

Athabasca University

**THE ISOLATION OF ONLINE ADJUNCT FACULTY
AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE**

By

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Douglas Dolan, who supported my decision to pursue this degree even before I became convinced I could do it. Without his encouragement in my low moments, plus his tireless help in editing my work, I would not have reached this point. I will never be able to repay him fully for all he has done for me.

ABSTRACT

The Isolation of Online Faculty and Its Impact on Their Performance

By

Vera L. B. Dolan

Using a grounded-theory, qualitative research approach, this thesis examines the experiences of 28 adjunct faculty members at Beckwith University*, exploring their views on whether periodically meeting face to face with management and peers has the potential to affect their motivation on the job and consequently the quality of education they provide to students. A few management representatives also shared their perspectives on the phenomenon; this enabled the researcher to compare the views of these two populations on whether face-to-face contact among faculty enhances teaching performance. The results of this study suggest a few concerns that online schools must address in their efforts to improve adjuncts' sense of affiliation and loyalty to their institution – which in turn will positively affect student retention levels. The main issues of concern to adjunct faculty are: (a) inadequate frequency and depth of communication, regardless of the means used, i.e., whether online or face to face; (b) lack of recognition of instructors' value to the institution; and c) lack of opportunities for skills development.

* Fictitious name given to the educational institution studied.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

According to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the number of Americans working from remote locations in 2003 was more than 20 million (as cited in Golden, 2006). In an article entitled *Telecommuting's impact on transportation and beyond*, Balaker (2005) estimated that at least 4.5 million U.S. workers performed their jobs remotely most days of the week. The number of individuals in America working full time from home rose by 30% from 2005 to 2007 (Shellenbarger, n.d.). Among these virtual workers, or *telecommuters*, are many online educators – particularly adjunct instructors who teach for distance education institutions across North America and in other parts of the world.

One of the main obstacles to telecommuting – an area that has been the subject of much research in recent years – is the sense of isolation that working from a distance can create. In an age that views effective communication among team members as vital for productivity, this isolation from corporate peers, subordinates, management and customers has begun to figure prominently on the list of obstacles to telecommuting (Alvi & MacIntyre, 1993; Bergum, 2007).

Administrators of distance education institutions, increasingly aware of the potential alienation that physical distance can cause to both management and co-workers, have begun looking for ways to create a greater sense of community among online adjunct faculty members. In these efforts, however, much of the focus seems to have been

on the highest level of Abraham Maslow's pyramid of needs – i.e., self-actualization – through providing instructors with opportunities to take on more challenging and rewarding tasks (Latham & Pinder, 2005). The principal rationale behind these attempts to strengthen community is the hope that online faculty will exchange best practices, thereby improving their skills and sense of self-gratification; this in turn will enable schools to retain students (it is hoped) by providing superior services from more motivated faculty members.

What these academic administrators – and business managers in general – seem to neglect, however, are the basic human needs of telecommuters: the desire to make friends, to be accepted by others, to feel valued, to have a sense of belonging, and to forge spiritual bonds within a group. In other words, they seem to overlook the importance of the *social capital* created when individuals have a sense of belonging to a network that promotes norms of reciprocity and trust (Putnam, 2000). While communities of practice focus on sharing knowledge and best practices in order to develop collective skills and organizational learning (Tremblay, 2007), they do not necessarily build social capital – i.e., “networks of strong personal relationships, developed over time, that provide the basis of trust, co-operation, and collective action” (Cumings, Heeks & Huysman, 2006, p. 574). When geographical distances impose an even greater psychological and social distance between people, managers often appear to concentrate solely on the accomplishment of tasks, disregarding the importance of nurturing relational, social and personal ties with telecommuting employees.

Many managers who oversee virtual workers apparently feel that providing access to a state-of-the-art virtual meeting space should be enough to create a sense of

camaraderie and trust. They seem to believe that with high-end technology they can create dialogue, knowledge exchange and collaboration, which should be sufficient to cultivate loyalty among such employees. However, in order to encourage the best possible performance from remote workers, it is essential for managers to understand that, regardless of how sophisticated technology may be in opening communications channels, it should not and cannot create a totally fulfilling work experience (Helms & Raiszadeh, 2002).

A significant part of employees' motivation to be strong performers comes from a sense of affiliation with their organization, and from the feeling that they are trusted and personally valued by their employers. By working off-site, telecommuters miss the proverbial "water cooler chats" and other spontaneous discussions that can enrich their professional learning and development. Moreover, as Donath concludes, "virtual communities may lack identity recognition in voice and tone, physical responses or gestures, and incremental signals from others resulting in deception and manipulation" (as cited in Driskell & Lyon, 2002, p. 382). Thus the negative impact of limited social interaction in the workplace cannot be underestimated.

