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FACULTY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE: A CASE STUDY IN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Kelly Ferris Lester

A Doctoral Project Submitted to,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI) at the University of Southern Mississippi aims to support cross-campus community for faculty interested in leadership within the program, discipline, or institutional level. A formative assessment of the FLI program evaluated the efficacy of the program, the impact for faculty fellows, and the relationship to institutional priorities. The formative assessment of the program incorporated a combined utilization and logic model to evaluate the data through the participatory lens of the facilitator and the inputs and outputs of the program. A document review, focus group, and semi-structured interviews encompassed the data collected. The analytic process involved coding themes with a peer-member check for validity and reliability. The findings and implications of the study provide a roadmap for leadership development in other institutions.

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I acknowledge the Center for Faculty Development team for their continued support in the facilitation of its signature programs, including the Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI). The collaboration with former associate director Dr. Cindy Blackwell supported the foundation of content in the FLI program. Similarly, associate director Dr. Hugh Broome reviewed data and analysis to provide a peer-member check of the research findings.

I acknowledge the mentorship of Dr. Amy Chasteen throughout the development of the Faculty Leadership Institute and the guidance of Dr. Jason Wallace as a faculty advisor to this capstone project.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work to Charles Lester. His patience, support, and love provide space for me to invest in my goals.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CFD</i>	Center for Faculty Development
<i>CTL</i>	Centers for Teaching and Learning
<i>FLI</i>	Faculty Leadership Institute
<i>USM</i>	The University of Southern Mississippi

CHAPTER I – THE FACULTY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Leadership development exists in many formats from organization specific programs to large group trainings to leadership-theory specific trainings. In higher education, institutes approach leadership development in various ways, and typically through a focus on institutional goals. The complexity of higher education’s horizontal and vertical structures includes opportunities and amplification of both informal and formal leadership. As Ruben et al. (2017) stated, “In practice, the dichotomy between formal and informal leaderships is typically more a matter of degree than a rigid dichotomy” (p. 149). Within this realm, leadership development in higher education institute applies to faculty and staff at all ranks and years of experience. This research study focused on the Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI), which commenced in 2019 at The University of Southern Mississippi to support the development of faculty in both informal and formal leadership within the faculty members’ disciplines, professional organizations, and the institution.

Statement of the Problem

Daily, faculty emerges as natural leaders. Of emphasis, faculty members lead their classrooms, and they impact students, our future leaders, each semester. Brené Brown (2018) articulated “We are guardians of a space that allows students to breathe and be curious and explore the world and be who they are without suffocation” (p.13). This statement reads with a sense of Brown’s biased view however, it is grounded in her philosophy of leadership and approaches to vulnerability, shame, and courage. The poignant element draws focus to faculty as leaders in the classroom, and yet, graduate programs and credentialing of faculty members often excludes leadership and pedagogical development. Instead, a focus on the disciplinary content, research methods, and writing takes precedence as “the presumption that subject -matter

expertise and experience were the primary ingredients necessary to provide effective leadership within colleges and universities” (Ruben et al., 2017, p. 343).

Beyond the classroom, many institutes of higher education honor the guiding principle of shared governance, or the input for decision making from stakeholders and constituents of various units of an institution (Kennedy, 1997). Faculty and staff serve on unit, college, and university level committees to guide curriculum development and policy implementation (Kennedy, 1997; Ruben et al. 2017). Faculty senates, curriculum committees, space, and facilities committees, planning and budget committees, athletic committees, foundations, and campus wide forums showcase a few examples of faculty involvement in campus decision making (Mealer, 2017). Faculty members impact institutional priorities and decision making through their service to these internal committees and draw as much influence as administrators on campus culture through informal and formal leadership roles.

Faculty are experts in their disciplines, and through research and publications their work represents the institution for which they are employed. Research contributes to specific fields and can contribute to society holistically. In our current landscape, many researchers and institutions contributed to action plans for the Covid-19 global pandemic through vaccine development, personal protective equipment design, social and mental implications of the virus, and more. Within this realm, faculty speaks on behalf of their discipline, research, and the institution. Ruben et al. (2017) posited the paradox of embedded leadership skills of research and the void of leadership development among typical graduate work focused on general studies and preparation for the work in the discipline. Ruben et al. (2017) further asserted “.... a narrow band of knowledge and expertise is no longer sufficient in preparing today’s leaders for the expansive array of challenges and opportunities that confront colleges and universities” (p.11-12).

Leadership development at an institution of higher education can impact faculty members' full contribution to the institution by "encouraging administrators to reflect not merely on their own values, but on the relationship of the institutional values (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 169). Approaches to leadership development vary in formats and timelines to meet different goals and to entice buy-in from participants. In reviewing multiple programs among higher education, leadership development program formats varied from two-day programs to five-day programs to six-nine-month programs (Sidle, 2019). These formats offer different foci, different levels of engagement, and different qualifications to participate.

Leaders of higher education balance many responsibilities and stakeholders. Ruben et al. (2018) explained "...an increasing emphasis has been placed on the choices leaders are able to make, and the importance of the situation, timing, goals, followers, and the interactions between and among these factors in explaining the success or failure of a particular leader" (p. 108). A robust leadership development program has the potential to lead to mentorship of student leaders within the classroom, to impactful contributions to the institution through shared governance, and to substantial influence on disciplines and society. Even more compulsory is the empowerment that faculty members can experience through an investment of self-reflection and leadership theories.

Faculty members' career trajectories may not include an aspiration to leadership with service and shared governance opportunities "regarded as burdensome, taking time away from other pursuits, and undervalued by the institution" (Ruben et al., 2017, p.13). The lack of aspiration and self-development in the realm of leadership can lead to a lack of skillset needed for higher education administrators and leaders. As the underprepared faculty members veer into leadership roles, a faculty member can quickly become overwhelmed with detailed processes for

paperwork, an increased workload, the complex transition to a leader of peers, conflict resolution, and the weight of daily decision making. Many routes unfold from the transition to leadership and cause a major shift in the unit's culture. Faculty leaders' awareness of the landscape of higher education paired with a defined leadership philosophy, interpersonal communication skills, and advocacy for the unit's mission and values will guide a successful path in leadership (Ruben et.al, 2017). A well-designed leadership development program for faculty allows time for faculty members to reflect on personal strengths and attend to the gaps in skillsets, such as conflict management, change management, building shared visions, decision-making practices, resources management, and more (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). If a higher education institute aims to build sustainability through its faculty and staff community and external stakeholders, the institution's inclusion of leadership development serves as an essential component to this aim.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficacy of the FLI program at USM for multiple stakeholders of the institution, including faculty, mid-level administrators, upper-level administration, faculty governance bodies, and ultimately, the students and their experiences at the university. This case study functioned as a formative assessment of the first three years of the FLI housed in the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) at USM. Guiding elements of this study included the assessment of the leadership development program's design, the approaches to recruitment of faculty, and succession planning within an institution.

The guiding research questions were:

1. How does the program design of the FLI impact the efficacy of the program?
2. What factors influence the participation of faculty in the FLI program?

3. In what ways does the FLI program prepare faculty for leadership roles within the institution?

Definition of Key Terms

I positioned this study as leadership development programming in the higher education. To delineate the scope and aims of this study, I defined the working definitions of disciplines, units, faculty, informal leadership roles, formal leadership roles, and leadership development.

Disciplines referred to the branch of knowledge that faculty members studied on a graduate level, and thus teach and research in this area. The term unit encompassed the component of the institution's infrastructure that the faculty member has a primary appointment. This has some variation depending on individual institution's infrastructure and encompasses the terms program, department, school, centers, and in some instances, college.

The label faculty within this study pertained to the core of instruction at the USM. With the designation as full-time equivalent by the institution, faculty serve in various ranks within the institution, including lecturer, assistant, associate and full teaching professors, assistant, associate and full professors, clinical professors, and professors of practice (USM Faculty Handbook, 2020). Participation in the FLI program excluded adjuncts, graduate students, and teaching assistants.

I defined informal leadership as roles that faculty commit to within service and governing bodies in the institution. Ruben et al. (2018) expanded this definition as "These good citizens of the academy lead by example. Another class of informal leaders include those who wield influence behind the scenes or in assigned committee work" (p. 147). Like many institutions, faculty members' responsibilities include teaching, research, and service. Informal leadership

exists in faculty meetings, committees, sub-committees, and even as an unnamed liaison to an administrator.

For this study, I delineated formal leadership as roles that included a formal title and administrative duties as an assigned job duty. These included, but are not limited to, program coordinators, school directors, college associate deans and deans, associate provosts, vice presidents, and provosts. Additionally, formal leadership roles comprised service roles for regional and national organizations. These roles could include serving on organization board of directors, serving in an officer role for an organization, chairing a task force within the discipline, serving on an editorial board for a journal, serving as an adjudicator for a regional or national competition among others.

Leadership development in the context of this study encompassed specific programming to teach leadership skills, to examine different scenarios of leadership, and to prepare participants for leadership roles. Leadership development programming may include different lengths of time commitment from a couple hours to long-term programming of more than a year. While leadership development can happen on an individual level, this study focused on cohort model of leadership development programming. Lastly, positioned in the context of higher education, the investigation of leadership development emphasized programming within or for leaders in higher education.

