature of supplemental instruction lies in its having small groups of students from regular courses voluntarily attend regular workshop sessions that are designated for enrichment rather than stigmatized as remedial” (Maxwell, 1998). Malm, Bryngfors, and Morner (2011) found “weaker” students gained the most from SI, making SI a perfect initiative for helping the developmental student population.

Each one of these initiatives engages students inside and outside of the classroom and connects students more with their instructors and peers. One noteworthy remark is learning communities, in class peer tutoring, and SI are all optional for students. One reason SI may not be a great idea for developmental students is the flexibility of attending; however, one study did show increases in retention and completion for those students who did participate in supplemental instruction (Evans, 2006).

**Summary**

Public higher education has dealt with state and federal mandates since the first public college was instituted in 1636 (Thelin, 2004). When a state mandate such as the LA GRAD Act in enacted to increase retention and completion, it is important to investigate its impact on institutions and its stakeholders. Although statistical data can provide insight on the implementation of a law, it cannot tell us specific details on the impacts of certain populations.
Thus, this study will take a case study approach and hopes to bridge the gap between how state mandates are really affecting the community college faculty.

This study seeks to investigate and understand the relationship between the LA GRAD Act and developmental education and focuses primarily on faculty perceptions at a public urban Louisiana community college. Due to decreasing state funds and an increasing need for developmental education, it is imperative to better understand how state mandates have effected faculty that teach these much needed courses. Many studies look at student perceptions (Barbatis, 2008; Dogbey, 2010; Fairchild, 2003; Ross-Gordon, 2003) and administrative perceptions (Bailey, 2009; Blum, 2007; Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006; Fain, 2011; McCabe, 2003; Mendoza, Mendez & Malcolm, 2009; Oudenhoven, 2002; Perin, 2005); however, literature pertaining to faculty tends to be on what faculty can do to help students rather their perspectives (Kozersacki, 2005; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). According to Umbach and Warzynski (2005), faculty are important to student learning and engagement, which means their perceptions should be considered as well. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), community college faculty overall are happy in their positions, but are disappointed in the underprepared student populations. It is important to look at how state mandates, particularly dealing with student completion and retention, have impacted community college faculty.

Student and administrative perceptions are widely researched; however, faculty perceptions are not plentiful. Also, four-year institutions tend to get more notice in higher education due to prestige (Toma, 2012); however, enrollment at two-year institutions is continually growing due to closed enrollment of four-year institutions and open enrollment of public community colleges. As the community college tends to grow it is important to
understand how these institutions work, the purpose they serve, and the impact they have on higher education.

Faculty are important to any higher education institution; however, faculty at the community college have a special role to enhance student learning and promote critical thinking to those planning to go directly into the workforce or continue toward a higher degree. Palmer (1998) sums it up by stating

In our rush to reform education, we have forgotten a simple truth: reform will never be achieved by renewing appropriations, restructuring schools, rewriting curricula, and revising texts if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends. (p. 3)

This study hopes to bridge the gap between state mandates, faculty, and developmental student populations by looking at how the LA GRAD Act has affected one Louisiana higher education institution.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The decision on how to conduct a research study requires the researcher to fully consider the topic and how to best answer the study’s research questions. Given the nature of this study, it was clear to the researcher the best methodological approach was qualitative. Thus, this study is centered on a constructivist paradigm. This allows for research based on perspective and experience rather than absolutes. While the researcher is most comfortable conducting quantitative analysis and typically views the world through a post-positivist lens, the research questions are what ultimately guide methodology in research (Creswell, 2009). People’s perspectives often change depending on their knowledge, physical and social surroundings, and personal experiences. Therefore, people see certain aspects of the world through a social constructivist lens. Due to the desired results, qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis during this study. The fact that funding allocations are increasingly being provided based on performance-based funding and the size of the developmental student population at the research site, it is important to understand the methods faculty have implemented to retain and graduate developmental students. Through qualitative research methods, this phenomenon was explored to gain faculty perceptions, initiatives, and effects on developmental student learning.

Quantitative methodology is the preferred method of research in the pure sciences and certain social science fields. It is a “means for testing objective theories by examining relationships among variables” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Characteristics of quantitative research are reflected through post-positivist philosophical assumptions and include testing hypotheses through relating independent and dependent variables and the use of descriptive and inferential statistics through surveys and experiments (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).
On the other hand, “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). Although qualitative research is accepted throughout social science research, especially educational research due to high amounts of human interaction between individuals and groups, it is important to discuss the characteristics, foundations, and assumptions that guide qualitative research. Qualitative research is viewed through many philosophical lenses. Throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher looked through a social constructivist lens. Characteristics of qualitative research include research in a natural setting, using the researcher as the key instrument, using multiple sources of data, analyzing data through an induction, making sense of what a participant is saying, involves flexibility throughout the research project, is an approach in which the researcher views the study through a theoretical lens, uses interpretation, and provides a holistic account (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012).

There are several ways to conduct qualitative research including phenomenology, ethnography, case study research, grounded theory, and historical research. In phenomenology “the researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 48). For example, Devries (2000) studied the phenomenon of the nature of learning by reviewing his experiences of what it was like learning to become music teacher. Although the study was an autobiographical case study, the underlying focus was on a particular phenomenon. An ethnography focuses on “discovering and describing the culture of a group of people” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 48). Barbara Myerhoff (1978) wrote a book using narrative inquiry where she studied the culture of the older Jewish population in an urban ghetto. Her intentions were to paint a detailed description of this group of people, which is an excellent example of a study that used ethnography as its underlying methodology. Grounded
theory is used in “generating and developing a theory from the data that a researcher collects” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 49). Strauss and Corbin (1997) give scholars interested in grounded theory several examples of grounded theory in practice. Historical research focuses on “people, places, and events in the past” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 50). Thornton and Ocasio (1999) used historical research methods to discover how power changes affected and can still affect the higher education publishing industry. This study will use the case study methodology, which focuses on “providing a detailed account of one or more cases” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 49).

The Case Study Research Design

Case studies have been used for centuries, especially in the practical areas of law and medicine; however, the definition of a case study is ambiguous and depends on the researcher’s questions, control, and desired end product (Merriam, 1988). They can be quantitative or qualitative in nature, but since this study is qualitative, this section will focus on characteristics of a qualitative case study. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012)

Case study research is more varied than phenomenology, which focuses on individuals’ experience of some phenomenon; ethnography, which focuses on some aspect of culture; or grounded theory, which focuses on developing an explanatory theory. What all case studies have in common, however, is a focus on each case as a whole unit as it exists in a real life context. (p. 49)


“Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon” (Merriam, 1988, p. 11, italics in original). In this specific case study, faculty
perceptions of the LA GRAD Act at a specific institution will be the major focus. “Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich, ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon studied” (Merriam, 1988, p.11, italics in original). The end product of this study will provide a complete description of faculty perceptions of the LA GRAD Act through Bolman and Deal’s (2013) theory of organizational leadership. It will also provide an interpretation of faculty perceptions through the four frames of an organization. “Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 1988, p. 13, italics in original). Readers will obtain knowledge throughout the discussion, which will confirm their understanding, contrast their understanding leading to a new perspective, or add to their understanding of faculty perceptions. “Inductive means that, for the most part, case studies rely on inductive reasoning” (Merriam, 1988, p. 13, italics in original). Although organizational theory is the underlying conceptual framework, the ultimate goal is to discover reality through data collection rather than hypothesize and use data for confirmation.

There are three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Stake, 1995). An intrinsic case study is one that involves understanding all aspects in one specific case; an instrumental case study uses a case to understand a more general phenomenon; and a collective case study uses multiple cases in a research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This study was an intrinsic case study focusing on one specific institution. Intrinsic case studies are popular in educational studies and are used when a researcher does not know much about a particular phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Although other states have used performance-based funding for long periods of time, the LA GRAD Act was passed in 2010 and has only been in effect for five of its six-year agreement. It is important to see what effects the LA GRAD Act has had on certain types of institutions in the state of Louisiana. Since each institutional type is
different, their locations provide different cultures for students, faculty, staff, and administration, and the LA GRAD Act provides different performance measures for each specific institution a case study pertaining to a specific institution will provide an in-depth analysis of how the LA GRAD Act is affecting that specific institution in hopes to understand the institution more holistically.

**Researcher Bias**

Qualitative research uses the researcher as the primary source of data collection, so it is important to discuss my personal worldview and biases I bring to this research. As discussed in chapter one, my personal experiences as a community college faculty member for the past six years have contributed to my involvement in this research. Although I see the student as the primary consumer of the community college, faculty members are of extreme importance in the deliverance of knowledge and learning in the community college (especially the developmental) classroom. As a faculty member at a community college, my primary role is teaching. I try my best to keep up with current federal, state, and community policy surrounding the community college and feel all community college faculty and staff should keep up with current events as well. I have a M.S. degree with a concentration in mathematics, which is related to my ability to think rationally and logically throughout any situation and use reflection when making certain decisions. After reading through *Reframing Organizations* by Bolman and Deal (2013), I have viewed my teaching position as one of leadership and have taken the necessary steps to reframe the way I view each classroom (as they are all different) as well as my other departmental duties. As a course committee coordinator I look at my committee through each of the four frames and do not believe any organization, whether it be an institution, committee, or classroom can be defined entirely using one frame.
My role in this study is to listen to the participants, record their words, and interpret the meaning behind what they say. I am to give a detailed description of the different points of view presented during the study as well as make connections to the literature bringing in as little personal bias as possible. I do have a personal investment with the research site and want to make recommendations to the Louisiana state legislature, faculty, staff, and administration on how to make this institution better for all individuals involved.

Bounding the Study

Setting

The study took place at a public, urban, Louisiana community college and is presented as a case study. Although community college missions are similar in nature, location, purpose, and overall goals separate each community college. In the fall 2012 semester the institution had a student enrollment of 9,124 with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 5,912, a retention rate of 53.8% from fall 2011, and 4.6% graduation rate at the end of the spring 2013 semester as recorded in the GRAD Act Performance Objectives/Elements/Measures 2013 Annual Report (Annual Report, 2013). There are 336 faculty with a FTE of 178.9. Additionally, the average class size is 26.3 students, and the ratio of FTE students to FTE faculty is 33.04 (Annual Report, 2013). According to the Diversity in Academe Report (2013), the specific institution had a full-time faculty in 2011 with the following racial and ethnic demographics: 58% White, 33% Black, 2% Hispanic, 1% Pacific Islander, 2% Asian, and 4% Unknown. Developmental courses are offered in English, mathematics, and reading. All full-time faculty have at least a Master’s degree with 18+ hours in their field of study (Faculty Credentials, 2006). In addition to teaching 15+ hours, each full-time faculty member is required to keep a portfolio with institution and community service along with attended professional development to be turned in at the end of each academic
year. Developmental education is mainstreamed throughout each individual department, therefore instructors who teach developmental education courses will often teach college-level courses as well.

**Population and Sample**

This study involved one institution where a purposeful sample was chosen from full-time faculty, who taught developmental education courses before the LA GRAD Act, when the LA GRAD Act was enacted, and/or currently teach developmental education courses in English, mathematics, and/or reading. Due to high faculty turnover rates within the institution, the experience of each participant varied drastically. An appropriate sample of full-time faculty was represented as well as each subject area. Since the study site does not have an approved Institutional Research Board (IRB), proper documentation was submitted and approved by the IRB at the institution in which the researcher is completing her degree and reviewed by the administration at the study site before any action was taken place (See APPENDIX C). The Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at the study site approved the study to be conducted at the proposed site.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative research, especially case studies, will usually have multiple forms of data collection known as triangulation of data to promote validity in research methods (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Merriam, 1988). Originally two types of data were to be collected: interviews and documents. However, due to complications in receiving requested documents, interviews were the only method of true data collection. The researcher is aware of this limitation and believes the interviews, along with the LA GRAD Act benchmark data, suffice for this intrinsic case study. Interviews were conducted concurrently while reviewing the
LA GRAD Act data to obtain a better understanding of the interaction between faculty and state policy. Memos were written directly after each conducted interview to serve as an outlet. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), “memos are reflective notes that researchers write to themselves about what they are learning from their data… to record insights gained from reflecting on data” (p. 518). Memos helped the researcher remember her thoughts about any situation during the data collection process.

A selective sample of developmental faculty were asked to participate in the study via e-mail to ensure a reasonable demographic sample for the institution. Those who were willing to participate were interviewed through a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). Constant analysis occurred throughout the study for efficiency through the interview process. Necessary changes to the protocol due to unclear wording or new observations took place as often as needed. Participating individuals were given the right to drop out of the study at any point in time, as necessary. Although the intention was to conduct interviews until saturation was reached or “the interviewer (researcher) is not hearing or learning anything new in the interviews and the same information is being repeated” (Schuh & Associates., 2009, p. 69), many different opinions were expressed and after nine interviews it was clear saturation would not be reached. However, due to the nature of this research study, saturation was not necessary as grounded theory was not the taken approach. Follow-up interviews were conducted via email, as necessary. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and distributed to each participant for participant reliability (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). In addition to conducting interviews with developmental faculty, the researcher reviewed the first four GRAD ACT annual reviews for the particular institution as well as the LA GRAD Act itself.
It is also important to note the researcher’s method of interviews as opposed to observations and audio-visuals. Although the researcher can gain first-hand experience with each participant by observing developmental faculty after the LA GRAD Act has been put into place, there are a few drawbacks to this method. There would not be a means of comparison before the LA GRAD Act was put into place, the researcher may be seen as intrusive or distracting, and class times conflict with the researcher’s schedule. Audio-visuals are seen as unobtrusive and creative; however, time and resources are limited and the equipment can fail. Although interviews are not in the natural setting and some participants may be less articulate, the point of this study is to obtain perspectives to understand if the LA GRAD Act has affected developmental faculty in the community college. Documents were difficult to obtain, and only the LA GRAD ACT reviews of the study site were analyzed. It should be noted that auditors have questioned the validity of the LA GRAD Act data. In 2013, “the Louisiana legislative auditor found inconsistencies in the data used to calculate how well individual colleges did meeting the goals necessary for permission to raise their tuition” (Capitol News Bureau, 2013).

Data Analysis

The researcher recorded each interview with a recorder and took notes in case of technology malfunctions. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher after all interviews were conducted to reduce any bias that could come from responses and to get a general sense of the data. To maintain the confidential identity of the institution and interviewees, each participant received a pseudonym. Once transcribed and checked for errors, each interview was distributed to each participant for participant reliability (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Once each participant approved the transcription and made changes, if necessary, the researcher coded each interview and looked for themes. The researcher used the eight-step process by Tesch
(1990) to analyze the text; however, due to lack of time and resources the researcher was the only one to code data (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). Although qualitative research software exists, it is often complicated and more time consuming than hand coding (St. John & Johnson, 2000), and was not used during data analysis.

**Validity and Reliability**

Although the researcher has discussed certain ways to ensure validity and reliability throughout this research study, she would like to point out some additional methods used to confirm the validity and reliability of the research study. Validity in terms of qualitative research is research that is “plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 264). The researcher will maximize the descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, internal, and external validity using a variety of strategies.

Although the researcher was the only interviewer during the study, to ensure descriptive validity she had a peer, as well as the interviewees themselves, check the entering of the data with the recordings for accuracy of what the interviewees said. To maximize interpretive validity, she obtained feedback from the participants, also known as member checking, to make sure her conclusions and interpretations accurately represented participant responses. She also used low-inference descriptors so that her description reflected the participant accounts and field notes accurately. Finally, she used certain data verbatim (the lowest inference descriptor) to capture the participant’s words as accurately as possible. To ensure theoretical validity, she used theory triangulation to interpret and explain the data.

To assure internal and external validity, the following strategies were used. First, the researcher looked at alternative explanations to her explanation and ruled out ones not better than the one she made. As discussed earlier, she also used method triangulation by conducting
interviews and data triangulation by conducting multiple interviews. Although the study was not made to be generalizable to an entire population, naturalistic generalization is one of the goals to ensuring external validity. She hoped to generalize developmental faculty perceptions at the specific institution; however, after the study was conducted and data analysis began, it was shown faculty perceptions were vastly different and generalizations were not as effective as hoped.

**Summary**

The researcher chose to conduct an intrinsic case study at a public, urban community college in Louisiana due to the types of questions asked. Semi-structured interviews were utilized for data collection. The researcher is cognizant of the importance to remember her biases and experiences during the entire research process. It is impossible to eliminate all potential biases (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012), but they were minimized as much as possible. As such, the researcher consciously decided to not teach developmental education courses until the conclusion of this research study. Moreover, she wrote memos throughout the study to help monitor her thoughts.

As funding for higher education continues to decrease across the nation, performance-based funding could become a desired method of incentive to increase performance at individual institutions in all 50 states. For states to implement some type of performance-based funding, it is important for all higher education personnel to become familiar with the positives and negatives of implementing performance-based funding at different types of institutions. It is also important to become familiar with different perspectives of performance-based funding and what works for each individual institution. Due to the nature of the LA GRAD Act standards and requirements for individual institutions, a case study is the best way to determine if performance-
based funding is working for developmental education at one specific institution. The researcher hopes to provide stakeholders and peer institutions with necessary developmental faculty perspectives on performance-based funding as well as bridge the gap with regards to faculty perceptions by conducting research at one community college in Louisiana.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter will discuss connections based off data recorded throughout the study and previous literature as discussed in the literature review. Although the LA GRAD Act is a very important piece of legislation for any institution in the state of Louisiana, faculty were not knowledgeable about what the LA GRAD Act entailed. Many faculty only knew what administration had told them about the LA GRAD Act, but were not aware of the details which came from the actual piece of legislation. A few faculty had heard of the LA GRAD Act, but had to be given an overview of the major point because they were unable to describe it in their own words. When analyzing the findings in this study, difficulties arose upon answering the research questions; however, several themes did rise from the data. The themes included strong disconnect between faculty and administration, a lack of and a diminishing of necessary resources, patience when it comes to teaching developmental students, and the need and pursuit of a collegial environment. Throughout this chapter the reader is presented with the findings of the research including demographics of the intuition and participants, the chosen qualitative methodology, participant profiles, findings with regards to each of the research questions, and connections made between the participant’s perspectives and the first four annual reports form the institution with regards to the LA GRAD Act.