Positionality

This study investigated the program design, facilitation, and benefits of the FLI at USM. As the director of the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) and the facilitator of the FLI, it is necessary to identify my own positionality and subjectivity with the study. Within this formative assessment and refinement of the CFD, my continuous analysis of my own strengths and

weaknesses as a leader became imperative to the evaluation of leadership development programming in higher education.

Honoring my subjectivity in the topic of leadership development, I acknowledge personal experiences in programming throughout my career in higher education and as a dance artist. I embarked on a journey of leadership development through both formal and informal programming during my professional career. In 2013-14, I participated in a college-level Faculty Leadership Institute at USM, offered for a two-year period within the College of Arts and Letters. My own transformation in this program led to continuous research and observation of leadership, and the experience shaped how I approached the design of the FLI in the CFD from 2019 to present. This experience also shaped my ongoing leadership roles outside of the university, including my role as president of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) (November 2020-2022).

In July 2018, I assumed the role as founding director of the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) with a charge to develop a leadership development program for faculty. The initiative, based in a call to action from faculty, drew my interest in applying for the director position, and my research into leadership development continued to ignite personal excitement. The FLI began in 2019 as an application-based program for faculty at any rank at USM. I served as the facilitator of the three-semester program with the original design resulting from a collaboration with then associate director of the CFD, Cindy Blackwell. The program included self-analysis of strengths and leadership skills, and my relationship to the participants centered on trust and open sharing of life and leadership experiences.

This formative assessment of the FLI program incorporated my own leadership philosophy and influences. As the program designer and facilitator of the FLI, I acknowledge the

inclusion of my leadership philosophy and ideals in discussions and content. To this end, the methodology included member checking of coding and theme identification from interviews and focus groups. I further acknowledge the purpose of the FLI as a platform for faculty fellows to investigate their own strengths and beliefs in leadership. I approached the facilitation as a guide to this journey. I recognized the relationship I have with the participants and personal aims to continually refine the program with my intention as a researcher to understand the landscape of leadership in higher education, succession planning, and development opportunities for faculty within institutions.

Implication and Application to Higher Education

The field of educational development is a relatively new component of higher education. The trajectory of educational development primarily focuses on teaching development and within the literature, campus units fall under the category of “Centers of Teaching and Learning (CTL’s).” While some CTL’s embed leadership development into programming, this is not consistent or perhaps even a priority across institutions in the United States. The intention of this study investigated the efficacy of leadership development at an institution. In addition, the study focused on the specific design and timeline offered in the FLI at USM.

The FLI’s model, based on research of models at other institutions, includes a three-semester commitment from faculty fellows selected through an application process. The cohort model prioritizes interdisciplinary community and sharing of experiences. The FLI’s design includes: 1) participant self-awareness and analysis, 2) discussions about the higher education landscape, 3) leadership theories, 4) communication skills, 5) conflict management strategies, 6) crisis management, 7) budget considerations, 8) gender and race inequities in leadership, and 9) topics of interest within each year’s cohort.

The possible implications of this study for higher education were two-fold. First, the study delved into the rationale and purpose for leadership development in higher education institutes. Second, the study offered a model for other institutions to adapt to meet their own needs. Through focus groups and interviews, this study incorporated a qualitative analysis of the programming and supported an approach for others to follow. The inclusion of quantitative data further established the growth and potential impact of the program. Lastly, the typically avoided discussions of succession planning can be ignited through leadership development programs within the institution. This study can open a line of communication for succession planning through the lens of leadership development and lend to the impact within shared governance and administrative roles.

Summary

Leadership development exists in multi-faceted models within organizations and as a stand-alone field. This study aimed to investigate if the purpose of the FLI program at USM met the faculty fellow and the institutional needs. The scope of this research study centered on one model of leadership development to assess the effectiveness and implications of leadership development in higher education.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership as a topic of study crosses over all industries. During the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, leadership styles, decisions, and approaches were both celebrated and criticized. Some leaders face criticism for moving too quickly in decision making, and others for moving too slowly. Some leaders elicit celebration for creating a community, while others receive accolades for demonstrating authority. Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones (2015) provided the reminder, “What’s required of leaders will inevitably be shaped by context and relationships. A primary skill must be to sense the different contexts: to understand the time and place and respond accordingly” (p. 204).

In higher education, leadership development is less prominent than it is in other fields (Sidle, 2019). This is not because higher education leaders are less accountable, but rather much focus in higher education and promotion rests on individual achievement (Ruben et al., 2017). As Ruben et al. (2017) stated, “Becoming a leader in higher education moves individuals from the technical or academic positions for which they were trained and into which they were socialized” (p. 86). In other words, many faculty members aim to excel in their discipline with aspirations for leadership falling lower on the prioritization list. This study investigated the efficacy of a specific leadership development program, the Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI), in providing faculty with the opportunity to grow in leadership skills and attributes. The following review of literature highlights discourse that describes the role of faculty in academia, introduces applicable leadership theories and frameworks, and addresses leadership development program design in higher education. The literature supported the overall FLI program design and formative assessment.

Faculty Roles and Leadership Opportunities in Higher Education

Faculty attends to many essential responsibilities within an institution ranging from program oversight to research initiatives to institutional functionality. Expressly, faculty members balance teaching, research, and service duties to meet the needs of institutions and to serve as responsible contributors of the shared governance models in higher education. In his exploration of faculty service, Donald Kennedy (1997) described the ways that service is meaningful and an expected part of faculty members' work at the university. The FLI design by the Center for Faculty Development's (CFD) director and associate director aimed to strengthen faculty members' leadership skills in a multi-faceted way. The FLI delved into topics of informal and formal leadership on campus and the relationship of these different roles to the institution. Kennedy's (1997) chapter "To Serve the University" supported the rationale within the FLI that faculty are essential leaders on campus, both in formal and informal capacities. Accordingly, leadership training supports the institution's forward trajectory through faculty informal roles as committee chairs, and eventually in succession planning within units.

An essential book on leadership in higher education is Kathleen Manning's (2018) book *Organization Theory in Higher Education* which organized leadership theories in alphabetical order. This intentional organization thwarted the prioritization of any one theory or model over another theory or model. Manning (2018) offered seven trends faced by higher education that inherently impact decision-making and organizational structure. Similarly, Ruben et al. (2017) in *A Guide for Leaders in Higher Education: Core Concepts, Competencies, and Tools* summarized "four cross-cutting themes" of the landscape of higher education that guide leaders and administrators (p. 17). The commonalities articulated include ever-changing technology, evolving roles of faculty members and higher education staff members, a decline in financial

resources for higher education, and “climate change” of student populations, enrollment, and retention patterns (Manning, 2018; Ruben et al., 2017). Both texts analyzed the necessity of alignment and flexibility within decision making models, leadership frameworks, and connection to the workforce in higher education. Manning (2018) approached the application of the leadership frameworks through the inclusion of case studies, providing readers with relevant instances in higher education in which a specific leadership lens. Correspondingly, the effectiveness of the case studies underscored the multitude of ways that faculty serve as leaders in higher education.

Ruben et al, (2017) approached application of leadership frameworks and decision making through the inclusion of rubrics and assessment tools for strategic planning and change management. The rubrics and decision-making tools provided a guide for leaders to analyze a situation, the players in the situation, the connection to institutional priorities, the communication strategies, and implementation of decisions (Ruben et al., 2017). Of emphasis, the chapter “Formal and Informal Leadership in Higher Education” highlighted the impact and collaboration among informal and formal leaders on campus and aligned with Manning’s case studies. Ruben et al. and Manning accentuated diverse cultures and subcultures within the fabric of institutions and the leaders’ responsibility in “predicting and detecting culture differences, demonstrating sensitivity to them, and finding creative ways to utilize and leverage the strengths of each perspective” (Ruben et al., 2017, p. 80; Manning, 2018). The stakeholders for institutions, including faculty, represent varied approaches to teaching, service, and research as these relate to the priorities of institutions. Higher education leadership necessitates an in-depth understanding of this complex fabric, and the preparation and development of leaders can guide the future of an institution.

Leadership Theories and Frameworks

The breadth of leadership theories and frameworks expanded as industries evolved and cultural needs of society unfolded through history. The design of a leadership development program entailed an in-depth understanding of leadership theories and frameworks. The next review of sources revealed the guiding leadership theories and frameworks that have significant relevance to higher education and the commonalities of valuing of self-awareness, employees, and priorities of the organization.

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal resonated throughout the literature and impacted the field of leadership, and their attention continued to evolve with relationship to leadership among different industries. Bolman and Deal (1991) in an early publication, *Leadership and Management Effectiveness: A Multi-Frame, Multi-Sector Analysis*, offered a theory of four frames of leadership: structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. The article described the frames and offered a viewpoint of how leaders shift from frame to frame. Data supported the assertions that leaders in different fields shift towards different guiding principles in leadership. Within the scope of higher education, the shift of leadership frames occurs as faculty members shift from leader of the classroom to leader of a unit, to leader of a college, and leader of an institution.

In a more recent publication *Reframing Organization: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, Bolman and Deal (2017) applied the multi-frame theory more broadly to contemporary companies and scenarios. The authors note “The demands on managers’ wisdom, imagination and agility have never been greater, and the impact of organizations on people’s well-being and happiness has never been more consequential” (2017, p. 7). This literature further elaborated on how leaders shift from frame to frame based on different contexts and scenarios. In relationship

to higher education, the horizontal and vertical structure leads to complex scenarios in which leaders may be engaging or managing conflict with peers of equal status, or in another context, keeping upper administration accountable through a faculty senate. Bolman and Deal (2017) acknowledged the many ways that organizations, or in this context institutions, are “complex, surprising, deceptive, and ambiguous” (p. 40).

Debunking the False Dichotomy of Leadership Idealism and Pragmatism: Critical Evaluation and Support of Newer Genre Leadership Theories (2014) by Hannah, Sumanth, Lester, and Cavarretta provided a contradicting review of leadership frameworks than Manning (2018) and Ruben et al. (2017). Hannah et al.’s (2014) study articulated how leadership theories evolved and expanded on ways the models were less than ideal for the current landscape. Hannah et al. (2014) posited the study’s intention “to place a critical scholar-practitioner eye on the newer genre theories, and more importantly, on the ways in which these theories have been employed by researchers. We surmise that these theories have made important contributions to both the literature and practice” (p. 599). Within the scope of the literature on leadership, a theme emerged of leaders maintaining an ability to shift frames, approaches, and communication styles to be successful in the multi-layered environment of higher education.

To broaden the leadership ideals and extend the theories past the specific environment of higher education, the next three researchers and sources brought a perspective to leadership from an alternate lens. Brené Brown, a prominent researcher in the field of leadership, shares her grounded theory of leadership in Ted Talks, Netflix specials, and two national podcasts. Brown, author of eleven books including *Dare to Lead* (2018), centers her research on shame, vulnerability, and connections to courage. Her theories support workshops with organizations and leaders to develop more open communication and efficient working processes. Brown

(2018) stated, “Building the grounded confidence to rumble with vulnerability and discomfort rather than armoring up, running away, shutting down, or tapping out, completely prepares you for living into your values, building trust, and learning to rise” (p. 166). The view offered by Brown supported approaches to conflict and change management within institutions that coalesced with Bolman’s and Deal’s frames of leadership. In essence, the combined frames of the structure and human resource create a setting for open communication and an opportunity to rumble with vulnerability.

Anthony Tjan’s (2018) *Good People: The Only Leadership Decision that Really Matters* similarly connected to Bolman and Deal’s human resource frame through an emphasis on relationship building that values truth, compassion, and wholeness. Tjan’s (2018) many examples of leaders in a various fields showcased how these values lead to success of an organization in any industry. Tjan labeled his guiding process as RISE: recognize, internalize, share, execute, which served as a framework for leaders and bridged the approaches of the other leadership theorists referenced in this study.

The recognize and internalize phases of RISE align with self-awareness of situations that guide approaches to decision making. Then, through the analysis of a situation and the share phase, the leader prioritizes communication of the decision with input from the stakeholders, combining both a human resource and political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2017). The execute phase requires more communication, assessment, and guidance from the leader, or the symbolic frame. Manning (2018) described one leadership approach, the institutional theory as one that is “created, shaped, and re-shaped through human action” (p. 115). Through the cultural model, Manning (2018) highlighted the ways that cultures and subcultures form complex structures in a higher education institute. The consideration of cultures guides the symbolic and political frames

from Bolman and Deal (2017) and aligns with Tjan's model of self-reflection, communication, and collaboratively built action plans to support organizational goals. Both Brown and Tjan included qualitative data from successful approaches and pitfalls within different organizations, thus allowing the application to higher education and the theories offered through higher education specific texts.

With a similar theme of authenticity, the research of Goffee and Jones (2015), an Emeritus Professor of Organisational Behavior at London Business School, and a Fellow of the Center for Management Development at London Business School, respectively further highlighted how self-awareness coalesces with effective leadership. The authors hypothesized, "You can describe it as authenticity involving consciousness (self-knowledge/awareness), coherence (self-consistency), and comfort (what could be called self-groundedness). But authenticity on its own is not enough" (p. 132). Goffee and Jones (2015), like the other leadership theorists, made a parallel to the importance of organizational culture and discussed how in order to ensure productivity, leaders must "conform enough" (p. 120). The conform enough strategy offers a way to build trust among the followers, which can enhance change management within the organization (Goffee & Jones, 2015).

While the theme of organizational culture resounds through the leadership literature, a gap exists in the identification of barriers and challenges in leadership roles for underrepresented populations, specifically, Black Americans. *Race Work and Leadership: New Perspectives on the Black Experience* (2019), edited by Roberts, Mayo, and Thomas is a compilation of essays that discussed historical and critical questions of Blacks' experiences in leadership, comparative studies, phenomenological studies, and theories of Black leadership and the future. Roberts et al. (2019) attended to the pathway, mentorship, and sustainability of leadership among Black,

Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Within higher education, BIPOC assume informal leadership roles, but roadblocks riddle the path to formal leadership roles, including a lack of BIPOC employee engagement on behalf of the leader (Roberts et al., 2019). Roberts et al. (2019) offered that a key engagement strategy for BIPOC in the workplace is for the leader to help the employees connect to a larger purpose of the organization (Roberts et al., 2019).

The connection to a shared purpose within organization structure appeared throughout the leadership literature. One of Brown's (2018) daring leadership principles is cultivating commitment and shared purpose which she asserted allows leaders to "hold themselves responsible for adding texture and meaning to work and tying smaller tasks to the larger purpose" (p. 100). By enacting the symbolic and political frame of Bolman and Deal, a leader can recognize the varied cultures and subcultures and provide scope for financial resources, needed collaboration, and/or a holistic view of the institution (Bolman & Deal, 2018). Ultimately, the coordination of the leadership skills and approaches offered through these various researchers prioritized authenticity, self-awareness, and accountability to multiple stakeholders. Leadership theories, frameworks, and models vary and often hold a context for specific industries. The resources selected for building knowledge and discussion of leadership showcased a broad view of the field, and yet application to higher education needs.

Leadership Development Program Design for Higher Education

In *Faculty Development in the Age of Evidence* (2016), authors Beach et al. described the trajectory of faculty development in higher education by identifying the ages of the scholar, the teacher, the developer, the learner, and the evidence. This recent publication in the field of faculty development provided both quantitative and qualitative evidence for the needs of educational development within the infrastructure of higher education institutions. Beach et al.

(2016) delved into guiding principles of faculty development centers, types of services provided, the strengths and weaknesses, and more. Of significant interest to this case study was the focus of assessment of faculty development programming. Beach et al. (2016) pointed out that “Typically, developers see themselves as coaches and resources to help instructors build their own skills as assessors, rather than putting themselves in the role of assessors of student learning” (p. 115). In the instance of faculty developers in higher education, the students are the faculty, and program assessment can further define the needs of the stakeholders and refinement of the programs.

The design of leadership development programs varies based on the intentions of the program (Sidle 2019). Sidle’s (2019) *Empowered: Leadership Development for Higher Education* presented variations of programs and essential experiences for leadership development programs. The organization of the book enabled the FLI facilitator to actively use the text throughout the program, and subsequently the formative assessment of the FLI. The sections included 1) discovering leadership, 2) personal mastery, 3) interpersonal mastery, 4) team mastery, and 5) system mastery and correlate with leadership literature. Sidle (2019) maintained an emphasis on a leader’s self-reflection first, and then the leader can investigate varied aspects of communication to guide followers. As the author unpacked the ideas of mastery, the book highlighted the why or awareness and defining purpose, and the how or compassion and awakening the heart, aligning the practices with the other guiding sources for a leadership development program (Sidle, 2019, p. 13). The exploration of guiding a shared vision threaded the importance of community within the leadership development program to the community that a leader builds within unit.

Wisniewski (2004) showcased a leadership development program at The University of Wisconsin-Extension called Extension Administrative Leadership Program (EALP) in the article *Leadership in Higher Education: Implications for Leadership Development Programs*. This article articulated the structure of the program through a leadership competence model that centered on seven principles: 1) development of core set of values and vision, 2) effective communication, 3) reflection and analysis, 4) creating a positive environment, 5) facilitation and collaboration, 6) problem-solving and risk taking, and 7) perseverance. Wisniewski (2004) described twelve sessions of the program with an overview of the activities that accompany each session and core value. The effectiveness of the leadership development program over several sessions strengthened the participants investment and commitment to the program (Wisniewski, 2004). Though Sidle (2019) suggested that variations in time could be effective in developing the leadership development program, Wisniewski emphasized how the time spent in the program resulted in increased ability to implement leadership frameworks and theories into practice. Both Sidle and Wisniewski correlated the community building in the cohort models to support the open dialogue and exploration of various viewpoints.