Demographics

In fall 2013, there were 371 full-time and part-time faculty; 205 (55%) part-time and 166 (45%) full-time, with a full-time equivalency (FTE) faculty to student ratio of one to 28 (Bear Facts, 2014). As mentioned previously, the Diversity in Academe Report (2013) recorded the specific institution had a full-time faculty in 2011 with the following racial and ethnic demographics: 58% White, 33% Black, 2% Hispanic, 1% Pacific Islander, 2% Asian, and 4%
Unknown. The Institutional Research Office sent an excel spreadsheet with a total of 60 faculty currently teaching at least one developmental course; however, this was not officially documented. A total of nine (2% of total; 5% of full-time; 15% teaching developmental education) faculty responded to the interview request, eight (89%) were White and one (11%) was Black, which is a recognized limitation of the study, assuming the demographics for faculty are relatively the same from fall 2011 to spring 2015. In addition, one (11%) faculty member was from overseas. Five (56%) of the participants were male and four (44%) were female. Although all participants were current full-time faculty, four (44%) participants were previous part-time faculty at the study site. Seven (78%) participants have taught at other institutions of higher education in and out of state, and six (67%) participants have taught in the secondary education system in and out of state. One (11%) participant previously taught secondary education outside of the country. Furthermore, one (11%) participant previously held the chair of developmental education at another out-of-state institution. There are about 80 years of service to the study site between all participating faculty and many more to other institutions outside the study site.

There was a good range with regards to classification of the participants. Classification of participants were as follows: Four (44%) Instructors; two (22%) Assistant Professors; and three (33%) Associate Professors. No full Professors responded to the email for interview. Five (56%) faculty solely teach math, three (33%) solely teach English, and one (11%) teaches both math and science. Each faculty member has taught at least one developmental education course between fall 2009 and spring 2015. Seven (78%) participants currently teach developmental courses at the institution, whereas two (22%) participants, both female, are not currently teaching any developmental courses for different reasons which will be discussed later in the participant
profiles. The highest level of education for eight (89%) of the participants is a Master’s degree with 18+ hours in their respective teaching area. One (11%) participant recently received a Ph.D. in his area of study. Five (56%) participants received degrees from institutions outside the state of Louisiana and the remaining four (44%) received degrees from institutions within the state of Louisiana.

Although participant race and ethnicity were not representative of the institution, there was a good representation when it came to education, experience, and classification. There was also good representation of background and participant age, which ranged from early 30s to late 60s. Although no part-time faculty responded to the interview request, some participants had experience working as part-time faculty at the study site. Unfortunately, data concerning the number of faculty teaching developmental courses was only received unofficially and was discovered later to be inaccurate. Overall, the participants were a diverse group of thinkers with many different distinct opinions.

**Qualitative Methodology**

As previously noted, this study was conducted using qualitative methods, specifically through an intrinsic case study approach. Nine faculty at one institution were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix B). A pilot interview was conducted to make sure the questions were clearly written and answers were conducive to the information the researcher was trying to obtain. Only one minor adjustment to question 12 resulted from the pilot. Additionally, the pilot interview was included in the research study due to the interviewee’s rich understanding and opinions with regards to the developmental classroom.

Each interview lasted between 15 and 60 minutes. Questions one through three were designed to help make the interviewees comfortable and ease them into more difficult questions
later. Questions four and five were designed to answer research question one. Questions six and eight through 13 were designed to answer research question two. Question seven was designed to answer research question three. Although meaningful data came from question seven as well as answers to other questions to answer research question three, after reflection, the researcher decided more research was necessary to really answer the third research question thoroughly.

Throughout the interview process, transcription of each interview was conducted and emailed to each participant respectively. Two participants responded with no adjustments necessary, four participants responded with minor adjustments, and three participants did not respond to the email sent with transcription. A follow-up interview via email was requested for one participant to elaborate on a couple things after the initial interview, which was a success. The researcher made the decision to transcribe all interviews herself to obtain a better understanding of the data. The researcher was also the sole data coder; however, constant and consistent contact was made between the researcher, dissertation advisor, and participants to ensure accuracy and validity.

Additionally the researcher wrote memos to herself during and after each interview for validity, reliability, and reflection. Memos included questions, reflections relating to literature and other relevant data, and personal reflection to reduce bias. The researcher’s personal reflections included “speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, and prejudices” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 21) with regards to each topic discussed. Each participant’s voice was also important to capture during the interviewing process. Thus notes were made during each interview to capture individual tone. Notes were used while the researcher was reflecting, during transcription, and while coding. Interviews included
information regarding primary material (information regarding the LA GRAD Act) and secondary material (information surrounding developmental and collegial education).

Originally document review was to be used to hopefully reinforce faculty opinions and to make connections between data and literature. However, during analysis it was noted document review with respect to faculty evaluation protocol would not add significantly to the data. Additionally, complications arose while trying to obtain documents from administration and the institutional research office. Therefore, it was decided document review would be entirely removed from data collection and analysis with exception of the LA GRAD Act annual reviews for the institution. Only a simple description of the LA GRAD Act outcomes would be necessary along with the first four annual reviews for the specific institution. Although interviews, descriptive statistics, and examination of the first four annual reviews are the only forms of data collection, the researcher knows this to be a limitation and feels other research methods were not necessary to complete this study.

As mentioned earlier, the researcher used Tech’s (1990) process while analyzing data. After transcription, each transcription was read carefully, multiple times, and the researcher made notes. Second, the researcher chose the shortest interview and did an in depth analysis on it writing more notes and trying to figure out the meaning behind the participant’s answers. After getting through one, all other interviews were analyzed in the same manner. Although difficult at times, the researcher was able to code the data, categorize information, and group specific topics. Each code was then labeled. Alphabetizing was not necessary due to the low quantity of codes. Finally, data was assembled to each category (recoding was unnecessary) and four themes arose: strong disconnect between faculty and administration, a lack of and a diminishing of necessary resources, patience when it comes to teaching developmental students,
and the need and pursuit of a collegial environment. In addition, research questions one and two were answered thoroughly and research question three was answered, but more research is necessary to fully understand the topic. Details regarding the findings of each research question will be discussed later. Before discussing the findings of the research questions it is important for the reader to get to know the participants involved in this study.

**Participant Profiles**

Each of the following participants were given a pseudonym to protect their identity. This section describes in detail each participant through the researcher’s lens. Each individual presented a uniqueness about themselves, which is notable for the findings and analysis of this study. Opinions varied widely due to each person’s unique history and experience. It is necessary to introduce each participant individually so the reader is able to get to know each individual participant on a personal level. Table 1 below is a summary of the demographics for each of the nine individual participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Ken</th>
<th>Alan</th>
<th>Mike</th>
<th>Sara</th>
<th>Ashley</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Emily</th>
<th>Rachel</th>
<th>Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to Institution in years</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches Dev. Ed. Currently</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ken

Ken is a White male who has been at the institution since 2001, when he began his tenure as an adjunct. Currently he teaches mathematics and physical science as a full-time instructor at the institution. Although he has only been full-time at the institution for one year, his experience as a part-time instructor made him an excellent choice as a participant for this study. Before coming to Louisiana, Ken taught at other out-of-state institutions at the university and technical college levels in mathematics and chemistry. As an older gentleman he is well rounded in his education and experience. He has also privately tutored individual students for approximately 10 years in secondary and post-secondary education in the following subject areas: algebra, calculus, chemistry, and physics, and will help any student with a need.

Ken currently teaches developmental and college-level mathematics courses along with physical science and physical science lab. Specifically, he teaches the first developmental math course offered, college algebra, and the first physical science with its lab. He is extremely soft-spoken and has a passion for his students. He says,

I just try to get it through to the students the best I can. I try to listen to what they are saying. Try to understand you know where they are having problems. Try you know help them get over the hump… I try to make the classroom atmosphere friendly. (personal communication, February 5, 2015)

Ken is more familiar with other state policies concerning education, specifically Indiana, and lacks a detailed knowledge with regard to the LA GRAD Act, but is open to doing whatever it takes to help any student succeed. Overall Ken is compassionate about education in general and would like to see positive changes to promote and support student success throughout all higher education institutions.
Alan

Alan is also a White male who has been at the institution working as a mathematics instructor for approximately four years. He recently successfully obtained his doctorate in mathematics from an in-state institution after receiving his undergraduate and Master’s degree from an out-of-state institution. Before being hired as a mathematics instructor, Alan was the math and sciences coordinator for the Student Athletic Association for an in-state institution and was employed there because he has “a propensity for handling students with learning disabilities” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). His job responsibilities included coordinating math and science tutors and evaluating initial student performance. Many students placing into developmental mathematics have some form of learning disability (Nichols & Quaye, 2009), making Alan a perfect participant for this study. In addition, Alan has also privately tutored students in a variety of subjects.

Alan currently teaches mostly college-level classes, but does occasionally teach the second developmental mathematics class out of three for the institution. His goal is to “teach you information I know you are going to need later” (personal communication, January 30, 2015) when teaching a developmental math course. He enjoys his academic freedom in the classroom and wants to use methods that work in the classroom to increase student performance. He says, “I guess with my scientific nature I am willing to try anything” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Although he will try anything, Alan also wants to make sure there is a significant positive outcome and has run statistical analyses to see if new methods work. He is a straight-forward individual with highly regarded opinions, but believes every faculty member is entitled to what works for them. He was very interesting and fun to talk with throughout the interview process.
Mike

Once again, Mike is a White male who has been with the institution for nine years. Six of the nine years he has been recognized as an Associate Professor of Mathematics and has applied multiple times to become a full Professor. He has a total of 28 years of experience with one year of experience in middle school, 15 years of experience in high school, two and a half years of experience in the university, and nine years in the community college. He is well-rounded when it comes to mathematics education and has taught at institutions in and out-of-state. Mike always stays connected with professional organizations and presents at regional and national conferences specifically geared towards mathematics education. His experience in teaching and passion for learning made him an impeccable participant for this study.

Currently, Mike teaches mostly developmental courses, but does teach a couple college-level courses as well. Specifically, he teaches multiple sections of the last developmental mathematics course offered before college-level mathematics at the study site and a couple of courses preparing potential elementary school teachers to teach mathematics. He enjoys teaching mathematics and does not like to differentiate any one student from the next. He has a strong passion for all students, not just his own. Although short and to the point, Mike had clear and concise responses that were direct and needed no further explanation. He offered strong opinions when it comes to education and backed up his opinions with previous experience. His classroom is run with high standards. He says “I choose a student centered classroom where there is a higher degree of accountability… I am fairly rigid when it comes to my expectation of the student” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Sometimes he seemed a bit coarse, but it is his way of showing his passion for the educational experience.
Sara

Sara is a White female, who has been teaching English at the study site for about five years. Last year she was promoted from Instructor to Assistant Professor. Before teaching at this particular institution she worked with the Agricultural Center for another in-state institution. She has also taught at another in-state community college and at an at risk high school. She made the move from being a high school educator to being a community college educator because of an incident in which she was physically abused at the particular high school in which she was teaching. She also said, “I am teaching the same students I want to teach only they are a little bit older, a little bit more mature, and because they are paying for it… they are more dedicated to it” (personal communication, February 20, 2015). She also has an educational background in teaching secondary education English. She told about her struggles with grammar throughout her educational experiences and finally made a connection to the understanding of English grammar while in graduate school. She feels her own experiences help her with helping the underprepared student. Her experience and educational background made Sara a wonderful asset to this study.

Although Sara does not currently teach developmental English courses she has taught the combined developmental English and Reading, when offered briefly for the institution through the Title III grant. She has also taught a variety of other developmental English courses at another in-state community college. Despite most full-time faculty having no interest in teaching developmental courses, Sara loves to teach them and expresses her interest each semester to her department chair. However, her busy schedule does not always permit her to teach those courses. She also said it is good to take a break from the developmental classroom once in a while because reading lower level work on a consistent basis can affect the way you personally
write and speak. Sara portrays a passion for each one of her students and would like to see more full-time faculty take responsibility for such an underprivileged population. Her passion radiates as she could go on for hours about her love for teaching. Many statements included, “My students, my babies, I love them, they’re my students, I love them” (personal communication, February 20, 2015).

Ashley

Ashley was the only Black participant who responded to the email. She is a younger mathematics instructor who has been teaching at the institution for nine years; five years as an adjunct and four as a full-time instructor. She recently was promoted to Assistant Professor. Before teaching at the community college she taught middle school math for about a year. Although her undergraduate education is in chemistry, her passion for mathematics surfaced in graduate school where she obtained a Master’s degree in mathematics from an in-state institution. Her experience teaching at the study site made Ashley an exceptional participant for this study.

Ashley currently teaches both developmental and college-level courses. Specifically she teaches the second and third developmental mathematics courses offered and college algebra, both the five and three hour formats. Previously she has taught the beginning developmental mathematics course as well and does not mind teaching any of the three as she is needed. Ashley lacked knowledge regarding state policy and was surprised by some of the results with regards to the LA GRAD Act, but had a plethora of knowledge pertaining to the developmental classroom. She goes above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to teaching and other responsibilities and can make a distinction between each type of student and their specific needs. She said, “I try to be personable. I try to interact more with [developmental] students because it’s just a different
level they’re on and because they are not social, they are not as mature as the college-level student” (personal communication, February 3, 2015). Due to the nature of the developmental student, she tries to help them out as much as possible academically and socially. Her main goal is to do her best with the hand she is dealt each semester.

**John**

John is a young, White male who has only been at the institution for a total of two years. As an English instructor, he taught part-time his first year and currently works full-time. Before working for the institution John worked as the manager of a bookstore. He obtained his education from two different in-state universities. In his Master’s program he took classes directly relating to teaching developmental education courses, but it was not until he was searching for a job that he decided to help the institution with teaching developmental English courses. Although John is inexperienced when it comes to teaching, his educational background and enthusiasm made him a great asset to this study.

As a part-time faculty member, John only taught developmental English courses for the institution, which is not surprising after interviewing several English instructors. As a full-time faculty member he teaches developmental and college-level English courses along with literature, drama, and humanities courses. His enthusiasm and opinions regarding teaching come out through his fast speaking and distinct facial expressions. He states, “I have taught the lower level [developmental course], but I don’t much like it. It’s mostly grammar and punctuation and I prefer to teach writing so I teach the upper level of the two that we have” (personal communication, March 13, 2015). As a new faculty member John is moderately knowledgeable about state policy and the developmental classroom, and is eager to share and learn different strategies to help him become a better educator. One noteworthy analysis was there was a little
apprehension in his voice to speak negatively about anything or anyone. John’s pure optimism was perceived as unusual at times with respect to all other interviews conducted. The researcher believes that his positive attitude is due to his lack of experience and not wanting to step on anyone’s toes that are above him.

Emily

Originally from overseas, Emily, a White English female has the most educational experience of all participants. She also has the most diverse educational experience. She has taught overseas as well as multiple institutions in several states in the United States of America. She has been with her current institution for about 13 years, and is currently an Associate Professor of English. Before this she was the chair of developmental education at an out-of-state community college for two and a half years. She also has experience teaching both developmental and college-level courses at both two and four-year institutions in and out-of-state. In addition, she taught junior and senior high school students, preparing them for their public examinations overseas. Public examinations are “national exams… standardized across the entire country... beyond the entire county. Any countries that use the British Educational System… much more consistent than it is here (United States)” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). The exams were used as a placement into different levels of university. Her diverse experience and tenure at the institution made Emily an extraordinary participant in this study.

Emily currently teaches developmental and college-level English courses, particularly the second developmental English course of two, both levels of college composition, British literature, and humanities. Just like John she does not like to teach the first developmental English course because she does not like the content. Emily is extremely knowledgeable about state and national policy with regards to education and takes part in many different task forces.
and committees in hopes to better developmental education. She states, “I volunteered to teach developmental from the beginning because I wanted to… I am a little bit more supportive of the developmental” (personal communication, March 17, 2015).

Although Emily has so many diverse experiences she portrays herself as humble and will take advice from her peers when she is in need of help. She told me of one experience in which she was having issues helping African American male students. She asked another staff member how to reach them in which the other staff member said

You need to get in their face. You need to enter their space because they really need to know you care because so many of them have been let down. And so you really need to show them you care by really invading their space and really making them respond to you.

Emily said, “That was the best piece of advice I was ever given because I found exactly that, you know?” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). She has a passion for her students like none I have ever heard and goes to unthinkable heights to reach as many of them as she can. This interview was one of the most enlightening and valuable conversations of my life thus far.

**Rachel**

Rachel, a White female, was originally the pilot study participant. She has been a mathematics faculty member at the institution for ten years; two in which she was part-time and the past eight full-time. She was recognized as an Assistant Professor until just recently when she was promoted to Associate Professor. Her previous experience includes teaching college algebra at an in-state university for two years as a graduate student, teaching one year of high school mathematics and science at an in-state high school, and private tutoring in multiple subject areas. Before obtaining her graduate degree, Rachel took time off to be a stay at home mom for her three children. After they were old enough to take care of themselves, she decided to return to school to get a Master’s in mathematics and teach. She has also been on several
department, college wide, and community and state committees and has used her voice to make necessary changes with regards to mathematics education. Her experience at the institution as a part-time and full-time faculty member along with service to the college, community, and state made Rachel an important asset to this study.