The groundwork of researchers Jeffrey Buller and collaborator Walter Gmelch further align the constructs of the FLI content and principles. Buller's (2013) *Positive Academic Leadership: How to Stop Putting Out Fires and Start Making a Difference* explored the frame of positive psychology, as developed by Seligman and Csíkszentmihályi in 2000, to construct a framework for positive leadership. The book reinforced the multi-dimensional role of faculty leaders, the need for leadership development, and explanation and implementation of skillsets. *Building Academic Leadership Capacity: A Guide to Best Practices* by Gmelch and Buller (2015) applied principles from positive leadership into concrete approaches to leadership

development programs. Gmelch and Buller (2015) assert “The transformation from successful faculty member—which involves one set of highly developed skills and attributes—to effective leaders—which involves an entirely different set of highly developed skills and attributes—cannot be accomplished by reading a book or attending a seminar” (p. 8). Beach et al. (2016) acknowledged the impact of faculty developers to institutional change, and a leadership development program could amplify the change at a holistic level.

Summary

The design of the FLI evolved over time by referencing experiences of the facilitators, the cohorts, and the interests and needs of different cohorts. Leadership theories and leadership development program design intertwined throughout review of literature and supported the evolution of the FLI over the assessment period. The intricacies of the leadership frameworks guided several aspects the FLI program design including understanding the faculty role in academia through multiple leadership theories and frameworks.

CHAPTER III – METHODS

The director of the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) designed, facilitated, and conducted the formative assessment of the Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI). The cohort model of the FLI centered on three principles: 1) developing self-awareness as a leader, 2) understanding the landscape of higher education, and 3) analyzing and applying skillsets of leadership into informal and formal leadership roles in academia. Through the lens of academic leadership, the design of the FLI prioritized three aspects as defined by Gmelch and Buller (2015):

- 1) Academic leadership builds a community of scholars.
- 2) Academic leadership sets the direction or either an entire institution or a unit of that institution.
- 3) Academic leadership empowers others. (pp. 42-43)

The methodology for the formative assessment of the FLI incorporated references to the above principles and intentions through a qualitative analysis and supporting quantitative demographic data. Experts in academic leadership development, Ruben et al. (2017) advised the inclusion of “the data from self-evaluations where leaders assess the knowledge or skills they believe they have gained from the program...” as an approach to assessing leadership development programs (p. 359). To allow for the inclusion of self-evaluations, the overall methodology incorporated a utilization-focused program evaluation to assess the efficacy of the FLI program.

Evaluation Rationale

The FLI evaluation’s purpose aimed to analyze the effectiveness of the FLI program for multiple stakeholders of the institution with emphasis on the cohort as a community of scholars

and connection to the institution's mission and vision. The formative assessment reviewed the current programming with the aim to improve the FLI program for future years and maintain alignment with the institution's strategic plan and "Academic Master Plan" (Office of the Provost, 2021). The evaluation considered the content covered, the sequence of content, program growth over the first three years of the program, and the stakeholder's perceptions of value of the program. The internal evaluation analyzed the efficacy of the FLI by conducting a focus group with FLI participants from all three cohorts followed by one-on-one semi-structured interviews with four FLI fellows. This data in conjunction with a quantitative analysis of application materials and a review of program alignment to the institution's mission and vision rounded out the comprehensive analysis.

The evaluation of the FLI program focused on leadership development within the context of higher education with further delineation to USM. The CFD at USM focuses on teaching development, research development, and leadership development as its three tiers of offerings. Beach et al. (2016) argued that faculty developers should maintain focus on needs of faculty and needs of institutional leaders to be well-placed to positively influence institutional quality, responsiveness, creativity, and excellence. This study, through the lens of the FLI evaluation, attended to the connectedness to the individual faculty member and the institutional values and aims.

Research Questions

The guiding research questions for this study were:

1. How does the program design of the FLI impact the efficacy of the program?
2. What factors influence the participation of faculty in the FLI program?

3. In what ways does the FLI program prepare faculty for leadership roles within the institution?

FLI Background

The FLI program commenced in January 2019, as part of the growth and strategic planning for the CFD at USM. When hired as the founding director of the CFD, the job description highlighted the establishment of the FLI as a significant component of the job description and drew me to apply for the position. I collaborated with the associate director to design the FLI, and she brought significant research experiences in leadership to the initial design of the FLI. The associate director facilitated approximately half of the FLI meetings for both year one and year two of the FLI, and she contributed to the overall content in those years. I served as the sole facilitator for the second half of year two and full year three. The overarching goal for the FLI included building a cross-disciplinary community that cares about leading and professional development. The sense of cross-disciplinary community is a hallmark of all programming in the CFD.

Program Structure

The FLI, a three-semester program, begins in the spring of each year. The spring semester includes a full-day retreat with the FLI Faculty Fellows, and then continues with bi-monthly meetings on leadership and administrative topics. The summer semester centers on shared reading on higher education administration and leadership with weekly discussion boards through Canvas, USM's online learning management system. The final semester, the fall, continues with bi-monthly meetings and delves deeper into leadership topics of interest of each cohort. The primary topics covered throughout the FLI are: 1) leadership theories, 2) strengths analysis, 3) conflict management, 4) communication skills, 5) collaborative leadership, 6)

strategic leadership, 7) advocacy, and 8) personal and professional goal setting (USM, Center for Faculty Development, 2021).

Application Process

The FLI is an application-based program for faculty members of all ranks at USM. As the CFD director, I solicit nominations from current FLI faculty fellows, school directors, and college deans. Nominated faculty receive a personalized email noting the nomination and offering information about the program. In addition, the CFD accepts self-nominations and advertises the call for applicants through campus-wide communication via email, the CFD website, and advertisement during other CFD workshops. The typical cohort size is 8-10 faculty members representing diverse disciplines and ranks within the university.

The application includes contact information, a three-page curriculum vitae, a rationale for participating in the CFD, and a leadership philosophy (Appendix A). The full CFD team reviews applications based on the narrative offered in the application, the perceived commitment of the faculty member to leadership development, and nomination by campus leaders.

Typical FLI meetings

FLI begins with a full-day retreat focused on developing community among the cohort, and a robust introduction to self-analysis and reflection through the lens of leadership. The FLI program continues with bi-monthly meetings that include active engagement and discussions based on a leadership topic and assigned readings. In the spring semester, most meetings focus on dissecting and analyzing leadership theories through readings, activities, and discussions. For instance, one meeting includes a review of values and intentions within one's unit, the institution, and higher education. Faculty fellows write characteristics of the venues on post-it notes and place on labeled white boards. The subsequent discussion maintains a focus on higher

education and leadership and allows for a discovery of similarities and differences at various levels of the institute. Another sample activity centers on small groups within the cohort creating concept maps on leadership, and then sharing themes and discoveries with the full group.

Leadership Philosophy

The FLI application process requires faculty fellows to submit a leadership philosophy. The purposely simple prompt requests a one-page leadership philosophy. The retreat day includes a re-visiting of the leadership philosophy and discussion of what others included and what might be missing. To frame the FLI experience, the FLI fellows revise and reflect on the leadership philosophies at the end of the final semester of the program (Appendix B). The intentional frame of the leadership philosophy allows for a reflection and analysis of personal growth and discovery through the FLI program.

Current Cohort and Improvements

At the time of assessment, the FLI had concluded two cohorts, 2019 and 2020, and the 2021 cohort was in progress. Each year, as the facilitator, I reflected on the goals of FLI and the accompanying topics and meetings format. The 2019 cohort met fully in-person, however, the 2020 cohort shifted to remote meetings in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. The shift inherently caused some changes to the meeting structures, and the interest of the cohort changed from year one to year two due to the pressing concerns within the pandemic, like crisis management and decision making. For 2021, the cohort met in person for the retreat day with spring bi-monthly meetings meeting via live web conferencing, then moved to a hybrid model in fall 2021 with some participants attending in person and some via live web conferencing.

The FLI structure remained consistent for the offering of the first three years, and this structure positions the formative case study evaluation of this research. As the program designer

and facilitator, I had access to the lesson plans, application data, and notable changes necessary for a comprehensive assessment of the program. The following further highlights the methodology for data collection and analysis of the FLI program.

Participants in FLI

The FLI program for the review period of 2019-2021 included three cohorts of FLI fellows. The cohorts, divided by year, include faculty of all ranks and a mix of leadership roles at the institution. Faculty fellows complete an application for the FLI program, which is reviewed by the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) unit. The director of the CFD solicits nominations from the current FLI fellows, school directors, associate deans, and deans. The solicited nominations combined with self-nominations showed an increase in applications over the three-year period. The applications rates increased 20% from year one to two and 29% from year two to three with an overall increase in applications from year one to three of 43% or 12 applications for the 2019 cohort to 21 applications for the 2021 cohort.

The selected FLI fellows for the 2019, 2020, and 2021 cohorts represent eighteen programs on campus, four academic colleges, and University Libraries. The highest participation rates are in the College of Arts and Sciences with thirteen faculty fellows and the College of Education and Human Sciences with eleven faculty fellows. The participation across the colleges related to the size of faculty in each college. The College of Business has two faculty fellows, the College of Nursing and Health Practices has one faculty fellow, and University Libraries has one faculty fellow. The programs represented in the FLI program include:

Table 1

Faculty Fellows per Program

Anthropology	1
Chemistry	1
Child and Family Sciences	2
Communication	3
Construction and Design	1
Dance	1
Education	3
Geology	1
Interdisciplinary Studies	1
Kinesiology	1
Leadership and Advance Nursing	1
University Libraries	1
Library and Information Technology	1
Management	2
Music	2
Nutrition	1
Physics	1
Psychology	3

The application included the rank of faculty fellows at the time of application and during the academic year 2021-2022 was accessible through the institutional website and the CFD record keeping. The faculty fellows represented most ranks among faculty at USM: assistant teaching professor, associate teaching professor, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. In addition to rank, many faculty fellows had administrative assignments as program coordinator, associate school director, or school director. The FLI cohorts from 2019-2021 supported 28 faculty fellows in leadership development. Of those 28 faculty fellows, three participants did not complete the program, three participants transitioned to higher rank roles at other institutions, and seven, or 25%, transitioned to a higher rank job at USM or another institution, and one participant retired.

Methods

The method for evaluation of the FLI program's efficacy combined a logic model with a utilization-focused model. The combined approach of these models allowed the research to focus on the inputs and outputs of the program, as well as establish an approach for decision making for future offerings of the program and a connection to multi-stakeholders (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Fitzpatrick et al. (2011), authors of *Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines*, explained "Logic models have developed an extension of objectives-oriented evaluation and are designed to fill in those steps between programs and its objectives" (p. 159). Through the identification of "program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes," the logic model provided a foundation to analyze the efficacy of the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011, p.159). While I approached the design of the FLI by evaluating personal experiences in leadership and research of other leadership development programs, the FLI program is specific to USM. The logic model in this instance allowed for a thorough review of the objectives and the connection to the design elements of the program.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) placed utilization-focused evaluation in the category of participatory evaluation. Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) asserted that in the utilization-focused evaluation, "The evaluator is developing a personal relationship with the primary users to meet their needs and sustain their interest in evaluation" (p. 181). This evaluation format supported the intentions of this program review because the researcher is the facilitator of the program, and the researcher created a circle of trust with the participants. The utilization-focused perspective for the methodology supported the established relationships with the primary stakeholder, the FLI faculty fellows. In addition, the CFD reports to the Office of the Provost, and the research maintained a connection to senior leadership of the institution. The relationships with

administrators on campus supported the assessment of the FLI in relationship to the institutional priorities.

As a case study, the formative evaluation focused on the specific leadership development program, the FLI at USM. While it can connect more broadly to leadership development in higher education, the intent focused on improvement of the FLI program at USM. Data collection was limited to the FLI program at USM and the faculty fellows of cohorts for the first three years of the program.

Data Collection

A comprehensive data collection included focus groups, interviews, and review of content in the program. All FLI fellows from 2019-2021 received an invitation to participate in the focus groups and interviews. The total participants in the initial three years of the program totaled 28 faculty fellows across 18 different disciplines at the university. Of the 28 participants, three faculty fellows transferred to higher ranking positions at other institutions, one faculty fellow retired, and one did not complete the program. A total of 25% (7 of 28) faculty fellows accepted a higher ranking administrative and leadership role during or following the completion of the FLI program.

An invitation was emailed to 23 of the 28 faculty fellows during the summer of 2021. The excluded five faculty fellows either did not complete the program or are no longer employed at USM. A total of twelve faculty fellows participated in the focus group with a somewhat equal distribution across cohorts. The cohort distribution included: 5 faculty fellows from 2019 cohort, 3 faculty fellows from 2020 cohort, and 4 faculty fellows from 2021 cohort. The semi-structured focus groups included questions that emphasized motivations to participate in the FLI, benefits and barriers in the program, and post-participation analysis (Appendix C).

Participants for ensuing interviews represented a purposive sample based on the discussions in the focus group with the intention to draw out the “specialized knowledge being sought” for the program assessment (Ruel et al., 2016, p. 152). The four interviews represented two faculty fellows from 2019 cohort, one from 2020 cohort, and one from 2021 cohort. The interviews discussed individual experiences in an intentional and in-depth way. The semi-structured interview questions for the four selected participants emerged from the focus group analysis and discussion (Appendix D).

A comprehensive review of FLI content, including applications, aided in the identification of quantitative data of how many faculty members applied to the FLI each year, disciplinary program representation, faculty ranks, and years of higher education experience. The content review examined qualitatively the scheduled readings and content, the lesson plans for each meeting, and changes from year to year within the layout of the content and activities. The triangulation of the focus groups, interviews, and content review led to consistency and validation of the data.

Analysis

The analysis of the data occurred in several extensive stages. The review of the FLI content and materials established the foundation for the development of the focus group and interview questions. The analysis included identification of cohesion, or lack thereof, within the materials, as well as the identification of key themes (Ruel et al., 2016). Further the analysis accounted for the potential bias that can occur with an internal evaluation. The analysis included a peer member check of the data collected by a colleague in the CFD. The researcher coded the focus groups and interviews, and then the current CFD associate director, who has not

contributed to the design or facilitation of the FLI program, member checked the data and coding.

The analysis of the quantitative demographic information attended to defining the population served in the FLI and subsequent leadership roles fulfilled. The quantitative data identified the rank of faculty who apply and participate, the faculty disciplines, and the rank and/or role obtained at completion of the FLI. The focus group and the interviews represented purposive sampling. This ensured that the focus group and interviewees represented the three years of cohorts, varied disciplines, and ranks. The qualitative analysis of the focus groups occurred through the identification of themes and coding of participant responses. The identified themes led to refinement of interview questions and insurance that the interviews addressed any perceived gaps in the focus group. The observation notes provided triangulation of the themes and further developed key findings within the analysis. Overall, the data collected and analyzed from the FLI faculty fellows for each of the three years led to the identification of benefits or lack thereof in the FLI program, and the relationship of leadership to higher education.

The analysis comprised of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. The tiered timeline in developing instruments allowed the process to stay attuned to its formative focus. Staying true to the logic model and the utilization-focused model, this analysis included reviews of the input, output, activities, connection to diverse stakeholders, and an outcomes-based long-term view of the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011).

Limitations

The limitations of this study connect to my positionality as the program facilitator. The limitations on the FLI program evaluation exist through potential biases of leadership models, theories, and frameworks highlighted in the FLI program. The additional constraint existed with

the personal relationship to the faculty fellows and cohorts. Through one lens, the focus group and interviewees trusted the facilitator and shared honestly about the success, benefits, and long-term effects of the FLI program. Through another lens, the participants only briefly mentioned challenges, barriers, or weaknesses of the FLI program. I prompted the participants to share openly and acknowledged that the trust built within the program was supported in the focus group and interview data collection.

Further Considerations

The political context of this study arose through the direct connection to stakeholders. The CFD, as a middle-management level, amplified connections to faculty and administrators. This in and of itself provided political context within the interweaving of an institute. One could infer that the CFD abides by directives from the upper administration to frame leadership in a particular context. Similarly, upper administration could disagree with approaches offered in the leadership development program, as leadership is a style and based in personal reflections. Different personalities flavor the culture on a campus. Additionally, I note that the audience for the formative analysis is the stakeholders: the faculty fellows, the upper administration, and the CFD, and this adds to the political understanding of this assessment. The program evaluation acknowledged the potential of the political landscape to impact the study, however, the combined logic model and utilization-focused model should help in leveraging the results. Furthermore, I acknowledge that FLI offered multiple lens of leadership, and as the facilitator, the researcher's personal leadership philosophy exhibited a degree of importance or bias towards some frameworks or styles of leadership.

Summary

The year-long FLI program covered leadership theory and practical application through a retreat, bi-monthly meetings, a summer book reading and discussion, and adaptations of content for each cohort's interest. The formative assessment of the program incorporated a combined utilization and logic model to evaluate the data through the participatory lens of the facilitator and the inputs and outputs of the program. A document review, focus group, and semi-structured interviews encompassed the data collected. The analytic process involved coding themes with a peer-member check for validity and reliability.

CHAPTER IV – FINDINGS

The program evaluation of the FLI program included three approaches to collecting data. First, the researcher reviewed content, applications, and other supporting components of the program to define the scope and aims of the FLI program. In the summer of 2021, the researcher administered a focus group of 12 past and current FLI participants and subsequent interviews with four FLI fellows from the focus group. The qualitative and supporting quantitative data distribute into the following categories: 1) participants in the FLI program, 2) themes, 3) strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations, and 4) support for guiding research questions.

Themes

The focus group and interview data closely aligned to one another. The interview questions drew upon responses from the larger focus group, and yet showed clear alignment of responses. Among the qualitative data, several common words emerged that allowed the researcher to maintain a consistent and focused discussion. The common words, while not designated as themes, support the context for the themes and other findings. The common words included: intentionality, collaborative, communicative, shared governance, different perspectives, transparency, network.