Although Rachel has taught the second developmental math course at the institution, currently she does not teach developmental courses. Her reasoning is as follows:

I found the developmental student to be unmotivated, many of them have had bad experiences in high school and have been taught so many procedures in which they get mixed up. They haven’t really been taught concepts or really been taught in a conceptual classroom. So they have all these procedures and they have to unlearn stuff they have learned and they get so many things messed up and they struggle and then they want to give up and I don’t want them to give up, but when they do give up it is like I take it personally and I just had to remove myself from that. It was too…it was kind of emotional…it was too emotional. I don’t like to see students fail and a lot of students were failing they would quit coming to class, they would just give up and quit coming, They would not do their homework because it was hard you know things like that, it is too hard they would tell me and I tried to motivate them and given them pep talks which takes up class time to do all this to try to help them and motivate them and have them reach their goal because they are not going to reach their goal without developmental math. (personal communication, January 6, 2015)

She has a desire for all of her students to do well and takes their success and failure as her own.

Students in the developmental classroom struggle more than those college ready and faculty become frustrated with teaching the underprepared (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011), much like Rachel’s experiences. Rachel has strong opinions about mathematics education and researches continuously on how to better herself as a mathematics educator by attending professional developments and researching strategies on her own time. However, Rachel, like most participants, lacked understanding when it came to what the LA GRAD Act entails. She knew more about policies that directly affected mathematics education and used her experience with regards to developmental education. Her thirst for knowledge was recorded throughout the
interview, and she did tell me that she was going to do research on the LA GRAD Act after our conversation.

Mark

The last participant in the study is Mark, a White male from a northern state. Like Emily, Mark has a great amount of educational experience. He has been at the institution for fifteen years and is currently an Associate Professor of Mathematics. Before being hired as a full-time instructor at the institution, Mark taught as a temporary mathematics instructor at another in-state university for about eight years. As budget cuts increased, “there was a move to reduce/phase out instructor positions at the university and [this institution] was a much better fit for a permanent position” (personal communication, March 26, 2015). Before moving to Louisiana, Mark received his education, both undergraduate and graduate degrees from an out-of-state university. Additionally he taught one year of high school prior to obtaining his graduate degree at an out-of-state school. His experience in higher education both at the institution and other institutions made Mark a great participant for this study.

Currently Mark teaches both developmental and college-level courses. Specifically he teaches several sections of the third developmental math course in the sequence and has never taught the first or second developmental math courses at the institution. Additionally he has taught developmental mathematics courses at the university level before taking the position at the community college. Mark also has experience in teaching many different mathematics courses such as college algebra, trigonometry, calculus, and statistics. He piloted a program involving students who place just below the first college ready course where each student took the last developmental math course and college algebra simultaneously. He found non-
traditional students were more likely to make it through the developmental coursework and college-level course successfully in one semester.

Mark’s personality is much like Mike’s in that he does not believe developmental students should be treated any different than a college-level student and is fairly rigid with his students. He does not like being told “how to do my job by others that don’t have to do my job” (personal communication, March 26, 2015). Being pushed into having to change teaching methods, he claims “I can’t really tell a difference, a measurable difference, between the old traditional way of being mostly lecture versus any of the newer approaches” (personal communication, March 26, 2015). He believes in higher student accountability when he says, “You (the student) have to take care of your business, you’ve got to do your homework, you’ve got to come to class prepared, and then you’ve got to perform on the exams” (personal communication, March 26, 2015). Mark has high standards for each person he comes in contact with whether that be a student, another faculty member, or a friend, which showed throughout our conversation. He is set in his ways, but will do what he has to do to keep his job as long as he keeps his morals and integrity in the process.

**Summary**

Each of the nine participants held vastly different opinions, which was surprising based on the participant demographics. Their educational experience did range which could be a reason for such vastly different opinions. Although each one had their own opinions the researcher was able to discover answers to each of the three research questions posed. Research questions one and two had clearer findings than research question three, but each question had results. The next section details the findings for each of the three research questions posed.
Analysis and Findings With Regards to the Research Questions

As previously noted in chapter two, the literature review, the LA GRAD Act (2010) is a piece of legislation enacted by the state of Louisiana which has an impact on all public institutions in Louisiana, including universities, colleges, community colleges, and technical colleges. Due to the different locations, cultures, and missions of each institution, the benchmarks and expectations of each institution with regards to the LA GRAD Act are different, thus only one institution was used in this study. In addition, part of the LA GRAD Act (2010) mandates all developmental education solely be taught in the community and technical colleges. Therefore, the researcher chose to analyze information from a community college prospective. As mentioned earlier, in the past several years there have been merges within the LCTC system to increase retention and completion within institutions, while keeping costs at a minimum. The results have been a smaller number of institutions within LCTCS with larger numbers in each institution. Therefore, the researcher chose to study an institution that merged with another institution within LCTCS. Last, many qualitative research studies record student and administrative perceptions, but leave out faculty perceptions. The researcher feels the faculty should have a voice and their perceptions are important as well. Each of the three questions asked during this study pertain to the topics above and the findings are listed below.

Question 1: What do developmental education faculty members at an urban Louisiana community college know about the LA GRAD Act?

Before beginning the interview process, the researcher had her own opinions on how the participants would react to each question. She took time to write out her biases before, during, and after interviews to eliminate as much bias as possible. However, it is noteworthy to give the reader an idea of her thought processes throughout the interview process. The researcher predicted that the majority of faculty would not know any details regarding the LA GRAD Act
and would have to explain it to the majority of participants. Much to the researchers surprise, she only had to explain it to three (33%) of the participants. This does not necessarily mean that the other six participants understood the LA GRAD Act completely; however, the majority of the participants were able to give a brief description and understood the overall idea of what the LA GRAD Act was trying to accomplish. After giving a brief description to each of the three participants, one actually did know about the LA GRAD Act, just did not know the formal name.

Two interview questions, specifically questions four and five (see Appendix B) were asked with regards to the first research question. Question 11 was indirectly related to answering the first research question as well. Upon asking each participant if they knew what the LA GRAD Act is, three participants responded with “no,” one responded with “I have heard of it,” two responded with “roughly,” two responded with “somewhat,” and one responded with “yes, but not in detail.” Although this in not a completely accurate observation, generally the more experience one had in higher education in the state of Louisiana, the more likely they were to know a little bit about the LA GRAD Act. In contrast, Ken, who has been at the institution since 2001 had heard of it, but needed an explanation and John, who has been at the institution for only two years, knew roughly what it was about. Both Ken and John have been full-time at the institution for only one year and both have previous part-time experience at the institution as well. The only participant with a doctoral degree, Alan, did not know the LA GRAD Act by name, but after a given explanation did remember hearing about it in department and division meetings. Therefore, the amount of education was not a factor in knowing about or how much detail one knew about the LA GRAD Act.

One major finding from this question was that each participant was limited in what they know regarding the LA GRAD Act. Some of them only knew about it from administration
throwing the phrase out there and linking it with the words “retention” and “completion.” Sara says, “The only thing I know about it is from what administrators have said and what they’re really concerned about is we need to make sure [students] complete” (personal communication, February 20, 2015). Rachel says, “All we hear is retention, retention, retention” (personal communication, January 6, 2015). Alan states, “we end up focusing on retention and that’s the uh priority that is sent down to us from those people that out-rank us, you know, at any given institution” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Emily sums up much of what the majority of participants said when she states, “Most of the emphasis seems to be on retention as a word, but not really the means of retaining” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). In other words, administration tells faculty about how important retention is partly because of a state mandate, but does not supply faculty with their definition of retention or the resources in which to retain them. More detail will be given with regards to answering research question two.

Another major finding was that although the majority of faculty knew the main idea behind the LA GRAD Act, many of them did not know or understand its many details. When asked to describe the LA GRAD Act as they understood it, the majority only knew about the retention and completion piece along with the funding aspect. Mike states, “Well the LA GRAD Act is an act that talks about looking a student success rates, graduation rates, completion rates, etc. from around the state of Louisiana” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). What Mike said is true; however, he was not able to give any further detail about why or how the state legislation planned to address each idea. John says, “I know it revolves around retention rates and there’s specific requirements to keep within the LA GRAD Act… but I don’t know a lot of specifics about it” (personal communication, March 13, 2015). Again John is not wrong, but
details are again missing with how the Louisianan State Legislature planned to carry out the six-year agreement. According to Rachel, the LA GRAD Act,

> is an Act mandated by our Louisiana legislature and it collects data and analyzes data and I believe based on that analysis we have funding formula that we get funding according to how many graduates we have instead of how many students are enrolled. (personal communication, January 6, 2015)

Rachel discussed funding with respect to the LA GRAD Act which the LA GRAD Act does entail; however, she was unclear about how the funding was actually distributed. The only comment Mark had in describing the LA GRAD Act was, “I know we have benchmarks set and if we fail to meet our benchmarks in our retention, then that impacts our funding” (personal communication, March 26, 2015). Mark added the piece about set benchmarks, but was not able to elaborate on the benchmarks and if they were standard across all Louisiana state higher education institutions. Sara says,

> If the more completers we have the more funding we can expect form the government… the only thing I understand about it truly is that if we have people that complete in a cohort in a timely manner… our funding is affected. (personal communication, February 20, 2015)

Emily again, reiterates the funding aspect, but did not know exactly how the funding would be affected, positively or negatively. Finally, Emily says, “What I understand by it is that the colleges are now funded based on the number of students that graduate... degrees and certificates and so forth. We are no longer simply funded by the amount of students we have” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). Although Emily gave the most accurate and detailed description of the LA GRAD Act, she still did not know many details regarding the LA GRAD Act.

The participants were not aware of some of the intricate details woven into the LA GRAD Act (2010) such as all developmental education would be solely provided by two-year
institutions. In fact, Ashely was completely unaware of this detail. She says, “I would hate to see [four-year institutions] eliminate developmental education courses” (personal communication February 3, 2015). Upon telling Ashley that it had been removed from four-year institutions she was flabbergasted and had many questions for me that unfortunately she would have to contact a specific four-year institution to obtain answers. Rachel said four-year institutions would always need to offer developmental courses, unaware that the LA GRAD Act had eliminated them from being offered at four-year institutions.

All participants agreed that the community college should offer developmental education courses; however, the participants disagreed when it came to four-year institutions. Ken did not care whether four-year institutions offered developmental courses because it did not directly affect him. Two participants, Alan and Mark, had reservations about four-year institutions offering developmental education courses, but agreed if the methodology and faculty teaching those courses were right then it would be fine. Both Alan and Mark believe the number of contact hours should be increased for developmental education courses whether offered at a two-year or a four-year college. Alan says if the four-year institution is to offer developmental education courses they need to make sure the instructor is teaching face-to-face multiple hours a week. Marks says,

I’d be okay with it if [four-year institutions] had trained educators that are experienced at teaching developmental education courses. I don’t think you want to put the research professional trying to teach math courses or any kind of developmental course. That’s not really their expertise in terms of the level of student preparedness. (personal communication, March 26, 2015)

For the same reason Mark is concerned, both Emily and Sara do not think developmental education should be taught at any four-year institution. Emily elaborates,

I think that it’s a good thing that a lot of [four-year institutions] have moved away from it because I think that one of the issues we have and I think the community college and not
just developmental, but also even with some of our college level courses is that when we get instructors coming from the four-year institutions, they really don’t know how to teach students who don’t have a sound basis. So I think concentrating developmental education in the community college is a very good thing because first of all we are teaching institutions so people who come here to work should expect to teach. And if they don’t want to they don’t stay. (personal communication, March 17, 2105)

Sara expresses that as times have changed, institutions have changed and those (students and staff) within the institutions have changed. She states,

I do not like the idea of universities teaching basic composition courses let alone developmental courses… I think that if we’re teaching developmental education regardless of four-year institution or community college that it needs to be well educated, best-of-the-best teachers. (personal communication, February 20, 2015)

Last, Mike, Ashley, John, and Rachel all felt the four-year institution should offer developmental education courses. As previously noted both Ashley and Rachel were both unaware that four-year colleges and universities were unable to offer any courses below college-level. On the other hand Mike had the strong opinion that four-year institutions should be just as responsible for developmental education as the community college. He says, “The four-year institutions should have the same concept of the student centered approach as the two-year institutions are mandated into this agreement” (personal communication, January 30, 2015).

Ashley, John, and Rachel all brought up the idea that an individual student may be college ready in all but one area and making a student attend a separate institution before enrolling into their choice institution could become frustrating and cause mental anxiety. John sums it up when he says, “It throws them off and it’s discouraging. I think that it’s very much a confidence killer” (personal communication, March 13, 2015).

In addition to no mention of the elimination of developmental courses in four-year institutions, other details were left unnoticed as well. Although there was specific mention of student success by means of retention and completion, there was little mention of “develop[ing]
partnerships with high schools to prepare students for postsecondary education” (LA GRAD Act, 2010, p.2). Emily and Sara were the only ones to mention the need for better grade school preparation, but this was not mentioned when asking about the LA GRAD Act. There was no mention of the following details: articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, increasing tuition, designating excellence centers, grated autonomies, and renewal policies in which the LA GRAD Act (2010) goes into great detail.

It was clear in talking with each participant that there was a limited knowledge about the LA GRAD Act. The participants that were familiar with the LA GRAD Act were only familiar with pieces in which junior level administration had acknowledged through communication in meetings and emails. This was also where the researcher began to see the disconnect between faculty and administration with respect to responsibilities, goals, and understanding. A notable observation was that developmental English faculty knew more about the LA GRAD Act than did developmental math faculty. However, all faculty knew and were mostly concerned with parts of the LA GRAD Act which directly related to their specific jobs than the entire state mandate. In other words, if faculty were not directly affected by a part of the LA GRAD Act, they were disconnected from that aspect all together, leading to answering question two.

**Question 2: How do developmental faculty at an urban Louisiana community college perceive the LA GRAD Act’s impact on the developmental classroom, if any impact at all?**

Upon asking questions related to answering research question two, specifically questions six, eight through ten, 11, and 12, responses were all over the place, which was vastly different than the researcher’s prediction. The researcher predicted that each participant would believe that the developmental classroom was, is, and would be impacted in some way by the LA GRAD Act, but this was not actually the case. Each participant had multiple perspectives with each question asked. When asked about whether the LA GRAD Act impacted teaching strategies of
developmental faculty at their specific institution the majority of participants solely responded based on their personal experiences, which drive a person’s responses and actions (Davis, 2004). For example, Ken said, “It hasn’t affected me directly…yet” (personal communication, February 5, 2015); Sara said, “I try not to let it affect me too much” (personal communication, February 20, 2015); Emily said, “I would say from my perspective, not at all… The fact that someone tells me I have to keep my students doesn’t make any difference” (personal communication, March 17, 2015); Alan said, “I have to choose what I know will be most important for the student’s success in a future math course” (personal communication, January 30, 2015); Ashley said, “I wouldn’t change my teaching style” (personal communication, February 3, 2015); and Rachel said, “I don’t know if it has impacted me personally” (personal communication, January 6, 2015). Mike, John, and Mark kept their answers more general to all developmental faculty, but still related their answers based off experience. Mark focused on pressure to complete students for obtaining funding when faculty know it is not the best option, John discussed the different challenges for faculty teaching developmental students, whereas Mike felt the LA GRAD Act did not have anything to do with developmental educators because it is “perceived by many people as an ending... and a developmental class is at the beginning” (personal communication, January 30, 2015).

Overall, all but one participant agreed that the LA GRAD Act did not affect their strategies as a developmental educator, but they could see how it would affect other faculty teaching developmental education courses. From what she understands in terms of retention, Rachel said the LA GRAD Act has more so affected her work atmosphere and feels “like [administration] are expecting less and less of students and more and more of faculty” (personal communication, January 6, 2015). Mark agrees with Rachel when he states, “Seems like
students are getting a pass at their responsibility… and the faculty member is being forced to supervise the students” (personal communication, March 23, 2015). The push for faculty to do more only came up when speaking with math faculty, making the researcher detect a difference in how departments and divisions are run within the institution. However, Emily did mention “blaming the faculty for students not succeeding” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). All English faculty agreed their strategies have not been affected by the LA GRAD Act and they would not change strategies just to pass students. In fact, Ken was the only one who alluded to passing students if mandated. All other participants said they would never compromise a student’s grade just because someone said they must retain and complete more students.

When asking the question about strategies each faculty member used in the developmental classroom, eight participants admitted to teaching their developmental and college-level classes the same; differences came in not with strategies but methodology and pedagogy. Each faculty member used similar strategies in every class they taught, but they spend more time on concepts in developmental classrooms, tend to write more about a concept, have methods to keep their students organized, and give more in-class time to work independently. Mike says, “The only difference with developmental students is you have to have more concern” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Ken says he talks more to the level of the student. Ashley discusses her difference in expectations; she expects less from developmental students with regards to understanding and organization. Sara and Rachel use time to answer more questions in their developmental classes. Emily expressed being more supportive of the developmental student, providing more feedback. Mark does not believe there should be any difference in the developmental and college-level classroom because the subject matter must still be mastered in the end. He even went on to say his weights for grading are the
same in his developmental and college-level courses. John was the only one to admit he does have one different strategy: he uses peer review in his college-level courses, but not in his developmental because he does not feel they are ready and confident enough to correct a peer. Emily disagrees and actively uses peer review in all classes to prepare the developmental student for college-level course work.