The themes from the focus group and interviews emerged as follows: 1) value of community dialogue, 2) knowledge and skill development in leadership, 3) broadened view of higher education and leadership, and 4) value of self-reflection. The themes emanated across different questions in the facilitated focus group and interviews and supported the three guiding research questions for this study. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher labeled supporting qualitative comments from individual participants as Fellow A, Fellow B, Fellow C, etc. The

labeled fellows represent different voices in the focus group and interviews. If cited more than ones, the fellow's the label returns to the initial label for the participant.

Community Dialogue

The aspect of community dialogue emerged as a common theme in the qualitative data. The focus group participants continually mentioned the opportunity within the FLI program to connect with colleagues across the institution. The community component developed as the faculty fellows shared personal strengths and weaknesses as leaders, identified commonalities and differences in units and experiences in higher education, and through facilitated discussions and regular meetings. The community established a safe space for open dialogue and honest conversations about successes, challenges, barriers, and self-reflections.

The focus group participants mentioned the opportunity for personal networking and interdisciplinary connections, as well as the opportunity to step outside of the perceived siloed environment of their unit. One faculty fellow stated, "Something like this [FLI] provides an opportunity to get to know people outside of your own unit outside of your own school or college" (Fellow A). Fellow G shared, "Seeing people at all different stages of their career and being able to converse with them and hear their examples and their experiences are what made the program unique and the experience unique." The focus group continually mentioned the "different perspectives," "different levels," "building a network," and the value of "interacting with different individuals" as benefits of the FLI program. The FLI program provided time for interaction with colleagues at the institution outside of everyone's home unit, and the ability to share experiences through activities and critical dialogue.

Knowledge and Skill Development in Leadership

The acquisition of knowledge in leadership strategies and skills resonated throughout the focus group and interviews. The faculty fellows mentioned their lack of knowledge specifically in leadership philosophies, models, and approaches prior to participation in FLI. The FLI program content provided an overview of various leadership theories through readings, inventories, videos, and discussions. The literature review highlighted that many faculty move into leadership roles due to strong performance in the discipline, and not necessarily because of strong leadership skills (Ruben et al., 2017; Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Sidle, 2019; Wisniewski, 2004). The focus group and interview responses supported the broad statements in the research about leadership preparation in higher education.

Through the focus group discussion, many faculty fellows shared the lack of leadership training as the reason for pursuing the FLI program. One focus group participant noted, “I’m already in a leadership position, but I always felt like I just sort of fell into that without really preparing to be a leader, and so I thought this was a good opportunity to just strengthen my background on knowledge of leadership” (Fellow B). Another participant stated a desire for “better understanding of why I do what I do, and why it works or doesn’t work” (Fellow C), while another one stated “I’m naturally not qualified as a leader” (Fellow D). These statements correlate to how the review of leadership theories and literature leads to increased confidence as a leader.

Fellow I stated, “Honestly, I had absolutely no knowledge that it [leadership] was a whole universe of literature that I’d never considered existed, so that was very helpful to me personally.” Other fellows described the benefits of “practical aspects of discussion” (Fellow D) and gained knowledge about “the difference between leadership and management and

supervision” (Fellow E). The leadership skills reported by the focus group were broad: communication, project management, listening, decision-making, conflict management, collaboration, among others. The content of the FLI program relied on the foundations of leadership theorists to provide a lens for application for the faculty fellows. Thus, an essential component to the FLI program centers on the acquisition of knowledge in the extensive field of leadership.

Broadened View of Higher Education and Leadership

The complexity of higher education’s structure and leadership lies in its differences from other organizational structures in business, healthcare, technology, etc. Faculty, as experts in their disciplines, prioritize disciplinary teaching, research, and service. Through the focus group and interview dialogue, the fellows noted how expertise in the landscape of higher education and even a specific institute could be lacking for faculty. The theme around the broadened view of higher education and leadership emerged as participants discussed why they wanted to participate in FLI, program benefits, and recommendations for future FLI cohorts.

Ruben et al.’s (2017) *A Guide for Leaders in Higher Education* offered a metaphor of faculty who transition to leadership roles as moving from the airplane pilot to the air traffic controller. The focus group referred to this metaphor and highlighted how faculty may see themselves as “an independent contractor.” This was a specific discussion topic among the 2019 cohort that surfaced through a leadership panel and one administrator’s analysis of faculty and their valuing of time and responsibilities. One participant stated, it’s “hard to navigate getting people invested in a common mission and people can feel siloed and that they're working independently” (Fellow E). One faculty fellow remarked, “Reading things that are specific to higher education or discussing them with others who are in higher education has a lot of value,

whereas just general management leadership type stuff doesn't always translate as well to our environment” (Fellow F).

The FLI program provided a view of the intricate processes at an institution, the importance of buy-in from stakeholders, and the interconnectedness of the process and stakeholders to shared governance. Within the focus group, discussion concentrated on time needed for change in policy and practice in higher education. Most agreed that the slow or “delayed” timeline connected to “many layers of bureaucracy” and shared governance. Yet, the focus group articulated the importance of shared governance with one participant summarizing that shared governance meant “trying to identify an idea that we can get buy in collectively” (Fellow D). Additional comments in the higher education realm included collaborative work, need for transparency in decision-making, the divide between faculty and administrators, curriculum oversight by faculty, and the balance of “integrating higher ideals, the scholarship and community of experts” (Fellow B).

Fellow B further articulated, to engage in leadership “you don't have to be on the dark side administration... and I think that it's important to understand how these discussions happen, ideally, we want everybody involved in those discussions from top-down to the bottom up.” Another fellow highlighted the value of “transparency and consensus building, and accountability are all together in a way” (Fellow D). The varied internal and external stakeholders lead to a layered structure in higher education, and the fellows observed how the awareness of the layers and processes supported their roles as faculty members in formal and informal leadership roles.

Self-reflection

The theme of self-reflection was iterative throughout the focus group and interview responses. The participants shared comments that highlighted how the FLI created time and tools for self-reflection. The self-reflection theme showcased the connection of personal reflective time to effective leadership practice. The participants made connections from self-reflection to understanding new perspectives and relationship building. The self-reflective practice was central to different skills and approaches from leadership models.

Participants referenced a specific session on Opposite Strengths theory, a component of the retreat focused on a personality assessment and presentation. Other references included an active listening experience to facilitate communication and conflict management skills, and a guest presentation on “Crucial Conversations.” Some notable comments from the focus group and interviews include:

- “I’ve learned a lot about myself” (Fellow F)
- “It’s easy for me to go through a week and just put out fires, rather than having this like really nice amount of time to actually think through these mechanisms of leadership and the philosophy” (Fellow A)
- “...helped me kind of be more comfortable in my own skin and feel less pressure and perfection and alone” (Fellow G)
- “it’s just given me a new perspective to really help and allow me to evaluate the ways I was going about things” (Fellow H)

Fellow G insinuated the importance of the applicability of the content, self-reflection, and discussions. The fellow shared the “self-awareness piece to spend time on what we really know about ourselves and what our leadership style is and what our leadership strengths are and how

we can lean on those and how this might benefit us in certain situations” was a benefit of the FLI program (Fellow G). Further explanation from Fellow G distinguished the efficacy of the program existed “As we kind of think about what changes we need to make and how we need to educate ourselves, and so I’ve been doing a lot of that work over the last year and a half too.”

The literature used as the content and readings highlighted the importance of understanding one’s tendencies and awareness to lead or re-frame leadership approaches based on a scenario (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Goffee & Jones, 2015; Hannah et al., 2014; Buller, 2013). The time spent in self-reflection during the FLI promoted the connection of self-reflection as a leadership skillset and application for future scenarios.

Strength, weaknesses, and recommendations for future participants

As a formative assessment and program review, the focus group and interview questions honed on the strengths, weaknesses, and recommendation for future participants. This component of the focus group and interviews allowed insight into the program design and content as the participants experienced it.

Strengths

The strengths mentioned centralized on the program’s structure. The qualitative data showed that the bi-monthly meetings allowed investment and a manageable workload for the faculty fellows. The reflections from the faculty fellows on content and activities highlighted a demystification of leadership and potential decision-making processes. Throughout the dialogue, participants articulated how this was a time of contemplation and career development. One fellow spoke about the prevalence of the leadership panel and its support in the faculty fellow’s understanding of sacrifices that come with a higher education leadership role, like scholarship (Fellow E). Other strengths aligned with themes articulated above with specific resonance on the

dialogical component with cross-disciplinary community at the institution and relevant content. Fellow E highlighted the influential factor of professional development for faculty in mid- to late careers in higher education: “it [FLI] helped me make sense of my role as an administrative leader... it helped me to be comfortable with how my personality interacts with leadership responsibilities and the outcome that is my unique leadership style.”

Overall, the FLI program’s regular meetings, manageable workload, and active learning supported the aims of the program and enhanced the identified themes of community, leadership knowledge, understanding of higher education, and self-reflection. Through the discussion of the benefits and recommended participants, the focus group and interview data showed the relationships between the structure and the fellows’ review of the program.