Each developmental math faculty focused on different active learning strategies as a whole, whereas English faculty focused on “workshops” as a specific strategy. Each math faculty had a different perspective on active learning. For example, Mike discussed, “being mandated to use active learning strategies” and followed-up with, “I choose a student-centered classroom where there is a higher degree of accountability” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Alan specifically discussed how he chooses to lecture for about half the class and putting students in groups to work on problems representative of the concepts with a higher degree of difficulty, letting them explore how to work a problem on their own. He started using this in his developmental classes and due to the positive results, runs all his classes in a similar manner. Ken and Mark both expressed difficulties in applying active learning strategies because they are not what they are used to, but Ken does encourage student conversation throughout the class and Mark uses group work, in-class quizzes, and other activities as time permits. Ashley uses more group work and active group conversation to get students to open up about what they do and do not understand. She says it is easier for a developmental student to open up to a peer than it is to someone who understands more than them, so she walks around and listens, answering questions and correcting as necessary. The last developmental math faculty, Rachel uses gap worksheets in each of her college-level courses and said if she ever taught developmental classes again she would definitely implement them in those classes. To elaborate,
gap notes are notes Rachel puts online with the examples she will go over in class left blank for them to complete as she goes over them in class. When she did teach developmental, she implemented peer tutors as funding permitted and created study guides before each exam with specific questions regarding each topic covered on the exam. She only gives the learning objectives in her college-level courses. Each math instructor decided to use these strategies either because they were told by administration or went to a professional development workshop and implemented what they learned.

On the other hand, the English faculty used many of the same active learning strategies, specifically workshops or, “the students are actually writing in class and are able to get guidance as they are writing from [the instructor] rather than the traditional way of giving them an assignment, sending them home with it, bringing it back, grading it, then giving it back with comments… its proactive” (Emily, personal communication, March 17, 2015). In addition, John uses audio-visuals via PowerPoint and YouTube, interactive workshops, and group work splitting the class time in 15-20 minute increments to keep students engaged. Furthermore, Sara uses a class management strategy by splitting the class into groups and assigning each group member a playing card with each playing card representing a different task such as leader, reader, writer, and various other responsibilities. She then expects her students to fulfill their task during the class period and rotates them as often as necessary so each group member has the opportunity to participate in each task. She also brought up daily learning language and using topics that the students could relate to, like popular culture.

The biggest issue that was raised with regards to classroom strategies was time management. Sara says, “Some of these [classroom management] strategies are vital in not wasting time because students have so very little of it” (personal communication, February 20,
A few faculty said the strategies were easier to implement in developmental classrooms because their classes were smaller; however, many of them discussed the problem with too many students in their developmental classes. Emily and Mark stated that there are developmental classrooms with 35 and even 40 students, depending on how many students the assigned classroom could hold, making it difficult to teach the underprepared population effectively. Thus, depending on class size, active learning strategies may not be as effective as anticipated.

Seven of the nine participants expressed that they have made changes in their strategies over the years, but only one, Mark, felt pushed into making changes after the LA GRAD Act was put into place. He says, “I am not allowed to be me in the classroom which is what I have the most success at in terms of being a teacher” (personal Communication, March 23, 2015). After elaborating on the changes made in strategies, many of them were making changes from strict lecture to active learning methods. Ashley said her changes resulted mainly from transition from a part-time to a full-time faculty because of the number of times the classes met. As part-time faculty she taught courses which met once a week for three hours at one time and now as a full-time faculty teaching classes that meet for a shorter time, multiple times a week. Mike and Sara were the only two faculty that said they have not changed their strategies much if at all because they feel what they do works for them. Mike flatly says, “I am satisfied with and I have modified very little in my developmental classes” (personal communication, January 30, 2015).

Each participant was able to elaborate on the most important characteristic of the developmental classroom, but had a difficult time with the least important characteristic. A few participants discussed similar characteristics, but the responses were again diverse; however, there were similar types of words. Seven participants focused on the student-instructor relationship, whereas two put the most important characteristic purely on the student. Both Ken
and Mark said the most important characteristic of the developmental classroom was that the students had to have a desire to learn. This is difficult for these students because the developmental student struggles not only with understanding the material, but self-efficacy and motivation (Barbatis, 2008). Alan focused on the structure of the classroom stating, “If [the instructor] structure[s] the system by which [they] teach them to where they’re going to be put into situations where they are not comfortable and they have to adapt their knowledge, processes will evolve themselves” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Although this puts the responsibility of learning on the student, the instructor has the responsibility of structuring the classroom a particular way to convey the expectations. Similarly, Mike focused on consistency in the developmental classroom, “because the student must have an expectation that whatever is being done in the classroom is consistently carried out without flaw” (personal communication, January 30, 2015). Additionally, both John and Emily discuss trust between the teacher and student. John specifically discusses the importance of community in the classroom and Emily discusses the importance of student perceptions of the faculty. Although Ashley used the term approachability, she eluded to trust between the instructor and students, agreeing with John about making the classroom like a community and keeping student anxiety as low as possible. Sara and Rachel discuss the importance of an exciting atmosphere and how the instructor must be excited about the lesson for the day. Rachel sums it up when she says, “your teacher needs to be very enthusiastic about the lesson and it is like you have to be a sales man and sell the lesson every time” (personal communication, January 6, 2015).

The majority of the participants could not think of a least important characteristic, answering the question with, “I cannot think of one, I don’t know,” or “everything is important.” However, both Emily and Alan both discussed adherence to getting through all the material. For
each of these instructors if they could get through the majority of the material with understanding they were willing to eliminate the rest. John focused more on student background like race, social experience, previous educational experience, and socioeconomic status. He felt that teachers needed to focus on each individual as they are in the present rather than their previous experiences. The only other answer came from Mark when he said the days and times in which the class meets is the least important characteristic, but was not able to elaborate on his answer. It was almost as if Mark was trying to give an answer to the question rather than really believing his answer.

One more question was asked relating to question two which was about the advice they would give to faculty, staff, and administration regarding the developmental classroom. With regards to administration the main response was to stop increasing the student numbers in the developmental classroom because it makes it difficult to help each individual student. Emily says, “The goal is not to end up with a classroom that is more manageable because half of them left. The goal is to keep all of them” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). Other advice for administration included increasing the number of contact hours for developmental courses, creating a better space with more resources, recognize their importance, and to try things before mandating them to be implemented by everyone.

All participants felt very comfortable with regards to giving advice to their peers. The main piece of advice with regards to faculty was to have a patient attitude with developmental students. As noted before patience with developmental students was one of the main themes that came from the data. Other advice included being open to students, changing expectations, not to be afraid of teaching developmental courses, really get to know your students because how they present themselves may not be who they really are, motivation, and to keep standards high and
similar to the college-level student. Each participant wanted to work with their peers to make the developmental education experience best for students. They alluded to having a collegial atmosphere within their individual classrooms, respective departments, and throughout the institution which was a theme that resonated with the researcher throughout the coding process. An important finding was that faculty did not focus on other staff when it came to recommendations.

Although the majority of participants did not believe the LA GRAD Act had any direct effect on their specific strategies, faculty are using more active learning strategies in the past few years. Their reasoning behind this change in strategy was mostly due to personal conviction. Only one participant admitted to being forced into active learning; however, they all discussed active learning strategies they are currently using from attending mandatory professional development and talking with other colleagues. The participant’s previous experiences guided their responses when answering interview questions related to research question two which is expected since it is personal. Throughout each interview retention and completion were mentioned multiple times, leading to the findings with regards to research question three.

**Question 3: How has the LA GRAD Act influenced the retention and completion of students enrolled in developmental courses at a urban Louisiana community college?**

Retention and completion are two major topics being discussed in higher education research today due to limited and diminishing funds with regards to public higher education (Fain, 2011; Hagedorn, 2005; Jacoby, 2006; Kelderman, 2011, 2012; Noel-Levitz, Inc., 2008). Retention and completion concerning the institution may have a different interpretation than that of a faculty member since faculty members are thinking of their classrooms and students above the institution as a whole. However, with the majority of community college students placing into developmental education courses (Cohen & Brawer, 2008: Louisiana Department of
Education, 2011), they must be retained and complete their developmental courses to get into college-level courses in order to complete a degree or certificate. Research also notes students who do not do well in developmental classes tend to drop out of school and thus the institution loses out on the retention aspect as well (Louisiana Department of Education, 2011). Upon asking questions with regards to answering research question three, the researcher expected each participant to discuss retention and completion with respect to their specific students, which was the case most of the time. There were a few times, however, the faculty did answer with regards to the institution as a whole. Only one specific question was related to research question three, which was interview question seven; however, responses to other interview questions helped to answer this question as well.

When asked about how institutional retentions efforts, mandated as a result of the LA GRAD Act and their impact on community college developmental education faculty, several faculty did not think it affected them at all. For example, Ken did not think it was apparent yet, but that it was coming. Alan did not feel that it affected the faculty at its base, but did affect them with recording attendance and other paperwork that would not be collected unless mandated. Mike expressed complete separation of the LA GRAD Act and developmental faculty saying

I do not think developmental faculty are affected by that, nor is there any specific criteria addressed for developmental faculty. There has been no change. In fact, the existence or lack of existence of the LA GRAD Act has had no effect on whatsoever on the developmental classroom. (personal communication, January 30, 2015)

However, the other six participants did feel an affect. Sara talked about the new advising system and the new teacher evaluation tool, which was not directly related to the developmental classroom, but did affect her personally. Ashley discussed the importance of faculty only teaching developmental students and the lack of funding along with the type of student being
taught in the developmental classroom. She states, “Based on the standards it would impact… it should impact… because you are dealing with a different type of student” (personal communication, February 3, 2015). John focused on the importance of immediate gratification when he said

I think that we are then at a disadvantage teaching developmental under those rules and regulations because there’s less incentive for the student in terms of instant gratification… there are no credits at the end of this course… so that’s a much bigger issue for retention right there. (personal communication, March 13, 2015)

Emily, Rachel, and Mark all talked about the lack of funding creating an increase in cap of the developmental classroom from 20 to almost 40 in some cases. Each were concerned that increasing the numbers in a developmental classroom negatively affects retention and completion. Additionally, they each discussed the lack of resources provided for students to be successful in these courses.

Rachel, Sara, and Mark discussed programs they were part of to increase retention and completion in the developmental classroom. Rachel was part of a program funded by Title III where peer tutors sat in each class as a resource for students during classroom activities and out of class study sessions. Rachel said this program was highly successful; however, ended as a result of the grant not being renewed after the allotted time. She also discussed issues with offering welcomed advice that was disregarded. On the other hand, Sara was part of the same grant, except she taught a combined English and Reading course for students to take in one semester, getting three classes for the price of one. Many students could not handle the workload involved and had to retake all three classes after failing the combined course. Sara tried to encourage and motivate her students to do their best, but many could not handle the load. Additionally, Sara was put in charge of a taskforce to discuss the positives and negatives of this combined course, but the response to helping was low and eventually the taskforce disassembled.
Mark applied for his own grant and received enough money to pilot a program to do something similar to what Sara did, but for mathematics. He only worked with students who placed just under the first college-level math course. They took his college-level math class while talking the last developmental math course of a sequence of three through ALEKS, an online self-paced program. The intention was to finish the developmental mathematics course by midterm and take that final exam. As long as the student passed the final with at least a 70%, they would obtain credit for the developmental class. He said the results were not great, but that nontraditional students tended to handle the increase in workload better than traditional students.

It was mentioned someone else in the mathematics department would run a pilot of this again in the future using a slightly different approach, but Mark did not know all the details. Out of three programs, only one seemed to be successful and is not in play now due to lack of money, providing the researcher evidence that faculty struggle in general with teaching developmental students (Boylan & Bonham, 2007; Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

In many instances faculty felt their strategies worked because they claimed higher retention and completion within their individual developmental classrooms with respect to what they have heard from other instructors. One piece of advice from Emily summed up what many of the other participants were trying to convey when she said, “I think anything that one can do in the classroom that can make those students want to be there, want to stay, want to show up, feel like they are getting something worthwhile from the experience helps with retention” (personal communication, March 17, 2015). Unfortunately no one had data to prove their retention and completion rates were actually higher than others, and the researcher did not ask participants what they thought were good retention and completion rates in which perceptions may have been different. It seemed like the faculty thought their strategies were more of a
predictor in retention and completion than did mandated retention efforts. Additionally, faculty felt mandated retention efforts affected them more than their developmental students.

Seven of the nine participants alluded to doing enormous amounts of what they considered unnecessary paperwork. The only two who did not mention this were Ken and John and they have only been full-time for one year. The seven other participants expressed feelings that administration felt faculty were more responsible for student retention and completion and retention than the student. Rachel said it best when she stated

> It seems like [administration] are expecting less and less of students, but more and more of us. As if we are the force behind all the retention and it is our duty to retain students… Somewhere the accountability needs to be on the student. (personal communication, January 6, 2015)

Faculty at this particular institution feel pressure to get students through their developmental coursework, but struggle with pushing them through just for them to fail their next course. Mark discussed the importance of “balance between getting the student through versus the mastery of the content” (personal communication, March 23, 2015).

Overall the participants felt faculty had a more difficult job in retaining and completing their developmental students. Lack of motivation, understanding of the material, and a lack of instant gratification were all reasons behind their challenges. Most of the participants did feel retention and completion of developmental students was affected by the standards mandated as a result of the LA GRAD Act, but those standards affected the faculty more so than it did the students. Pressure to pass students to obtain necessary funding along with loads of paperwork frustrated the participants and made them question the responsibility of the student. Although findings were somewhat sound for research question three, the researcher feels the results were overall inconclusive and more research is necessary to answer this question more thoroughly.
Connections of Faculty Perceptions and Annual Reviews

The last findings the researcher would like to present are those that connect the participant perceptions with the LA GRAD Act annual reviews. The reviews include the first four of six for the study site. Keep in mind that it was noted the reviews may not be entirely accurate (Capital News Bureau, 2013); however, it was the only data provided with regards to how the institution was doing according to the LA GRAD Act standards. First the researcher would like to note the institution passed LA GRAD Act standards with a code of green the first four academic years. This means the “Institution has passed the Student Success Objective and two or three other GRAD Act performance objectives. Result: This allows the institution to retain tuition authority for the next academic year and makes the institution eligible for autonomies” (Board of Regents, 2011) for each of the four academic years. It should also be noted that this did not mean the institution passed each set of benchmarks for each academic year. The next few pages will outline the findings with regards to the individual LA GRAD Act reports for each academic year and finish with connections made between these findings and the participant interviews.

Each report detailed specific programs, accomplishments, and descriptive statistics with regards to the institution, which were given in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The second report, given in 2012, had to be revised due to massive amounts of errors within the original report that was documented with the Board of Regents. The second year report (2012) was quite a bit longer than all other reports and written in a completely different style than other given reports. The third and fourth year reports were easiest to read due to clarity and given outline to follow. Although the reports were set up differently throughout the first four years, each report did record similar data detailing information with regards to each of the four objectives set by the
state legislature through the LA GRAD Act. There were differences in each objective from year to year to reach the goals and benchmarks outlined. Due to the nature of this study, only a detailed account of the first objective, student success, is given.

Within the student success objective each report detailed policies instituted by the governing board (LCTCS) and institutional upper level administration to meet/exceed graduation rates, discussion of programs which needed better graduation rates, partnerships with local high schools, and passage rates on certification exams such as the PRAXIS (teachers exam) and NCLEX (nursing exam). In 2011, adopted policies as recorded by the LA GRAD Act annual review included mandatory new student orientation, improved advising through Starfish (online advising scheduling tool), establishment of career services, going through records to find how many students have credits to be awarded a general studies degree, sustaining partnerships with five secondary schools within the surrounding area by tracking progress between each partnership, and pass rates for nursing and teacher education national exams. Although there were increases from the baseline data from the year 2008, the benchmarks were not quite met for the year. Additionally there were a few statistics regarding program completers in which the benchmark and actual data were the same extremely high values, which were not explained within the annual review.

For the student success objectives recorded for year two in 2012, the following adopted policies were discussed in quite a bit of detail: new student orientation implemented mostly online, mention of the continuing Title III grant and its initiatives, the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as required by SACS, six new academic programs, an entire section dedicated to developmental education with descriptive statistics and descriptions of implemented programs, the Center for Academic Success, Art, partnerships with six secondary institutions and events
carried out within the partnerships, testing including the Graduate Academic Potential (GAP) test, the ACT COMPASS placement test, and the English 101 exit exam along with pass rates, student evaluations through College Net, assessment plans within the institution, divisions, and departments, certifications including the PRAXIS, NCLEX, and OSHA, and the use of IPEDS for comparing data. As the reader can see, the list is much longer than that of year one and there is more recorded detail with regards to each listed above. It was also organized inefficiently and the process of reading through the document was overwhelming and time consuming. For this academic year only one benchmark, student retention, was not met and decreased from the first year data recorded. Additionally, the first year percentage data for program completers changed drastically on the second report which again was not mentioned anywhere in the report.

In 2013, the third LA GRAD Act annual report was released and with regards to the student success objective the following data was recorded: academic program assessment must be completed once a year instead of once every three years, reverse transfer from a four-year to a two-year institution, utilization of Advanced Placement (AP) and ACT/SAT scores if provided for placement, programs to increase graduation rates specifically with regards to minority populations such as Men of Color Higher Achievement (MOCHA) and PRISM for STEM majors, the Teaching and Learning Center for faculty professional development, the Enrollment Management Team, update on student orientation, Title III Grant initiatives, QEP, implemented pilots with regards to developmental education, Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) established between surrounding secondary schools specifically focusing on English and mathematics, the GAP and English 101 exit exams, IPEDS, and the graduation survey for student experiences. There was no direct mention of professional national exams in the report, but it was provided in the appendices. The document again did not keep a
consistent layout from the previous years making it difficult for the researcher to compare. This was also the first year that all benchmarks were met, in fact exceeded. It is also noteworthy to mention that developmental education was moved from data regarding student success to data regarding objective two, articulation and transfer with no mention as to why.

The fourth year (Annual Report, 2014) was the final year analyzed in this study, and the report was given in 2014. The student success objective discussed information regarding a new Division of Innovative Learning an Academic Support set up specifically to provide assistance with regard to student success, retention, and graduation for faculty and students, a new advising method involving all full-time faculty advising students of the same major within their division along with division advisors, blocking out specific times during the week for student’s to participate in campus activities, expansion of on-line and hybrid courses for students in need, more high-school faculty accredited to teach dual enrollment courses, and in addition to 100% pass rates on the NCLEX and OSHA, a new program, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, had a 87.5% pass rate for its first cohort taking the national exam. This was the first year the audience was provided a reason behind benchmarks not being met. The actual retention rate was eight percent below the benchmark set. The reasoning given for such low retention was due to a major change in systems in which there was massive confusion for all students and faculty. Additionally this was the year the institution merged with a technical college, which was tough on the students coming from the technical college. The report did detail these two major issues and although the retention rate was not met, the institution still passed the student success objective. Developmental education is not mentioned in the fourth year of reporting.

Throughout the data collection process there were some connections made between each of the four annual reviews and the participant interviews. First, advising came up several times
in several of the interviews, mainly the changes made and mandated paperwork. Each annual report discussed advising and the changes made over the past several years directly corresponding to faculty perceptions. Although faculty feel pressure and overworked with the extra paperwork, the annual reviews record success of the new advising process. In fact the year after the new advising process came into effect the retention and completion rates were at their highest for the institution for the four years analyzed.

Another connection the researcher made was the different grants and pilot programs discussed in both the annual reviews and participant interviews. The annual reviews gave a synopsis with regards to the Title III grant and other various pilot programs in which participants were involved with, which the participants discussed in greater detail. However, the annual reviews did not discuss the outcomes or provide data with the success of the Title III grant or any pilot programs whereas the participants did provide this information. The reports tended to only discuss the positive points of implementing certain pilot programs, but never followed up with any findings. The faculty seemed to know more about how the programs either succeeded or failed than did the writers of the reports.

Additionally, there was a section in which all but one of the reports that focused on developmental education. This is where the researcher was able to establish disconnects between faculty perceptions and administration. None of the participants mentioned the addition of more developmental course sections as mentioned in the third year report (Annual Report, 2013). Instead the faculty participants focused solely on the course cap increases on the developmental courses, which is not mentioned in any report. Also, in talking with the participants who teach developmental math courses, each referred to three distinct developmental courses, whereas the 2013 report states the math department, “redesigned developmental math to consolidate 3
courses into 2” (Annual Report, 2013, p. 12). Each interview was conducted in the spring 2015 semester and the report was released at the end of the spring 2013 semester. None of the participants eluded that this change was ever made or even discussed. Additionally the participant’s never mentioned anything about the Summer Writer’s Workshop for students who placed into developmental English or the Summer Boot Camp for students who placed into developmental math. On the other hand the 2012 annual review not only mentions these two important programs, but gives statistics on their effectiveness. This could have been due to the fact that none of the faculty participated in either program, but again shows the disconnect between faculty perceptions and what administration deems important. Within each of the nine interviews every faculty member said that administration does not know anything about their strategies as a developmental educator. In reviewing the annual reviews, the researcher can see this is a problem.

The last connection made in reading the reports and conducting the interviews was although the majority of faculty felt a negative impact from the set standards set forth through the LA GRAD Act on their developmental classrooms, retention and completion steadily increased from the baseline data until year four, where the retention rate plummeted. The participants either saw no changes in their developmental students with respect to retention and completion or have made personal changes in strategy that have kept their retention and completion rates higher with regards to other faculty within the institution. Although the definition of retention for faculty and what is stated in the LA GRAD Act are different, the majority of students place into developmental education courses and these students affect the institutional retention and completion rates as well as faculty retention rates. These two definitions work together at this institution.
Summary

Clearly each participant had a distinct personality that came through during the interview process. Faculty knew more about their direct responsibilities with regards to the developmental classroom than they did the LA GRAD Act. Although most participants did believe the LA GRAD Act had an effect on the developmental classroom, they saw more of an effect on them than the students with increased paperwork and accountability for their student’s retention and completion. Faculty perceptions and information recorded in the annual reports were similar when it came to certain implemented programs; however, there were a few areas of clear miscommunication and disconnections between faculty and administration. The next chapter will provide the reader with the researcher’s analysis of the findings, a discussion relating the findings to the literature, and the implications with regards to the findings and practice.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Using qualitative methodology through the chosen case study, the researcher conducted nine interviews with faculty and reviewed the first four of six annual reviews with regards to the LA GRAD Act for one specific Louisiana community college. After transcribing each interview and reading through each interview multiple times, the researcher was able to identify four themes and answer each research question posed. As noted in chapter four, there was not one simple answer to any of the thirteen interview questions which made it difficult to address faculty perceptions as a whole; however, similar responses were made with regards to at least a third of the participants to obtain answers to each research question and find each theme. After analyzing the data it was clear faculty did not understand details regarding the LA GRAD Act and there was an extreme disconnect between faculty perceptions and data given in the four annual reviews. In addition to the restatement of the problem addressed in this study, this chapter also contains a discussion with regards to each individual research question and theme, implications of the findings and practice, recommendations for faculty, staff, administration, state legislation, and the researcher’s personal reflections.

Restatement of the Problem

The Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomies for Diplomas Act (LA GRAD Act), an important piece of legislation for the state of Louisiana, was put into place summer 2010 with the main goal of increasing student success by means of performance based funding. Louisiana is the only state in which tuition at institutions of public higher education is controlled by the state legislature. The LA GRAD Act is a six-year agreement between state legislature and public higher education institutions where, if certain standards are met, individual institutions will be given the authority to increase tuition without legislative approval. Other incentives include
limited operational autonomies for travel, obsolete equipment, inventory, and contracts for hires (LA GRAD Act, 2010). Four performance objectives, different for each individual institution are included within the LA GRAD Act: student success, articulation and transfer, workforce and economic development, and institutional efficiency and accountability. For the individual institution to pass, the student success objective must be met or exceeded for each academic year by meeting certain set benchmarks with regards to retention and completion. Data must be recorded and turned in by the institution in a timely manner at the end of each academic year.

Much focus with regards to the LA GRAD Act has been on four-year colleges and universities, with little regard for the many two-year colleges positioned around the state (Louisiana Developmental Education Policies, n.d.; ULyankeeFellow, 2010). Technical fields are in demand throughout the job market and community colleges pave a way for those wanting to enter in such fields, and therefore community colleges should be a high priority in higher education today (Breneman, 2012; Obama, 2009). A major impact on the community college with respect to the LA GRAD Act is developmental education. Four-year institutions in the state of Louisiana are no longer allowed to offer these high demand courses and thus two-year institutions are mandated to teach all developmental courses. Over half of students enrolled in higher education in Louisiana placed into a developmental course in 2006 and of those less than 15% passed those courses in a reasonable amount of time (Complete College America, 2011). Community colleges have had to increase the amount of developmental course sections offered to accommodate such a high demand which has continually increased over the years especially since the LA GRAD Act was put into place (Annual Report, 2013). Due to such an important piece of legislature affecting so many higher education institutions and the increased demand for developmental education, it was important to look how the LA GRAD Act effects students,
faculties, and staff of two-year institutions. It was also important to determine if the LA GRAD Act has increased retention and completion rates since it was put into effect.

Another major issue for the community college is the number of students per classroom. Student numbers in community college classrooms are typically very small with even smaller numbers in developmental classrooms (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The numbers are kept small because the majority of students placed into developmental courses are not only underprepared for college academically, but also tend to be socially underrepresented (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughan, 2006). Unnecessary stress, overwhelming anxiety, and social barriers concerning students and faculty can result from a classroom with too many underprepared students. Additionally, faculty are the ones who implement strategies, either original or ones that have been publicized through professional development or workshops, to help students pass these undesired courses. Therefore, faculty perceptions regarding the LA GRAD Act and developmental education at two-year institutions was important to determining the success of the LA GRAD Act with respect to two-year institutions.

**Discussion**

In chapter four, the findings and analysis of those findings were laid out with respect to each research question, themes, and connections between interview responses and LA GRAD Act reports for a specific Louisiana community college. As previously stated, the LA GRAD Act is an important piece of legislation for all Louisiana public higher education institutions and faculty play a major role in community colleges. The specific institution being studied brings in many underprepared students who are required to take developmental courses meaning faculty must be available to teach these high demand courses. One part of the LA GRAD Act (2010) specifically mandates two-year institutions have the sole responsibility of teaching all
developmental education courses further solidifying the need to understand developmental faculty perceptions at the community college level in Louisiana. In this particular section the researcher will discuss how each question and theme relates back to previous literature as discussed in chapter two.

**Question 1: What do developmental education faculty members at an urban Louisiana community college know about the LA GRAD Act?**

Although this was a fairly simple question to answer due to the nature of the question, a discussion with regards to literature is necessary to understanding why community college faculty have limited knowledge about such a fundamental mandate directly and indirectly affecting their work in their developmental classrooms. First, community college faculty are mainly concerned with teaching (Cohen & Brawer, 2008) which was apparent when interviewing each faculty member. They are mostly concerned with helping their students succeed not only academically, but also socially and emotionally as well. It is rare to find a community college faculty member who engages in academic research due to their teaching loads; however, they do practical research on a daily basis with implementation of new strategies. Additionally, when they are not engaged in the classroom, they are typically holding office hours to help students, serving the college in some capacity, attending professional development activities, or attending a mandatory meeting according to participants and literature (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Vaughn, 2006). There is not much time to engage in academic research as a community college instructor, much less a developmental educator dealing with underprepared students. In other words, it is rare to find a community college faculty member who will take time to look up information about state mandates and how they relate to their individual jobs, as they are more focused on doing their teaching job well.
Second, community college faculty rely on information given from upper and lower administration which may or may not be reliable. It makes sense for the faculty to rely on what administration tells them with regards to the institution considering administration is the eyes, ears, and mouth for outside institutions and the public; however, personal agendas can bias how information is given and received (Creswell, 2009; Davis, 2004; Johnson & Christensen, 2012). This particular community college is very bureaucratic in nature where each person has a purpose and a place (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013). It operates like a machine and when the machine has a broken part, information can become unreliable. Many faculty gave information about the LA GRAD Act based on what administration had given them in meetings and major parts of the act were left unmentioned. Additionally, faculty took definitions of certain buzzwords as they understood them rather than the definition as defined by the LA GRAD Act creating a barrier in their knowledge of how policies embedded in the act work. They did not look up information regarding the act and it was only mentioned in meetings. Other forms of communication such as email or memos were not used between administration and faculty with regards to the LA GRAD Act according to the participants in the study; however, they may have overlooked information given as their responsibilities outside the classroom continue to steadily increase. Although many faculty mentioned grants, pilot programs, and committees in which they were involved which were specifically developed with regards to meeting LA GRAD Act standards, faculty were only doing what they were told by their chairs, deans, and chancellor. They volunteered or took on classes that were part of their contract, but they were unaware of the administration’s agenda.

Last, the answers to this particular question led to the first theme: There is a strong disconnect between administration and faculty, which flowed through answering the other two
research questions as well. With regards to this question, it is important to note faculty and administration are on different levels when it comes to state mandates. Administration is focused on funding for the institution as a whole (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; McCabe, 2003) and thus their focus is on the entire LA GRAD Act and its effects on the institution as a whole. On the other hand, faculty are focused on their individual classrooms and responsibilities in their departments and divisions which make for different interpretations, and they focus only on the parts which could affect them personally or their students. Also, although the institution is clearly bureaucratic as a whole, faculty seem to operate under the human resource frame in a more collegial environment (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013) where they work together for the greater good of their students. Faculty are more concerned about the human element of the institution, whereas faculty perceive administration to be more about politics surrounding the institution. The LA GRAD Act is a political mandate where administrations of peer institutions are in constant competition to obtain funding for their specific institutions. Faculty suggest administration operates under a political framework (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013), which is highly possible due to the nature of this mandate and other job responsibilities such as advocating for their specific institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Overall, the majority of faculty did know a little about the LA GRAD Act and its purpose, but left out many details to give a true understanding of what all the LA GRAD act entails. Due to the different priorities of faculty and administration along with the framework in which each group primarily operates, faculty feel as if their voices are left unheard as well as blamed for student failure. It is not unreasonable for administration to operate through a political framework as their responsibilities often lead them to advocating for their institutions. It is also common for faculty to want to be in a more collegial environment as they are seeking to help one
another and are smaller in nature (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013). The problem arises when the communication between one part of the institution and another part are not communicating effectively and efficiently with one another, which seemed to be a problem within this particular institution according to developmental faculty. Recommendations on how to fix this issue will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Question 2: How do developmental faculty at an urban Louisiana community college perceive the LA GRAD Act’s impact on the developmental classroom, if any impact at all?**

As noted in chapter four, the majority of faculty participants agreed that the LA GRAD Act did impact the developmental classroom in some way, especially the faculty members themselves. One of the major impacts on the developmental classroom is the types of activities and methods used to teach. As research suggests learning communities, peer tutoring, and supplemental instruction (SI) have all been shown as effective methods used in the college classroom (Evans, 2006; Malm, Bryngfors, & Morner, 2011; McCabe, 2003; Tinto, 1998; Topping, 1996). One of the participants, Rachel, discussed the successes of peer tutoring funded by Title III, which was specifically applied for due to the LA GRAD Act. She also discussed the implementation of SI being used in other courses and would like to see it offered for developmental education, which would be great since it has been shown most useful for weaker students (Malm, Bryngfors, & Morner, 2011). Although learning communities were not specifically mentioned by the participants, Sara did elude to learning communities while discussing her role in teaching a combined developmental course for students who were also enrolled in a college study skills course. In addition, one of the LA GRAD Act reports detailed a method in which developmental students taking a specific section of developmental English were also required to take a specific section of study skills in hopes to promote student success. According to Sara, students enrolled in that particular section of developmental English did do
slightly better than those who were in other sections not linked with the study skills course. I am not sure if this was due to it being a learning community, the need for college study skills, or a combination of the two. More research needs to be done for a conclusive result.

Secondly, the majority of faculty are now using some type of active learning technique or student collaboration in the classroom including group work, flipped classrooms, peer evaluation, workshops, gap worksheets, etc. Active learning has been a buzz word since the 1990s and has a variety of meanings and methods associated with those meanings making it difficult to actually define it through one specific lens. According to Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005), to correctly implement active or collaborative learning, a college faculty member must make sure they explain their expectations to students, form groups correctly, structure each active learning task, facilitate students during the exercise, and evaluate and grade students effectively throughout the process. Alan, one of the participants, discussed each one of these steps in detail in his interview. The authors also give several examples of collaborative and active learning activities, which the interview participants discussed as well. Although their claim to change is a personal one, the majority of faculty did not start using active learning techniques until mandated to attend professional development activities involving active learning, which was in 2010, the year the LA GRAD Act was put into place.

The majority of faculty in this study who use some sort of active learning technique in their developmental classrooms claim their students do better in their developmental classes and have said they do better in college-level classes as well; however, one instructor believes these methods hinder his students because of his teaching style and another instructor said he had not seen a change in his classes. Some literature says active learning or collaboration is successful where other research has found it to be unsuccessful or inconclusive (McAndrew, 2005; Myers,
Many participants who believe active learning techniques are successful also use these same techniques in their college-level classrooms. The only complaint by participants using active learning techniques is the time it takes to prep and the amount of time it takes away from explaining the material; however, a few participants believe if implemented correctly they could overlook this negative aspect.

Another issue developmental faculty felt passionate about was the amount of students enrolled in each section of a developmental course. Literature states the average developmental classroom with have anywhere between 20 and 25 students with no more than 30 (Cohen & Brawer, 2008); however, this is not the case according to faculty at the institution studied. Many instructors said their developmental classes contained 40 students and some even said 45, which was a major concern for the instructors because they have less one-on-one time to devote to each individual student. In fact, one instructor showed me their syllabus from before and after the LA GRAD Act had been enacted and the cap on their developmental course was changed from 20 to 40. Faculty reported a greater drop-out/withdrawal rate from their larger developmental courses than those put into classrooms which had maximum seating capacity for 24 students. Faculty claimed administration bumped up the numbers to accommodate the amount of students that could fit in a classroom. Although the LA GRAD Act report (2012) states they increased the amount of developmental course offerings, this has not affected the increasing numbers of students enrolled in each individual section. In my opinion, administration made the decision to accommodate those students coming from four-year institutions needing developmental education; however, according to faculty students are failing more and more due to this decision.

Positive, negative, and neutral perceptions were discussed between participants when asked questions concerning how the LA GRAD Act has impacted the developmental classroom.
Once again the disconnect between faculty and administration continued to arise throughout each interview. Additionally, two new themes were discovered during this time: the lack of and diminishing of necessary resources to better serve the developmental student and patience when working with developmental students. Although the LA GRAD Act reports from 2011 – 2013 had increasing information provided with respect to developmental education, faculty complained they are continuing to lose resources to help their students. Rachel and Sara both discussed the importance of the Title III grant money in providing developmental students with peer tutoring and a way to get through their developmental courses faster. However, the grant ended abruptly with no explanation to faculty as to why the needed successful resources were gone. Additionally, Emily made reference to new demands with the lack of resources to accurately and effectively carry out those plans. It may not be impossible to do well without needed resources, but it does make it difficult and puts unnecessary stress on all involved. In the case of the developmental classroom, students need extra support, both academic and social. Without the resources, developmental students are more likely to drop or fail out of these courses, never having the opportunity to make it through college. The LA GRAD Act has set benchmarks for each individual institution, but it is difficult to meet these benchmarks without support and resources.