Weaknesses

The focus group and interviews yielded less weaknesses as compared to strengths. The researcher and facilitator attentively pursued the discussion of weaknesses by acknowledging personal positionality. The focus group participants viewed the primary weakness as the book reading and online discussion board during the summer, or second semester of the three-semester program. Overall, the responses varied with some impetus on the summer months and balancing time and some in reference to the specific text for the summer reading. One participant articulated “I was really excited for the other readings, but I struggled in the summer” (Fellow E), and another participant noted that the selected text “wasn’t conducive to the kinds of really good discussions in previous meetings” (Fellow G). Other participants specified exact chapters and sections of the selected text that remain helpful, and some mentioned the text as an ongoing reference. The other weakness, or rather suggestion, that emerged from the group focused on the

setting for the meetings. Several participants made the request to vary the meeting spaces as a way to see campus.

Recommendations for Future Participants

The focus group and interview questions ended with a series of questions centered on future potential participants. The focus group participants offered a variety of responses to whom they would recommend the program. The list ranged from committee chairs to program coordinators to associate school directors. As the discussion continued, the participants highlighted that the program was applicable to all faculty and a beneficial way to support a thorough understanding of higher education. Fellow B pointed out that participating in the FLI would lead to “better colleagues who interact with an understanding [of higher education].” Additionally, Fellow H reiterated the “issue of succession, and that if we want faculty, you know all faculty, to be willing to step up and take over” then the FLI support serves this aim. The commentary about potential participants supported the earlier discussion around the benefits and relevant content of the FLI program.

Summary

The richness of the discussions with the focus group and interviews allowed for a thorough review of the FLI program and laid the foundation for the analysis and implication sections. The themes of 1) value of community dialogue, 2) knowledge and skill development in leadership, 3) broadened view of higher education and leadership, and 4) value of self-reflection emerged through the coding of the focus group and interview data. The themes supported the aims of the FLI program to develop cross-campus community and to build leadership skills.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

Academic leadership is the act of empowering members of the faculty and staff by working with them collegially to achieve common goals, build a community of scholars, and sustain a high level of morale. (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 43)

Three unique facets define academic leadership and connect design approaches for leadership development in higher education. As defined by Gmelch and Buller (2015) an effective academic leadership program encompasses: 1) a community of scholars, 2) the ability to set direction for units and the broader institution, and 3) through shared governance, empowerment of colleagues and contributions to the whole institution. Gmelch and Buller (2015) advocated that leadership development in higher education incorporate a cohort model, attention and adaptation to the group members, awareness of leadership as an ongoing process, development a supportive culture within the cohort meetings, and establishment of a specific context.

The establishment of the Faculty Leadership Institute (FLI) program at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) allowed the researcher an opportunity to design a new program in the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) and meet the needs of the institution. The participants in the FLI program represented all ranks of faculty and individual pursuits of career and professional development. The structure, the content, and the participant reflections guided the adaptations of the program from year to year. Further, the focus group and interview data contributed to the formative program review of the FLI program and supported future considerations of the FLI program.

Program Efficacy

The fundamental research question of the program evaluation focused on the efficacy of the FLI program: How does the program design of the FLI impact the efficacy of the program? Throughout the evaluation process, the consideration of the term efficacy deepened and necessitated an inquiry of purpose of the program. The FLI program aimed “to build an interdisciplinary community that cares about leading and professional development” (Center for Faculty Development, 2021). The FLI website further defined the experience for potential faculty fellows to “gain skills, knowledge, and resources that are transferable to varied dimensions of their faculty careers, from research productivity to involvement in their professional discipline to formal leadership opportunities on campus” (Center for Faculty Development, 2021). The FLI program highlighted the inclusion of community development, knowledge and skills in leadership, and the application to the broad faculty roles and responsibilities at the institution. Looking through the lens of the program goals and purpose, the focus group and interview themes paired with an analysis of the program structure demonstrated that the FLI program is effective and an applicable career development path for faculty.

The focus group and interview data interwove with the program’s purposeful structure and manageable workload for faculty fellows. The FLI’s bi-monthly meetings required faculty fellows to prepare for the discussion topic by reading articles, book chapters, or personality inventories, and noted as “manageable” by focus group members. The facilitated meetings centered on dialogical exchange among the cohort through an active learning approach and emphasis on self-reflection. In many ways, the facilitator carried the responsibility of community development through the content topics, experiential engagement, and the facilitator’s attention to the participants. Sidle (2019) asserted the facilitator’s role as one that bonds the cohort, which

“serves to improve the learning function of the group by creating shared agreements on norms and values in ways that promote trust, reciprocity, and cooperation” (p. 17).

Gmelch and Buller (2015) recommended, “A well-designed leadership development program provides formal time and space for reflection on leadership issues and offers a structure in which these reflections can be shared with colleagues” (p. 31). The scaffolded content of the FLI program moved from defining leadership to exploring leadership models and skillsets with attention to the landscape and complexity of higher education. The context of higher education distinguished the FLI program from other leadership development programs and led to the guided consideration by participants of how to apply leadership skillsets and models to relevant scenarios of higher education.

The growth of the FLI program from year one to year three and application rates attested to the program’s efficacy. Each year, the application rates increased with an overall 43% increase from year one to year three. The open application and call for nominations allowed for expansive and intended outreach for program participation. Each year the current faculty fellows and middle to upper administrators nominated peers. The nomination process ignited community sharing of the program from peers and campus leaders, and inherently signified participation in the program as an honor. The recognition that a colleague considers another to have leadership potential spawns the self-reflection process that the program grounds itself. Further, the career development aspect of the program was displayed through the faculty fellows who shift to leadership roles during and after participating in the program. The results exhibited that 25% of the faculty fellows transitioned to formal leadership roles of school directors, associate deans, or committee chairs within and outside of USM. The relationships and success of former faculty

fellows demonstrated the quality of the FLI program, and it assumes the FLI faculty fellows embody initiative, drive, and skillsets to serve in leadership roles.

Participation Factors

The second guiding question for the FLI program evaluation centered on identifying the factors that influenced participation of faculty in the FLI program. The influential factors crossed over with the program's efficacy in central ways. For example, the nominations process noted above impacts the effectiveness of the program and the participation. Other factors prompting participation included the manageable workload, faculty interest in career development opportunities, the sense of community, and interest in understanding leadership theories and roles in higher education.

Most of the FLI faculty fellows agreed that their knowledge of leadership theories, models, and frameworks was lacking. The assigned readings throughout the FLI program demonstrate the variety of leadership approaches, and as Bolman and Deal (2017) pointed out, "No single formula is possible for the great range of situations that leaders encounter" (p. 337). In addition to the readings, the FLI faculty fellows brought a wealth of experience to the cohort, yet most had not unpacked their decision-making, conflict management, or project management through the lens of leadership. The guided reflections and sharing often served as tools for the cohort to apply and/or discover alternate ways to approach a situation or problem. The recursiveness of community dialogue and self-reflection on the topics of higher education and leadership emerged as the fundamental value of the FLI program.

Career development of faculty seems to be inherent in higher education because the structures for promotion and tenure for faculty provide a directed path. However, as Beach et al. (2016) highlighted in their study of faculty development and centers for teaching and learning,

“The top services most frequently mentioned by directors across all institutional types as candidates for expansion were midcareer and late-career faculty development and peer review of teaching” (p. 65). The focus groups and interviews data revealed that some participants sought the FLI as a next step in career development to expand skills and to be more intentional about pursuing opportunities. The cohort model of the FLI allowed blending of experiences and community development and supported the faculty at different career stages.

Leadership Preparation

After considering the efficacy and influential factors for faculty participants, the researcher evaluated the ways that the FLI program prepared faculty for leadership roles within the institution and disciplinary professions. The crosspollination of the focus group and interview themes aligned with the benefits and strengths of the FLI program. The breadth of participation across eighteen programs, four colleges and University Libraries presented potential for institutional impact. The cross-disciplinary community built through the FLI programs led to networks for future committees, shared governance bodies, and administrators at the middle and upper level. The career development opportunity served as a foundation for succession planning as opposed to the typical assumption that higher education leadership roles have disciplinary experiences but “have not had formal management or leadership preparation” (Beach et al., 2016, p. 70). Again, the collected data showed the promotion of 25% of FLI participants can potentially impact the institution through the continuation of the FLI program.

The theme of self-reflection served as a foundational skillset for faculty fellows. During FLI, the facilitator created structures for self-reflection through writing, community dialogue, and personality and communication inventories. The practice of self-reflection resonated with FLI faculty fellows and during the focus group, the data showcased a continued practice.