Patience when it comes to the developmental classroom was another important theme taken from the data. Administration has high expectations on faculty, which in some cases seemed to create an anxiety on some of the participants in the study. They said their focus was on their students, but they seemed to discuss all their other responsibilities as well such as paperwork, advising, and the never-ending emails they were required to send to students. It is difficult to keep patience in the classroom when other responsibilities are affecting faculty
members. In fact, although Rachel said patience was very important in the developmental classroom, she no longer teaches developmental courses due to the fact that she feels the developmental student is unmotivated she cannot deal with their mindset. In speaking with Rachel, it seemed as if she had lost a little patience with her developmental students. Literature suggests full-time faculty do not want to deal with developmental students for the same reasons Rachel discussed (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Although other faculty did not blatantly state their negative concerns teaching developmental students, many of them did discuss their difficulties in getting through to their developmental students.

Lastly, online developmental education came up when discussing how the LA GRAD Act has affected the developmental classroom. Online courses are offered for each developmental math and English course at the institution; however only two of the participants teach online. Sara, one of the online instructors said her retention rates in her college-level classes were alarming so she could not imagine developmental students being successful in an online course. The majority of math faculty interviewed discussed how developmental classes online were detrimental to developmental students, although only one had experience teaching these courses online. The LA GRAD Act report (2013) discussed the My Computerized Classroom (MCC) for developmental mathematics, a program designed to help students pass their developmental courses at their own pace using computer software and online homework system. In this scenario, students are in a classroom working with an instructor who operates more like a tutor walking around the classroom and helping students who need assistance. No faculty commented on this program, which could be due to the fact that none of the participants actually taught MCC courses. I was not able to obtain any data on the success of these courses. To accommodate the ever increasing developmental student population, more sections of online
developmental courses were added to the schedule, but many faculty interviewed do not agree with these methods for the developmental classroom. They felt online methods would cause the students anxiety and they would not have the support needed to be successful in the course. Literature shows where online developmental courses have been successful and unsuccessful and hybrid courses have been the least successful (Ashby, Sadera, & McNary, 2011; Lynch-Newberg, 2010; Peterson & Bond, 2004; Zavarella, 2008).

Overall, faculty did see an impact on their classrooms with regards to methods expected to be used in the developmental classroom, strategies used within their developmental classrooms, much needed diminishing resources, tested patience, and thoughts about online courses. Again the disconnect between faculty and administration was noticed by the increasing numbers in each developmental classroom when faculty clearly see a problem with too many developmental students in one classroom. Clear changes must be made with noticeable variations in the student population over time; however, the challenge is how to make the changes effectively for the good of each institutional part rather than just one section. Each strategy and method discussed in the interviews were used to see their students continue through the course, complete the course, and continue to be successful in the rest of their courses throughout their college career. In other words, the faculty wanted to see them succeed and graduate leading to the discussion of answering research question three.

**Question 3: How has the LA GRAD Act influenced the retention and completion of students enrolled in developmental courses at an urban Louisiana community college?**

It seems this research question would be fairly easy to answer; however, this was the most difficult question to tackle throughout data collection and analysis. The problem was that faculty assumed retention and completion to be defined as students not withdrawing from a course before the end of the semester and completing the course with and “A,” “B,” or “C” as
their final grade respectively. The definitions of retention and completion as stated in the LA GRAD Act are “The measure of the proportion of students who remain enrolled at the same institution from year to year” (Hagedorn, 2005, p. 98), specifically their first year, and “The outcome of how many students within a cohort complete and/or graduate from an institution. This is typically measured in two or three years for associate level programs and four, five, or six years for a bachelor level programs” (Noel-Levitz, 2008, p. 4), respectively. Again one can see the disconnect between faculty and administration when it comes to understanding definitions. It seemed as if their deans and department chairs referred to retention and completion exactly as the faculty understood the ideas, which does make sense. In fact, more students are likely to be retained as Hagedorn (2005) defines retention if they are retained in their courses, and they are more likely to complete as Noel-Levitz (2008) defines completion if they successfully complete their developmental courses (Bailey, 2009; Mamiseishvili, & Deggs, 2013). So although faculty have a different perspective on retention and completion than do administrators, without one, you cannot have the other.

Another issue arose when answering this question: faculty perceptions are very diverse. Some believed retention for developmental students was affected, others felt it would never be affected, and others felt that although they have not seen an affect yet it was coming soon. Additionally their reasoning was different, as discussed in chapter four. Faculty did agree that developmental educators have a more difficult job in retaining and completing students because of the type of student they are dealing with on a daily basis, which is consistent with literature (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). A couple of the faculty brought up the amount of students in the developmental classroom. They were concerned that putting more students into one classroom leads to lower retention and completion rates because they are not getting the support necessary
to get academic understanding. Another felt to increase retention and completion faculty would eventually have to just pass students through. If this is the case, what is the point of having a grading scale, assessments, or even class?

One major finding did come out from the data with regards to faculty: they felt blamed for student success and failure. Some took it more personally than others, but each felt some personal responsibility for how their students did academically. Those who expressed lower retention and completion rates in their developmental courses did not have anything positive to say about retention and completion. They did not feel they should be responsible for retention and completion rate because they felt it was up to the student, not them as faculty. Others with what they perceived to be better retention and completion rates made it known by stating their students were affected by their teaching strategies. They felt their strategies were a key in retention and completion in their respective courses. A couple of the participants felt the instructor could be the one to make or break a student in a developmental course. They expressed their concerns when certain instructors were given developmental courses to teach because they felt it takes a special person to help these students. Literature backs up the importance of the faculty member and their engagement in the classroom with regards to retention and completion (Barbatis, 2008; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), but engagement on the part of the student is necessary as well (Tinto, 1998, 2003).

Faculty did express the importance of student engagement with respect to retention and completion. The participants claimed students who completed homework assignments, came in for office hours, went to tutoring, and engaged in classroom discussions were more likely to stay in the course and complete the course than those who separated themselves. One particular study found that students must be willing to engage themselves to be successful in developmental
courses (Evans, 2006). Some faculty expressed a concern because they have seen a decrease in retention and completion in their developmental courses over the past few years. Although the decrease has been during the LA GRAD Acts tenure, I am not convinced the LA GRAD Act has anything to do with the decrease. Faculty expressed that they believed it was due to the poor secondary education provided in certain areas around the state. This would make sense due to budget cuts for all levels of education across the state as well as pressure to pass students regardless of their understanding. In fact, as time passes, colleges will be admitting students who will have completed all their education under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which could show a decrease in retention and completion because college does not have these boundaries as of yet. The LA GRAD Act reports show inconsistencies in retention for the institution throughout the first four years. Form the baseline there was an increase to year one, a decrease to year two, an extreme increase to year three, and an extreme decrease to year four. This data suggests the strategies set forth to increase retention have had inconsistent effects throughout the past four years and more research needs to be conducted to see what is really causing such inconsistencies. Graduation rates were shown to increase in the first two years and decrease in the next two years. More research needs to be conducted to see why there were increases and then decreases.

In obtaining unofficial data from the institution’s faculty resource site, the completion rates for developmental courses are considerably low between 40 and 50 percent in math and slightly higher in English. Retention rates for these courses are similar. Although the retention and completion rates in developmental education courses have fluctuated since the inception of the LA GRAD Act, I am not convinced retention and completion have been affected entirely by the LA GRAD Act. I believe more evaluation is necessary to answer this research question as
well as answering questions with regards to retention and completion. As of right now, I consider these results to be inconclusive.

**Implications of Findings**

Not much research has been conducted with regards to state policy and faculty perceptions in higher education. My hope is this study will start a conversation between other researchers and practitioners throughout the United States with regards to state policy and faculty perceptions. Clearly state policy does affect developmental faculty at this specific community college in Louisiana; however, it is important to see if there is an impact at other community colleges around the state as well as other states. I believe this study has the potential to begin a conversation between other researchers interested in state policy, developmental education, and faculty. This research study has brought about some implications of findings including additions to current literature; the framework in which administration and faculty work in are very different due to agendas and job responsibilities; policy does affect the majority of developmental educators directly and indirectly even without much knowledge of state policy; and retention and completion are considered both positive and negative for faculty.

First, this particular study confirmed much of what literature says about developmental faculty, student engagement, and collaborative learning techniques. The majority of developmental faculty struggle with the developmental student population in terms of being academically underprepared, lacking self-motivation, meeting all the needs with such a diverse skill set in the classroom, and social barriers (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perrin & Charron, 2006). Throughout each interview each of these struggles was either directly or indirectly mentioned confirming faculty struggles. Additionally, a few faculty discussed the importance of full-time faculty teaching developmental education courses even
though the desire is low, reinforcing what Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) found in their study. In fact, only one participant, Ashley, said she would be willing to teach any of the developmental mathematics courses as necessary. Others preferred to teach certain ones due to course content or student population. Also, previous part-time faculty all said they were only given developmental courses to teach which again reinforces the idea that full-time faculty, who pick their course loads first, do not want to teach developmental courses, leaving the part-time faculty with the majority of the responsibility. Full-time faculty are the ones mandated to attend professional development activities and implement new ideas in their classrooms in hopes to encourage student engagement, but full-time faculty continue to walk away from the student population needing these strategies making it more difficult on the student, part-time faculty, and institution.

Student engagement and active/collaborative learning techniques were discussed quite a bit throughout the interview process. Many believed these techniques worked, but a couple could not tell a difference between traditional lecture and collaborative techniques, consistent with the literature (McAndrew, 2005; Myers, 1996; Prince, 2004; Smuttle, 2003). Learning communities were implied in one conversation, which according to the participant was successful, reinforcing Tinto’s (1998 2003) findings. Additionally, supplemental instruction (SI) was discussed by one participant with regards to college-level courses, and it was suggested the institution use SI for developmental courses for its effectiveness. Literature states SI is more helpful for weaker students (Malm, Bryngfors, & Morner, 2011) and one study found it to be successful for developmental students (Evans, 2006). Peer tutoring also came up in a few interviews, which the participants found to be successful and enjoyable, reinforcing an older study’s findings conducted by Topping (1996). Not only is literature reinforced throughout this
study with regards to developmental education and classroom strategies, but the frameworks in which faculty and administration work under were also strengthened.

In talking with the developmental faculty at this particular institution, it became obvious that there is a camaraderie and respect for other faculty within their departments. They share information with one another with regards to classroom techniques, knowledge gained at professional development opportunities, and how they view their classrooms. Even though their opinions are diverse in nature, they are willing to listen to one another and try different things to help their students be successful. They wanted a collegial environment and often expressed working under a human resource framework. Due to the relatively small mathematics department and even smaller English department, the human resource framework is possibly a considerable choice for each individual department (Birnbaum, 1988; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). Other characteristics of the human resource framework which faculty implied throughout their interviews were their focus on student and other faculty needs, the need of each individual doing their part, and the willingness of helping each other as necessary (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Above all, the majority of them expressed a care for the human aspect in the workplace.

On the other hand, they perceived administration to work under a political framework. They discussed the limited and diminishing funds for higher education in in the state, the need for advocacy of the institution, and the power administration has which are all assumptions of the political framework (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2013; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). They felt administration used their power to get what they wanted, but blamed the faculty when things did not go as planned. It seemed to me that faculty believed an administration operating under this framework was mostly negative because of their experiences including increasing classroom size, more unnecessary paperwork, and the lack of compensation such as a raise.
Although most people look at politics in a negative light, those who operate under a political framework see necessity of politics in the workplace (Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010). The LA GRAD Act is very political in nature in that it offers incentives for meeting standards. For this reason, administration does need some operating through a political lens. Additionally, the faculty alluded that the institution is run as a hierarchy, and they struggle with administration who try to tell them how to do their jobs, but feel administrators do not really understand the complexity of their jobs. It is true that all higher education institutions need some type of structure, but it needs to be a structure that works for the institution. In looking at the LA GRAD Act reports for the first four years, many of the administrative positions are labeled as vacant. If an institution has a structure set in place, it needs to have positions filled along with current job descriptions so everyone knows what they are responsible to complete. Without the necessary structure the institution will eventually fail (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Faculty feel that they need these roles to be filled with the right people. As one can see, three of the four frameworks were discussed indirectly throughout participant interviews, and the process of reframing should be part of each individual, department, division, and whole institution to effectively accomplish goals (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This is especially important for faculty given that the majority of them felt the LA GRAD Act, a political state policy, did have some effect on them and their classrooms.

Although there is not much literature with regards to faculty perceptions on state mandates, this study shows state policy does have an effect on developmental educators. More research needs to be conducted on this topic to really understand effects of state policy and faculty perceptions. However, the importance of state mandates for higher education institutions were noted and reinforced. Many state mandates such as Proposition 13 (1978), Assembly Bill
1725 (1988), The Remedial Education Commission (2011), ACT 360 (2013), and Our Louisiana 2020 (2014) are examples of the importance of state mandates with regards to funding and meeting goals. Without state policy, it is possible many state institutions would fall through the cracks with lack of support. Institutions need money even though money is scarce. Higher education in Louisiana have been hit with consistent budget cuts since 2008. For the 2013-2014 fiscal year, the institution studies brought in a revenue of around $56 million in which tuition and fees comprised about $15.6 million or 28% of the earned revenues and the state appropriations of the same amounts (SACSCOC, 2014). The LA GRAD Act gives Louisiana state institutions the ability to have more control over their individual uses of money along with other autonomies to help with necessary resources for students to have an exceptional education experience. However, according to faculty, state policies, specifically the LA GRAD Act, have positive and negative consequences.

The largest part of the LA GRAD Act centers around student success, specifically looking at retention and completion rates. Many states are trying to increase their retention and completion at all public higher education institutions and are using different methods to accomplish such a heavy task. Some of these methods have been successful whereas others have been unsuccessful (Arnone, 2003; Hebel, 2011; Kelderman, 2011, 2012; Sander, 2013). Although there have been many studies conducted over the years regarding retention and completion, more work needs to be considered with regards to these two tied buzz words. It is crucial to define what is meant by the words retention and completion as throughout this study it was noted faculty had a different idea from what the two words mean with regards to the LA GRAD Act. Using faculty definitions of retention and completion, positive and negative concerns were expressed. Faculty felt personally responsible for students who remained in their
courses for the entire semester and completed, they felt administration held them personally responsible for student success and failure, they felt pressure to present material using specific methods, they felt retention and completion of developmental students was tougher than that of a college-level student, and they felt they lacked resources that could help them do their jobs more effectively, which is representative of the literature (Casazza, 1999; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Kozeracki, 2005). More research on retention and completion with respect to faculty perceptions should be conducted to better understand faculty issues.

In conducting this study, one notices that former study findings were reinforced with regards to developmental faculty and students, faculty and student engagement, and active learning techniques. More research should be conducted with regards to state mandates as this study shows positive and negative effects on the developmental classroom as well as the lack of faculty knowledge about the LA GRAD Act. The findings in this research raise more questions than give answers, which is important for future research studies. It should be noted that findings were inconclusive with respect to the third research question and further research should be conducted to obtain a more conclusive result. Although there are important implications of the findings with regards to research, there are also important implications for practical purposes.

**Implications for Practice**

Community college instructors emphasize teaching over all other job responsibilities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; McCabe, 2003). Therefore it is important to discuss the implications for practice for community college faculty. One major theme coming from analyzing the data is that developmental faculty must have patience when dealing with developmental students. Due to their lack of academic preparation as well as other social factors, developmental students can present themselves differently than those who place into college level classes (Bailey, Jenkins, &
Throughout this study, faculty remained adamant about making sure each student felt comfortable with the instructor. Although developmental faculty struggle with teaching developmental students because of such diverse academic and social barriers presented (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011), many faculty felt it was necessary to disguise the struggles and practice patience at all times. Developmental students struggle with negative attitudes towards subjects they do not understand (Dogbey, 2010), so it is important for the instructor to present a positive attitude and keep the atmosphere free of negativity and judgment.

Another important implication for practice is for full-time faculty to take more responsibility in teaching developmental courses. Although the majority of instructors throughout this study were willing to teach developmental courses, one could not deal with the type of student in the developmental classroom, and the others had a preference in which developmental course they preferred to teach due to content. The problem with full-time faculty not taking responsibility for these courses is that retention and completion rates for part-time faculty are significantly lower than that of full-time faculty (Bailey, 2009; Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Jacoby, 2006), which could be relative to type of course taught. Those who are hired on as full-time faculty are considered as more desirable than ones working part-time, so it is important as faculty to help out the neediest students; however full-time faculty often feel they are better than part-time faculty and should be teaching the more advanced courses (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). All faculty should take responsibility in teaching developmental education courses, especially when the majority of courses offered are developmental.
Another important implication for practice is the need for evaluation of teaching strategies in the developmental classroom. Instructors emphasized the importance of their student’s learning throughout data collection. Many of the participants expressed their changes each semester to tweak their strategies to be more effective in the classroom. If something did not work, they would try to rework the strategy or try something different. Once they found an effective strategy, they would implement it across all their classes. Also, strategies were similar for the individual departments showing how important it is to share working ideas for each specific discipline. It is not just about finding strategies that work, but implementing them effectively and sharing your knowledge with others (Kozeracki, 2005).

Not only should community college faculty be willing to teach and update their developmental courses, but they should also be willing to read up and make understanding of state policy that affects them and their students. Their schedules are busy with teaching, service, and professional development activities, but faculty need to be aware of changes and reasons behind these changes to have a better understanding of why administration makes certain decisions. If faculty continue to rely only on administrator’s words about policy, they will continue to struggle with understanding why policy is implemented in a certain way and communication will continue to diminish between the two. In other words, faculty should be willing to use the process of reframing or “examining the same situation from multiple vantage points” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 333). If faculty looked at certain situations through a political or symbolic framework instead of just through a structural or human resource framework, they are more likely to understand state policy. This does not mean they have to agree with everything, but it would help with communication and understanding. I believe administration, staff, students, and faculty should use the process of reframing as well to open effective dialogue.
and eventually lead to better relationships with all institutional personnel. According to the results of this study, faculty and administration do not interact as much as they should which has resulted in an extreme disconnect between the two units. Although there is interaction between faculty and department chairs and deans, interaction between senior administration and faculty is limited to twice a year with hardly any communication according to the participants. How is an institution supposed to operate effectively without all parts working together for the greater good?

In order for an institution to run effectively, support must be provided to all. As noted earlier, “Access without appropriate support is a false opportunity” (Casazza, 1999). Being an open institution, community colleges provide access to all members it its community; however, faculty claim the resources continue to disappear coupled with higher expectations by means of retention and completion. If the institution’s administration or system in which the institution is situated continues to cut funding for developmental education when developmental education continues to grow, students will never accomplish their academic goals and faculty will continue to feel blamed for their students failure. More faculty will feel like Rachel and give up teaching developmental courses which will only increase the developmental course load for part-time faculty, which is not necessarily the best option for students as discussed earlier. AS stated earlier, institutions of higher education in the state of Louisiana have seen budget cuts since 2008. According to an auditor’s report, the LCTCS System saw a 10.8% decrease in net assets from the 2008 to 2009 fiscal years (Financial Statement Audit, 2010). Faculty, especially developmental faculty, cannot be expected to run their classes effectively without appropriate funding, resources, and compensation. If budgets continue to decrease as they have in the past
seven years, eventually each institution in the LCTC system will have to shut down. Resources are a must for education to survive.

In addition to providing financial stability, the institution needs to update their data reports. According to data provided through an email from the institution’s Institutional Research Office, of the supposed current 60 faculty teaching developmental, 27 (45%) are full-time while 33 (55%) are part-time. Although this seems like a pretty solid number of full-time faculty teaching developmental courses, I am not sure how accurate the data being presented considering one of the interviewees was given on the list and she is currently not teaching developmental courses. Additionally more part-time faculty could have been hired to teach developmental courses after the data was given.

Incorrect data can cause problems within the institution and outside the institution. Inside the institution, if data is recorded incorrectly or provided incorrectly, reports will not be done correctly and information will need to be updated causing conflict and unnecessary stress on all involved. Also secondary sources may need to be involved causing more problems. Institutions must provide as accurate of data as possible to ensure the public peace of mind when considering attending a specific institution. A student may choose to attend a specific institution based on statistics provided by the institutions website or those given directly from the institution and find out after enrolling the data was inaccurate. This could cause the student unnecessary frustration and even may cause the student to leave, affecting the retention and completion rates. Although mistakes can happen, this study shows how easy it is for data to contain major errors, which affects not only the validity of this study, but the confidence in the institution’s institutional research office as well.
Overall, it is important for developmental faculty to have patience with their developmental students, full-time faculty take responsibility for teaching developmental courses, reevaluating teaching strategies, faculty becoming more familiar with state policy, all involved with higher education learning the process of reframing for means of better interaction and communication between departments, providing appropriate support throughout the institution, and making sure data is accurate and up to date. The ultimate goal is to have an effective institution where students are prepared for their respective careers upon leaving the institution and entering their appropriate fields. Although challenging, these things are not impossible to accomplish. With the right people working together for the institutional mission, the community college will be a great success. All of this being said, the next few sections will provide readers with recommendations for the state legislature, administration, faculty, and staff with regards to the community college.

Recommendations

This study has presented quite a few implications of findings and for practice. It is easy to point out what works and does not work, but it becomes difficult to provide recommendations or possible solutions with regards to areas that need help. One of the interview questions specifically asked each participant for advice with respect to administration, faculty, and staff. Some faculty went as far as giving advice to the state legislature as well. Considering what faculty said along with literature and my personal reflections, the following sections will provide suggestions to state legislature, administration, faculty, and staff directly geared toward the state of Louisiana and the particular institution studied; however, these recommendations are not limited to the Louisiana state legislature and specific institution, but could be useful for other state legislatures and higher education institutions as well.
State Legislature

Louisiana is the only state in which the state legislature has control over tuition increases. To try to eliminate some of this power, they enacted the LA GRAD Act in 2010, a six-year agreement, which gives public state institutions the right to increase tuition up to 10 percent if they meet certain standards. In other words, this is Louisiana’s way of granting performance based funding. As great as this sounds on paper, if educators are not aware of what the LA GRAD Act entails, how will it be implemented fully? It was shown although faculty knew the main goal of the LA GRAD Act, they were not aware of all the details embedded into the Act along with the exact consequences for meeting or not meeting certain standards.

The first recommendation, which actually came from Ken, one of the study participants, would be to hold a session before enacting a major state mandate, affecting a great number of people, asking those who could potentially be affected their ideas on how to carry out the policy effectively. As a faculty member who reads up on state policy, I was unaware of the LA GRAD Acts adoption until it was in the process of being adopted. People want to feel a sense of making a difference, especially faculty who want to have a voice through shared governance. By including people in the decision making process, they not only feel more involved, but more accomplished. Although not everyone will agree with the decisions, those involved will at least feel they had the opportunity to be involved. Also, it is important to take other’s opinions into account, not just say it, but do it. Then, pilot ideas that are agreed upon and see if they work before just blindly enacting something across the entire state. Although using ideas that have been successful in other states across the country is not a bad idea, populations are different, so things must be carefully considered before implementation.
Once a decision has been made to enact a state mandate along with a start date, my second recommendation for state legislature is to provide information surrounding relevant state mandates to each higher education unit either through letter or more appropriately through a seminar explaining the plans of the state mandate and how it will affect each individual involved. I would suggest having a question/answer session along with a handout explaining the details in a direct way. I believe direct communication would help each unit in understanding their purpose in carrying out state policy and help people feel involved. At this point communication is very important, as without knowing and understanding something, implementation will not be carried out effectively. According to this study, with administration’s explanation faculty still lacked knowledge. Additionally, as the researcher, it took me days to find the color codes for a successful and an unsuccessful implementation of the LA GRAD Act standards, which reinforces the lack of communication and expectations. It makes sense that direct communication would be the most effective way to provide an audience with explanation, understanding, and expectation.

One last recommendation for the state legislature, which came from many of the study participants, is to provide public higher education institutions with the appropriate resources to carry out state policy effectively. According to each of the four LA GRAD Act reports (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014), this institution has carried out its responsibilities in maintaining green, which is the highest status; however, the faculty feel resources continue to diminish making it more difficult to provide appropriate services. If the LA GRAD Act is a type of performance based funding and the institution is performing, why are the resources diminishing instead of overflowing? There seems to be a trap door with regards to the LA GRAD Act, which I have not been able to pinpoint at this particular time. The ones with the resources have the power
Community colleges desperately need resources for developmental education as the majority of the student population takes at least one developmental course (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Baker, 2012; Boylan & Bonham, 2007; Cejda & Leist, 2006; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fain, 2011; Oudenhoven, 2002; Perrin, 2005). Faculty see appropriate resources are being eliminated as the numbers in their developmental classrooms continue to increase and money to use innovative strategies continues to decrease. Although the state legislature holds the power, without money provided specifically for developmental education, the community college may need to change its open door policy leading to other major issues affecting the entire community. Previously a taskforce was put together to gather information with regards to developmental education (Louisiana Board of Regents & Louisiana Department of Education, 2011) and a need was found. The state legislature needs to reevaluate what the commission found and make necessary changes geared toward developmental education to help the community college successfully implement effective strategies for developmental education. It is not enough for the state legislature make necessary changes, but senior and junior level administration within the institution must make necessary changes as well.

Administration

Senior administration staff are the direct ties to the state legislature for their respective institutions. Part of their job responsibility is to advocate for their institution to try and obtain the necessary resources to carry out the institution’s specific mission. In the state of Louisiana, educational funds are continuing to be cut, especially for higher education, which makes this job more difficult for administration, but not impossible. My first recommendation for senior
administration, specifically the chancellor or president, is to continue to advocate for their institution by attending state legislative sessions, writing to the state legislators consistently with regards to necessary resources, and attempting to set up private meetings to discuss important matters surrounding the institution and community which is especially important for community colleges. The president/chancellor is the voice for the institution, and for the institution to survive tough economic times it is important for them to truly represent and advocate for their college. In other words, continue to work under the political framework where “politics is the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of scarcity and divergent interests” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 183).

Due to the diminishing funds for higher education provided by the state and federal governments, administration needs to be creative with obtaining resources for the institution. Many local companies are willing to give money and resources to the local community college who have programs which support their needs. The resources include money for certain programs and internships for students planning to get an education in their respective fields. Part of the Louisiana 2020 goals include obtaining more partnerships with local businesses to support the demands for educating students in particular workforce fields. I suggest administrators (senior and junior) assess the college’s major needs and contact local businesses which would provide resources for certain needs. It may be difficult to obtain money for developmental education; however, with the majority of students placing into developmental education courses that are necessary prerequisite for most certificates and degrees, an argument can be made on behalf of developmental education, especially for community colleges. It is important for administration to try their best to get their institution the necessary resources. There will be times of failure, but progressing forward is bound to produce an eventual success.
In looking on the institution’s website, I noticed there was a particular person who was in charge of grants. Grant money is a great way to obtain needed resources for the institution. Although grants are available often there is so much competition to obtain a grant and it can be overwhelming and time consuming for those involved. It is important for the person who has the most knowledge in grant writing to research information pertaining to grants and provide services to help those interested obtain grant monies for a specific group. The institution has obtained grant funding before through Title III for developmental education and there are other grants available specifically focusing on developmental education. I would suggest getting a taskforce together to research and apply for grants specifically pertaining to developmental education since this population continues to be so predominant throughout this campus.

Although meeting with the state legislature, advocating for the institution, and working to obtain money and resources is a major part of senior administration’s responsibilities, another important part is having affective communication with their employees. Throughout this study I found faculty felt disconnected from administration, especially senior administration. They did not seem confident in their administration’s ability to help them in any way. In fact, all developmental math faculty felt disconnected from their direct administration. It is so important for faculty and their respective department chairs and deans to communicate effectively and in turn lower level administration to communicate the needs to senior administration. Although there are supposed regular meetings held throughout each respective semester, I do not gather there is much effective communication in these meetings. My suggestion is for senior and junior administration to send out a weekly or monthly newsletter communicating institutional, division, and departmental information so faculty know about what is going on within the institution. Also, make sure expectations of faculty are clearly communicated with an explanation as to why
they may need to make changes or do something. Effective communication needs clarity, so make sure when sending out information it is thorough and will be interpreted the way intended. Remember, this study shows faculty operate under a different framework than do administrators, so clarity of expectations and explanations are extremely important for effective communication.

Another important recommendation I have for administrators is to make careful decisions when it comes to hiring. All institutions need a structure in which each person appointed to a position carries out their job responsibilities the best way possible. As a leader and boss, it is your responsibility to make sure the job responsibilities are not only clearly communicated, but also overseen correctly. In reading the LA GRAD Act reports, it was apparent different people wrote the reports as well as different authors assigned in each report. There was a lack of consistency within each report that made it difficult to pinpoint certain information and read the report easily. It did not seem that the documents were proofed by someone other than the writers themselves, and even seemed as if information was copied and pasted from the original providers. Also, information in the report did not line up with the interviews. With as large as these reports there should be multiple writers; however, it is important for the same group to write the report each academic year and to have a template to follow, making adjustments as necessary. In other words, give the responsibility to one group and have another person or group go through it suggesting necessary changes.

It is important to hire employees who will do their jobs efficiently and effectively with the consumers (students) and other workers (faculty, staff, etc.) in mind. At this institution faculty do not feel administration has their best interests at heart. They are under the impression administration does not understand their job, but mandates them to do things in their classrooms that may not be the best for their students or their teaching styles. It is important for
administrators to have an understanding of what their employees do daily. With this in mind, I suggest more evaluation of faculty in their classrooms and more discussion of what strategies faculty have used to be successful in their developmental classrooms. Literature says faculty who teach developmental courses have a difficult time with academic and social barriers (Cohen & Brawer, 2008), so it is important to listen to the struggles faculty have and support the faculty in their job responsibilities. Additionally, I suggest filling the vacant administrative positions as soon as possible because leadership is very important to the overall institution. Without leadership, faculty do not have points of contact and someone to represent them in their respective positions.

It was mentioned by a few of the longer reigning faculty developmental education was centralized as its own department at one point, but eventually it was decided to be mainstreamed throughout each respective department. As literature points out, faculty prefer developmental education to be centralized to one department (Perrin & Charron, 2006); however, centralization has its negatives as well, specifically dealing with communication of expectations between the developmental and other academic departments (Perrin, 2005). I am not convinced centralization is best for this particular institution due to the existing communication problems; however, it is important that faculty are provided with help when it comes to teaching developmental courses. Therefore, I would recommend administration to provide professional development opportunities to faculty specifically designed for developmental educators. Kozeracki (2005) suggests graduate programs offer specific courses pertaining directly to developmental education as to prepare faculty who may have to deal with developmental students. This is a fantastic idea for those starting their graduate programs who are interested in teaching at the community college; however, many full-time faculty are not planning to go back
to school as they have completed the paid education necessary to complete their jobs. It is also known that higher education is a field that is ever changing and to keep up with the changing student populations and working strategies it is necessary to be engaged in professional development opportunities. The institution in the particular study, as in many other community colleges throughout America, requires full-time faculty attend a certain amount of professional development activities. Instructors want to attend professional developments that will enhance their abilities in the classroom not just because they have to attend a certain amount. Administration needs to bring in those who are experts in developmental education and have them work with developmental faculty, especially new developmental faculty, to provide information about the developmental student population as well as provide advice on how to deal effectively with these students. Administration must remember that just providing the access is not enough, but continued support must take place if changes toward this population are to persist (Casazza, 1999).

One major finding in this study was that faculty were disappointed in the number of developmental students in their classrooms. On average, the developmental classroom has between 20 and 30 students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008); however, the faculty at this institution claim their developmental classrooms have an excess of 40 students in some cases. They claim administration has told them they need to fill up classrooms with as many students as the classrooms will hold to accommodate the increasing number of developmental students coming into the institution; however the LA GRAD Act reports only claim there has been an increase in the number of section offerings. My suggestion would be for those in charge of room assignment to place developmental course sections in classrooms that will hold no more than 30 students as to limit the number of developmental students in one classroom. I believe this would
relieve some of the tension between faculty and administration as well as help these students become more successful in their developmental courses.

My last recommendation for administration is to be open and honest with faculty with a caring and concerning spirit. As this point, developmental faculty do not feel respected in their jobs, their workload continues to increase without compensation, and they are not convinced administration really understands their wants and needs. As mentioned earlier faculty want and need a voice with regards to the institution. There has to be a feeling of trust and sometimes faculty feel like things are said, but not carried out. During regularly scheduled meetings tell the faculty of goals and plans to meet those goals. Let the faculty share their thoughts and ideas and take them into consideration. Do not hold a meeting with the intention of only listening to ideas, but fully engage and critically think through what may or may not work for the institution. Faculty have experience working directly with the students (the consumers) and they do have wonderful ideas, and if implemented correctly could potentially help the institution overall. However, it is not just about administration taking more responsibility, but faculty must make certain changes as well. The next section will focus on the recommendations for faculty, specifically developmental faculty.

Faculty

Administration is not the only unit needing to make changes within this particular institution. Faculty play a major role in higher education as they are one of the direct contacts for students. They should want to advocate for their students consistently to provide them with the best educational experience possible. My first recommendation to faculty is to attend and become a voice in faculty senate meetings. Administration has an active role in the political sector and faculty senate is one way faculty can become familiar with political processes and
obtain information about what is going on within and outside the institution. It is a place where faculty can freely express opinions and hear from those who have a stake within the institution. It is at these meetings where discussions pertaining to state policy can erupt and conversations can start pertaining to what is working and what is not working according to faculty perspective. Faculty can receive information firsthand and feel they have a voice in certain matters. It is impossible for faculty to get everything they want, but at least these meetings, if run correctly, can provide faculty with a sense of involvement.

Additionally, I would highly recommend faculty attend the LCTCS annual conference. It is at this conference that the president of LCTCS, administrations, faculty, and vendors provide faculty with information pertaining to important topics facing Louisiana community and technical colleges. As someone who has attended this conference several times in the past, I have had the opportunity to listen to different perspectives and obtain an overall picture of what is important to different populations and why they are advocating for different agendas. It is not enough to attend the conference, faculty must want to become more knowledgeable, really listen to the speakers, ask questions when necessary, and provide the speaker with constructive feedback on the topic of interest. They also must be willing to share the information gathered to their respective departments and divisions to start a conversation and hopefully ignite necessary changes within the institution.

Not only should faculty attend important meetings, but they should also make it a priority to further what they know by researching and attending professional developments pertaining to their interests. Administration can provide opportunities, but faculty must attend and make the most out of the opportunities. Free professional developmental activities are available to faculty within and outside the institution. Faculty must research, find, attend, and make the most out of
the activities that pertain to their interests. It would be beneficial to tell those in charge of setting up professional development activities what faculty feel they specifically need. Additionally express interest in hosting professional development activities to provide faculty with your personal experiences and strategies that have worked for you in your classrooms. The faculty interviewed throughout this study had so many different strategies that they could share to other faculty in the form of professional development. After attending these activities, use trial-and-error to find out which strategies are most compatible with your teaching style and student population. Do not be afraid of failure as that is how people learn. Faculty must be willing to take the responsibility of making necessary classroom changes with a positive attitude to make a difference, especially when dealing with developmental students.