The intertwining of the themes of self-reflection and knowledge of leadership showcased that self-reflection is a leadership skillset. Gmelch and Buller (2015) insisted “The goal for college administrators therefore should be to reflect continually on what it is they are trying to do, why they made that decision, whether their actions lead to the desired results, and how they might respond differently to similar situations in the future” (p. 11). Moreover, Sidle (2019), Ruben et al. (2017), and Bolman and Deal (2017) build upon Gmelch and Buller (2015) through the language and practice of “self-centered to more other centered,” “a process of social influence,” and “the power of reframing” respectively. Concluding the emphasis and imperativeness of self-reflection by leaders, Gmelch and Buller (2015) offered the insight that “No one has ever transformed a college or university by adopting a clever technique. They transformed it by embodying worthy values” (p. 17).

The FLI program begins each cohort with a retreat day focused on self-reflection, and through the self-reflection, the foundation for community dialogue begins to form. The trust of each FLI cohort resonated in the focus group data through the discussion of benefits of the program. The reframing of strategies and listening to one another’s approaches guided the community network and supported the knowledge of leadership and skillsets. As Bolman and Deal eloquently stated, “Depending on leader and circumstance, each turn of the kaleidoscope can reveal compelling and constructive leadership opportunities, even though no one image is right for all times and all seasons” (p. 346). The contribution of the themes of self-reflection, community dialogue, broadened view of higher education, and knowledge and skill development of leadership interlaced to demonstrate the ways the FLI program prepared faculty fellows for leadership roles in higher education.

Future Recommendations

The limitations pinpointed in the formative program review of the FLI program at USM include the centralized view of a specific program at a specific institution, the lack of racial and gender demographic data, and the connection of the researcher as the program facilitator. The centralized focus on the FLI program at USM supported the researcher's intention to reflect and improve the program for future offerings and cohorts. Yet, this limited analysis positioned the FLI program at the specific institution and highlighted connections to the institutional values. As a model for leadership development, future program designers will need to consider how a potential program connects to their institution values and mission.

The demographics captured for the FLI program evaluation did not include gender and racial demographics. The analysis of the demographics lacked consideration of marginalized identities. Future studies should consider the impact of leadership development and support for women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ in higher education.

Implications

The formative evaluation of the FLI program ignited implications for higher education, succession planning, and career development for faculty. Throughout the literature and program design best practices and models, scholars indicated a need for leadership development specific to higher education.

Leadership Development Design

Leadership development exists in many structures and attends to diverse intentions. Some leadership development programs prescribe to a broad application of skillsets, and some leadership programs prioritize specific models and frameworks (Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Sidle, 2017; Bolman & Deal, 2017; Tjan, 2017). The complexity of organizational structure paired with

the common acknowledgement that faculty enter leadership roles with little administrative or managerial experience necessitates specificity of leadership development through the academic leadership lens (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). Further, the structure and time spent in the program rises as imperative to a program's impact. Gmelch and Buller (2015) asserted,

But there is a difference between short-term leadership development opportunity and a sustained ongoing program that provides the infrastructure administrators need in order to learn how to do their jobs better, enough consistency for them to receive reinforcement in their efforts, and a well-scaffolded structure that helps them move from introductory to a more advanced level of understanding. (p. 6)

The data collected for the FLI program evaluation highlighted the impact of the length of the program and the ability to build community, expand knowledge and skills of leadership, build depth of knowledge of higher education, and the resonating practice of self-reflection. A shortened version of the leadership program lessens the opportunity to invest in the stated themes.

Faculty Participants

The CFD prioritized educational development to support teaching, research, leadership, and campus citizenship (Center for Faculty Development, 2021). The CFD provided career development at different career stages through various programming, and the FLI program services all faculty ranks. The analysis of demographics of faculty rank during and after the FLI program captured the primary participants at 66% (21 of 28) were at the associate or full professor rank. The focus group and interviews further showcased that faculty fellows engaged in FLI as a process to inform next career steps. While one-fourth of the faculty fellows moved to an administrative post, a couple shared an intentional decision to invest more in research or with a national organization. The nominations process and open call for applicants in the FLI program

provided a path for succession planning in programs and schools. For instance, the nominations from a school director or associate dean recognize potential in a faculty member for the succession of the school director in an upcoming semester. This intertwined with career development and ultimately, connected to the organizational culture, or the shared values of the institute (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Institutional Alignment

The FLI program aimed to meet institutional needs through the strategic mission of the CFD. Through the efforts to establish cross-campus and cross-disciplinary community, the CFD programming designed the FLI for all ranks of faculty and the aims centered on the view of leadership as applicable to many roles and responsibilities of faculty members. As Fellow G summarized, “Leadership is challenged by integrating that the higher ideals, the scholarship, the community of experts.” The purposeful design of the FLI program as a three-semester program with a manageable workload demonstrated efficacy through its emphasis on self-reflection and community dialogue guided the faculty fellows to investigate leadership skills and knowledge through the context of higher education.

The fuller impact for the institution connects to building a cultural of leadership and community. As the FLI fellows move through the program, the fellows have created a community and built relationships that follow them into informal and formal leadership roles. This community has developed a common language of leadership and discovered one another’s strengths and weaknesses. Each fellow will engage in informal and formal leadership roles from their self-reflection and continued consideration of their approaches to leadership. This community will continue to seep through the various leadership levels of programs, schools,

colleges, committees, and the university. In other words, the shared experiences of the FLI program will guide the leadership approach and culture of the institution.

Summary

The case study of the FLI program investigated the program design and participant experiences through a combined utilization and logic model. The qualitative analysis of focus groups and interviews paired with a document review incorporated shared and individual experiences of faculty fellows across three cohorts. The efficacy of the FLI program emerges from the year-long cohort model, attention to self-reflective and community practices, and content covering both theoretical and practical foundations for leadership in higher education. The value of the program continues to rise through high application rates, a competitive application process, and the succession of faculty fellows into informal and formal leadership roles in the institution. The implications for future cohorts of the FLI program centers on a continued reflective practice by the facilitator paired with attention to the institutional priorities.

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APPENDIX A

Faculty Leadership Institute Application

Faculty Leadership Institute 2021

The FLI is spread intentionally over three semesters to decrease the time burden during any given term. It begins with an all-day retreat on Wednesday, January 13, 2021 from 9 am - 4 pm. The spring and fall semesters will include bi-monthly meetings--Mondays from 3:00 - 5:00 pm, and the summer will include online discussion boards and readings. FLI Faculty Fellows will develop leadership skills applicable to all levels at the university and within the professional landscape.

FLI 2021 Retreat: January 13, 2020 | 9 am - 4 pm

Spring Meeting Dates: January 25 | February 8 & 22 | March 8 & 22 | April 5

APPLICATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 30, 2020

- Name * First Last
 - USM ID *
 - Email *
 - College *
 - School *
 - Name of School Director *
 - Phone * -### -###
 - Upload a 3 page CV *
 - Upload a one-page Leadership Philosophy *
 - Describe why you want to participate in the Faculty Leadership Institute *(250 words)
-

APPENDIX B

Leadership Philosophy Reflection Worksheet

One year ago, we started on a journey with you writing your leadership philosophy as part of your application for the Southern Miss Faculty Leadership Institute.

After our time together reading, thinking and discussing, you have revised your

leadership philosophy. Using the space below, please reflect on how your philosophy has changed (if it has) and then reflectively consider the philosophies of two of your colleagues.



Consider your revision. What have you changed if anything?						
	Three Word Summary	Management Style (Meetings, Administration, etc)	Crisis Management Style	Mentoring Style	Questions you still have	Comments or thoughts to consider
Philosophy 1						

Philosophy 2						
What more do you need to consider for your own philosophy if anything?						

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

1. What drew you to apply for the Faculty Leadership Institute?
2. Describe your leadership philosophy or approach prior to entering the FLI.
3. How did your leadership philosophy or approach change throughout the FLI?
4. What is unique about leadership in higher education?
5. What benefits did the FLI have for you?
6. Were you able to apply strategies from FLI into your daily work as a leader?
7. Describe weaknesses in the FLI.
8. Describe strengths of the FLI.
9. Would you recommend the FLI to others?
 - a. If so, who would you recommend? Why?
 - b. How would you describe the FLI to this person?
10. Any additional comments that you would like to offer?

APPENDIX D

Semi-structured Interview Questions

**The interview is part two of the data collection for this study. The interview will be semi-structured and based on themes noted in the focus groups. Below are the tentative questions for interviews.*

1. In your current leadership role, how did the FLI program prepare you for your interactions with colleagues at various levels?
2. How did the FLI program prepare you for conflict management?
3. How did the FLI program prepare you for visionary leadership, collaborative leadership, cultural leadership....? (dependent on themes from the focus group).
4. Discuss a memorable moment within the FLI program. What was the content covered and how did it resonate with you?
5. During the focus groups we discussed the unique landscape of higher education and the ways this intersects with leadership approaches. Can you talk more about this?
6. In your opinion, how effective is the FLI program?
7. Any additional comments that you would like to offer?

APPENDIX E

IRB Approval Letter

Office of Research Integrity

NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-21-261

PROJECT TITLE: Evaluating the USM Faculty Development Institute

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: Provost and VP for Acad Affair, Educational Research and Admin

RESEARCHER(S): Kelly Lester, Jason Wallace

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: June 28, 2021



Donald Sacco, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Chairperson