One recommendation from many of the faculty interviewed in this study was for full-time faculty to take responsibility for teaching developmental courses. According to literature, full-time faculty do not want to teach developmental courses for different reasons and thus the load falls to part-time faculty with lower retention and completion rates (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Hughes & Scott Clayton, 2011). As community college instructors, with such a large developmental student population, it is apparent that full-time instructors teach these courses. Developmental students need to know faculty are invested in them and not just students in college-level courses. According to one interview participant, faculty who do not really want to teach underprepared students often leave the institution; however, the institution needs full-time faculty who are willing and able to teach developmental students.

It is not just about filling the need, but practicing good strategies in the developmental education classroom. One such strategy, offered multiple times by the study participants, was having patience with developmental students. These students are often slower learners, struggle
with different academic and social barriers, and are in need of motivation, advice, and structure (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005; Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006; Nichols & Quaye, 2009; Oudenhoven, 2002). They are in need of an instructor who is willing to listen, guide, and encourage them through their academic careers. Although patience is difficult when dealing with a population who should know certain material, everyone is developmental in some capacity. Faculty need to remember that at some point they needed someone to practice the art of patience with them personally. My recommendation for those teaching developmental students is to reevaluate their teaching strategies each semester. Continue to use what worked and tweak the things that were unsuccessful. Additionally, at the beginning of each semester assess the academic and social dynamics of each developmental class and use what they need rather than what you think they need, as these things can be polar opposites. The process of assessment will need to continue throughout the semester as dynamics may change. Ask students for their expectations of you to have them critically think what they would like to get out of the course because many of them will surprise you when it comes to what they expect. Keep realistic expectations with ongoing challenges to keep the classroom interesting. Faculty need to know that teaching developmental students can often be challenging, but if strategies are incorporated correctly the experience is rewarding.

One last recommendation for developmental faculty is to use faculty resources available such as the teaching and learning center and those who are experts in obtaining resources such as professional grant writers. The teaching and learning center at this specific institution offers professional development opportunities and is consistently seeking feedback on the needs of faculty. One study participant attended a few activities held by the teaching and learning center and uses ideas from the presenters. It can be difficult to express concerns to administration, so
the teaching and learning center can act as a safe place to ask for needed resources. When funding is limited faculty need to make use of what is available. Additionally, there are many grants available for application when it comes to the developmental classroom. Although grants can be difficult to apply for and obtain due to constant competition, the institution’s grant coordinator can point faculty in the right direction and help them put together the necessary paperwork. When you are not sure about something ask for help. Community college faculty are supposed to be experts at teaching, but it is important to ask for help from other experts in order to effectively carry out teaching responsibilities. Faculty and administration are not the only units necessary to carry out the institutional mission, support staff are also important and need recommendations to effectively carry out their daily responsibilities.

**Staff**

One of the main units associated with support staff is advising. Although many of the faculty members discussed having the responsibility of advising particular students, the advising department is partially responsible for getting students started in their academic careers at the college. One of their main jobs is to meet with first-time freshman to discuss placement being that the community college has an open admission policy. Although the institution has an open enrollment policy, every student must take a placement test for mathematics and English unless they have appropriate ACT, SAT, or AP scores which are also used for placement. Throughout the study, faculty were concerned about students being placed incorrectly in their mathematics and English courses. A few study participants suggested that advisors highly recommend students enroll in the course in which they first placed instead of telling them to retake the placement exam if the student was not happy about where they were originally placed. Although standardized tests are faulty, and students do not want to take developmental courses, they need
to realize by placing into a developmental course they will obtain the necessary preparation to do well in their college-level courses (Duranczyk & Higbee, 2006). Advisors need to motivate students to take the courses in which they place and not skip a course because they feel they are ready. To my understanding the institution has a system in place that should not allow students to take a course in which they do not have the placement scores or prerequisites for; however, faculty in the study are not convinced. Therefore, I also recommend that the system be checked periodically to make sure students are being placed and enrolled correctly and to communicate with administration the challenges behind bad placement.

Another recommendation I have for staff is to be in constant contact with secondary education institutions in the surrounding community to provide opportunities for students to complete developmental coursework early, and if necessary, provide resources to students planning to attend the community college, to figure out how to help students become successful throughout their educational experiences. Many programs are available, as discussed in the LA GRAD Act annual reviews, to help with student preparation, retention, and completion. These programs include Upward Bound, boot camps, and other preparatory agents. It is important for the staff to make an effort to help students as much as possible to do their best. Students need to know they are supported in their educational and social lives, which is where staff can make a difference.

The only other recommendation I have for all support staff is to be the support system necessary for both the faculty and student populations. Many faculty interviewed did not feel they truly understood the roles of support staff or felt that certain departments were not meeting their expectations with what they did understand. In browsing through the institutions website, I did notice some issues with information that was not updated according to what I noticed on the
campus, which could cause major issues for faculty, staff, administration, and students. The information should be updated as necessary to ensure a good experience for all. If changes are made with regards to location of services, services provided, or contact information, an immediate announcement should be released to ensure information is distributed to all campus members. Additionally, let faculty know what you need and what you offer so they can direct students appropriately. This will clear up unnecessary confusion and help faculty and students have a better overall experience.

Summary

Each individual entity is responsible for their specific areas of expertise and thus have responsibilities which are different from every other entity. The majority of recommendations are specific to each unit; however, I have one recommendation for all units, which is to practice the art of reframing as defined by Bolman and Deal (2013). As each individual has different experiences and brings uniqueness to their respective units, each person must look at situations from different perspectives to provide the best overall experience for themselves, their respective unit, and the institution as a whole. As the data in this study continually showed the lack of communication between each unit and a lack of understanding why each unit made certain decisions, it only makes sense that individuals must be able to look at things through multiple lenses to really acquire a complete picture. I truly believe by viewing decisions through multiple lenses and making the best decision for all units, the atmosphere and communication will eventually become better for everyone.

Recommendations for Future Research

Now that recommendations have been laid out for practitioners according each unit, it is important to lay out the recommendations for future research. As community colleges continue
to grow and receive national attention, it is important to continue to conduct research with regards to these specific institutions. It is important to focus on the community college as many job opportunities only require a two-year degree (Breneman, 2012). Although literature continues to increase with respect to community colleges, more research is necessary concerning administration, faculty, staff, and students within the community college. Developmental education continues to increase causing a need for research on why and how to reverse this ever-increasing trend. Community colleges are the sole provider of developmental education in certain states and are mostly open-access institutions, so it is important to figure out how to help provide necessary funding and how to help students become successful in their developmental and college-level coursework.

Although this study provides researchers and readers with an adequate amount of information, it did not seem to fully answer questions with regards to retention and completion. Retention and completion continue to be buzz words in all of higher education and thus more research is needed to fully understand these major concepts. The LA GRAD Act puts the majority of its focus on student success looking at retention and completion rates within each specific institution; however, faculty did not seem to believe the LA GRAD Act had much of an influence on retention and completion and I was not able to really get a full picture as to why. More research regarding retention and completion through a faculty perspective is recommended and necessary to increase these rates. Additionally, I would suggest obtaining a community college student perspective on student success. Louisiana state legislation and higher education administration put high regards on student success through retention and completion; however, if students see success differently, this may cause discrepancy and failure within specific institutions regarding student success.
Another recommendation for future research is to look at how the LA GRAD Act has affected all community colleges in the LCTC system by using a comparative analysis approach. It would be nice to determine which institution within the LCTC system has had the most success and least success in carrying out the standards as laid out by the LA GRAD Act and conducting research comparing those specific institutions. Additionally, because the last year of the agreement is approaching for the 2015-2016 academic year, I would suggest researching the impact of the LA GRAD Act throughout its tenure overall. Although this study looked at the first four of six years, which is the majority of the time, the last two years can provide more insight into the success or failure of performance-based funding as well. Once again, this study focused solely on one objective: student success, so it would be beneficial to research the other three objectives as well.

Clearly, this study points out that faculty at this specific institution are not well educated or concerned with state mandates; however, more research should be conducted with different faculty populations to see if this is the case in other types of institutions, areas, and states. Additionally, it would be a good idea to research faculty perceptions with regards to other types of state and federal mandates. Faculty perceptions are important, but often overlooked in research, therefore more research should be conducted specifically regarding faculty perceptions in relation to student populations, administrative roles, and state legislation. Faculty perceptions provide institutions a means of gaining insight and understanding in a different way and help the institution to become better overall. Without the faculty, the institution would fall apart because they play an important role in student’s lives (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005) and without students, there would be no community college.
My last recommendation for future research is to specifically gear research questions toward part-time faculty, specifically in Louisiana. Institutions are continuing to hire more part-time faculty due to budget constraints. In fact, more than half of the faculty at many institutions in Louisiana only work part-time (Guidry, 2015). Although this study resulted in no interest from current part-time faculty, if qualitative research is conducted specifically with this population in mind, there is likely to be more response. Additionally, more quantitative research is needed with regards to part-time faculty.

Overall, this study was conducted with the mindset of starting a conversation. Clearly more research with regards to community colleges, state mandates, developmental education, and faculty, specifically in Louisiana, are necessary to gain a better, overall picture for higher education in the state. As resources continue to diminish and funding deteriorates, all involved in higher education need to not only be aware of the arising issues, but need to be involved in solving any problems. It is up to everyone to work together and use the process of reframing to really understand the overall picture and make necessary changes to create a better collegiate environment for all.

Personal Reflections

Upon first deciding what I wanted to research for my dissertation, developmental education came to mind. I have a passion for students who struggle because we all struggle with something. I spent a great amount of time reading through literature on developmental students and spent the majority of my time throughout my doctoral program writing and presenting on developmental education, specifically students. I noticed literature seemed to focus on the developmental student population, but did not focus much on the ones who teach and mentor them throughout their developmental sequence, namely the faculty. As a faculty member who
has taught developmental mathematics courses at both the university and community college levels, I was very interested in how other faculty perceived the developmental classroom. As a current community college faculty member, I began to research information specifically targeting developmental educators in the community college. I noticed there was not much written with regards to the community college, especially faculty. I also spent time researching community college administration, both junior and senior level, in which there was a moderate amount.

It was not until I was sitting at a department meeting and my dean started to discuss retention and completion and mentioned the phrase “LA GRAD Act” that I became interested in state mandates. The acronym was never explained to the department, but I was determined to learn more about this LA GRAD Act. Then, as I was taking a class on organizational leadership and was introduced to Bolman and Deal’s (2013) idea of reframing, I started to make connections. I always had the idea that I would do a quantitative study because of my mathematics background and the need to find something that worked for the majority; however, my questions had different plans. I would continually reach out to professors in my department and ask questions with regards to research methodology. It finally stuck out that I would be conducting a qualitative study.

At first the process was daunting as I was not used to writing letters to potential participants, drafting interview questions, or conducting face-to-face interviews. It was especially difficult for me to code data and locate themes throughout the data collection process. I also had to consistently remember to eliminate as much bias as possible, since I was conducting research on something I was so passionate about and had personal investment with the choice of institution for the case study. With all of this said, I would memo after each interview, reflecting
on what each individual relayed. I also kept constant contact with my advisor in which she let me talk freely. Both of these things kept me grounded and centered during the collection and data analysis processes. I was under the impression writing would be the most difficult task; however, once I knew exactly what I needed to convey to the audience, everything came out easily.

Overall, this process has been challenging and rewarding, but as with anything, looking back, I would have made some changes. One change I would have made is choice of institution. Although my institutional choice was convenient, I realized my personal investment and relationships within the institution may have limited the results. I did interview people I did not know well, but being part of the mathematics department of the institution, many of the participants were personal friends who wanted to help me. I did make sure to include information that was only relayed through the interview process, but it was difficult at times and I had to really think about what to write. Conducting this study at a different institution would have taken off this particular stress; however, I am sure other stresses would have popped up.

Although I did run a pilot interview session, it was not until later throughout the interview process that I discovered there were not enough questions to thoroughly answer research question three. I wish I had realized this sooner as to add questions specifically relating to this particular question, but it does give others the chance to research more about this particular topic. I have realized I need to pay more attention to detail when writing interview questions. Upon this realization, I made sure to pay more attention to participant responses and to read through responses more thoroughly. I actually began to memo more frequently and in more detail as well.
The only other change I would have made in hopes for a more thorough outcome deals with obtaining institutional data. Although I emailed the institution’s Institutional Research Office and met with the personnel, I was not able to obtain accurate data requested. I am not sure if this was due to a miscommunication on my part, but it was not until the end of the study I realized I could have found this data myself through the faculty intranet. However, the mistake led to other written miscommunications, furthering the results of this research. Next time, I will make sure to ask about all resources available before starting the study.

Throughout this process, I have learned much more than I ever could imagine. I feel more confident in conducting qualitative research and learned more about my personal strengths and weaknesses. Although it was not perfect (no research ever is), I was able to gain insight into faculty perceptions different than my own, gain an understanding of what it really means to practice the art of reframing, and to appreciate federal and state mandates for what they have accomplished over the past few centuries. My personal biases did try to creep into the study, but I did my best to keep them from taking over. I am excited to see what new research comes about from this study and hope discussion will arise with regards to faculty perceptions.
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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Greetings [Insert Faculty Name]!

My name is Patricia Kuhlman Van Brunt and I am a doctoral student at Louisiana State University. I am conducting a research study on the effects of state mandates on remedial education. The study seeks to learn about how the LA GRAD Act has affected developmental education faculty in the community college.

I am contacting you because you have taught at least one developmental course from 2008-present. I thought you might be interested and able to participate in the study. Participation includes attending a 60-minute individual interview.

All individual interviews will be held in the institution’s library for your convenience. Please know participation is voluntary and should you participate, all information shared will remain anonymous. Also, your decision to participate or to not participate in the study will not affect your relationship with anyone at the institution.

Attached is approval from Louisiana State University's Institutional Research Board to conduct this study. Furthermore, the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at the study site, is interested in the findings of this study and has provided me with her approval as well.

This research interests me because I have taught developmental education courses before and after the LA GRAD Act was enacted. I believe it is important for educational researchers and practitioners to better understand the experiences of developmental education faculty. If you are interested in participating, please contact me via e-mail at vanbruntp@mybrcc.edu. Please forward to any colleagues who you think are eligible and may be interested. Thank you for your time and I look forward to meeting with you!

Sincere thanks,
Patricia Kuhlman Van Brunt, M.S.
Doctoral Student
Louisiana State University
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Script:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study! As mentioned in previous communication, the individual interview provides the opportunity for me to obtain insight on your faculty perceptions and experiences of developmental education since the enactment of the LA GRAD Act.

As a reminder, this interview is completely voluntary. If, at any point, you wish to not answer a question, simply say, “I prefer not to answer.” If you wish to not participate or wish to conclude the interview at any point and want to be removed from the study, simply let me know and all documentation will be destroyed and any dialogue you have provided thus far, will not be used in the study.

Do you have any questions?

Ok, let’s begin.

[Turn on digital audio recorder. Ask the following questions in semi-structured format; allowing for follow-up questions as needed.]

1. Tell me about yourself. What is your job title and how long have you held that position?

2. Do you have any previous experience in higher education, developmental education, or teaching?

3. Do you teach only developmental education courses? Have you ever taught a college-level course?

4. Do you know what the Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomies for Diplomas Act is? It is also known more commonly as the LA GRAD ACT.

5. Describe the LA GRAD Act as you understand it.

6. How does the LA GRAD Act impact the teaching strategies of faculty members in developmental education at your institution, if at all?

7. How do institutional retention efforts, mandated as a result of the LA GRAD Act, impact community college developmental education faculty members?

8. What strategies have you used in your developmental education classes? How have these strategies impacted your students? You? Administration?

9. Have you changed any strategies in your developmental classroom throughout your tenure as a developmental educator? If so, could you elaborate?

10. Do you have different strategies for teaching developmental courses versus teaching college-level courses?
11. What are your opinions on four-year institutions offering developmental education courses? What about community colleges?

12. What is the most important characteristic of a developmental classroom? Least important?

13. What advice would you give to other faculty, staff, and/or administrators about the developmental classroom?

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in the study and share your perceptions with me! I hope this was a good experience for you and allowed you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences.
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST

TO:      Danielle Alsandor
         ELRC

FROM:    Dennis Landin
         Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE:    November 20, 2014

RE:      IRB# 3572

TITLE:   LA GRAD Act's Effects on Developmental Faculty: A Case Study


Review type:  Full  X Expedited  Review date:  11/18/2014
Risk Factor:  Minimal  X Uncertain  Greater Than Minimal

Approved  X Disapproved

Approval Date:  11/19/2014  Approval Expiration Date:  11/18/2015

Re-review frequency:  (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved:  30

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):  

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal:  (if applicable)  

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irm
VITA

Patricia Kuhlman Van Brunt is originally from McDonough, Georgia. She moved to Louisiana to pursue higher education as well as twirl for the Spirit of Northwestern Demon Marching Band. Her goals and dreams led her to obtain a Bachelor’s of Science degree from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana and a Master’s of Science degree from The University of Louisiana at Lafayette in Lafayette, Louisiana, both with concentrations in pure mathematics. She has presented at conferences on mathematical concepts and developmental education. Currently, Patricia is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at a southern Louisiana community college where she has resided for six years. She is pursuing a degree in higher education administration to better understand historical and current events surrounding higher education as well as learn how to help with future endeavors. Her goal is to eventually obtain a vice chancellor position at the community college level. In her spare time, Patricia likes to spend time with her wonderful husband, Jason, visit family and friends, and help her church spread the word of Christ to others in the community. She also likes to play with her two energetic dogs, Comet and Pixie. Her hobbies include service to her community, exercising, and attending painting workshops. Additionally, Patricia and Jason are patiently awaiting the arrival of their first child.