In the virtual academic setting, management typically tries to provide faculty with sophisticated technological means for the exchange of best practices at a distance, so instructors can hone their teaching skills and thereby play an important role in retaining students. Unfortunately, these virtual community spaces do not necessarily develop and nurture personal and psychological bonds with these individuals. Indeed, while online adjunct instructors may welcome virtual meeting resources, in trying to absorb valuable knowledge and sharpen their skills they are not always thinking how they can best serve

their sponsoring institution. They may simply be using the resource to pursue personal interests – i.e., not to develop stronger ties with colleagues and administrators, but mainly to learn through the exchange of ideas and thereby become more marketable professionals. So the mere existence of a virtual academic community does not necessarily foster loyalty among faculty toward management and the institution. Management, for its part, cannot be sure that a technology-based community of practice will provide reliable indicators of how much workers can be trusted.

Fukuyama (1995) defends the idea that reciprocal trust can only emerge within a social context in which virtues such as honesty, reliability, cooperation and a sense of duty to others becomes palpable: “Although there may be some countervailing trends in the newer networking technologies, it remains to be seen whether virtual communities will be an adequate substitute for face-to-face ones” (p. 317). Putnam (2000) also doubts how cohesive a community can be in a computer-mediated environment:

Anonymity and fluidity in the virtual world encourage “easy in, easy out,” “drive-by” relationships. That very casualness is the appeal of computer-mediated communication for some denizens of cyberspace, but it discourages the creation of social capital. If entry and exit are too easy, commitment, trustworthiness, and reciprocity will not develop (p. 177).

The Internet seems to foster communications that do not reflect a sense of civic duty, or a *sense of duty to others*, as Fukuyama puts it. According to Welton (2005), “[u]nless linked with body-to-body interaction in public spaces, cyber-democracy, by itself, is rarely democratic in the strong, interactive, participatory sense” (p. 215).

Fukuyama (1995) goes on to observe that when people trust co-workers and

management according to “a common set of norms, doing business costs less” (p. 27). If we accept this as a given, we can conclude that it is critical for the administrators of online educational institutions, in their ongoing pursuit of higher student retention rates, to gain insights into how they can better nurture loyalty and enthusiasm among faculty – particularly in an environment that can easily be perceived as cold and impersonal.

A key question is whether periodically gathering remote instructors face to face will strengthen relationships and deepen their sense of commitment to the institution. Just as importantly, will bringing adjunct faculty together deliver a better educational experience to students – or will it simply enable them to improve their skills and move on elsewhere in the academic world? And in situations where meeting face to face on a regular basis is very difficult, the challenge for academic managers is to determine how often they should be creating opportunities for remote faculty to mingle with peers and management in a social context – or, if this is not possible, to decide how learning institutions can achieve the same goals from a distance.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the overall perceptions of online adjunct instructors regarding efforts by their academic institution, Beckwith University* (BU) to establish a relationship based on trust, loyalty, sense of affiliation and commitment to high-quality services. The aim of the study is to explore whether periodically meeting face to face would nurture a stronger personal connection between academic management and faculty – a connection in which adjunct instructors’

* A fictitious name for the actual institution studied.

psychological and social needs would be respected, motivating them in turn to provide students with the best possible learning experience.

After having worked for eight years as an adjunct instructor and faculty coach with the institution in question, this researcher began to question whether BU's adjunct faculty members, while extremely competent in their teaching skills, were in fact performing well *because of* a deep sense of affiliation with the institution. Instead, it seemed that their strong performance could be motivated by other factors. From this researcher's perspective, adjunct instructors appeared to be detached from the organization; they were simply doing their jobs in order to be financially compensated at the end of each contract, not necessarily because they had a solid interest in doing well for the sake of the institution's success.

The main purpose of this research is, therefore, to uncover to what degree the researcher's perception reflected reality – that is, whether management could be doing better with regard to nurturing trust and loyalty from faculty, whether an improvement in this area would make a difference to their teaching performance, and whether face-to-face meetings could be the key to achieving such an improvement.

It is relevant to mention that BU has a highly sophisticated online educational platform. The school's website and course environment were custom-designed following a socio-constructivist approach, in which socialization of the entire school community – academic management, instructors and students – is intentionally facilitated by various interconnected pages and links.

BU provides its instructors with an online resource, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), that allows for asynchronous contact with management as well as other

instructors. The philosophy behind CTL is that faculty can use the space for “professional development and [have an] enhanced opportunity for collaboration” (CTL Blog, 2008). Although the resource was created with the clear intention of serving faculty, at the time this research study was initiated, instructors did not seem motivated to keep online discussions alive or maintain a spirit of camaraderie based on emotional and socially fulfilling ties. The norm appeared to be that when one faculty member posed a question or comment, there might be a few postings in response and then the discussion would come to a conclusion – albeit often not explicitly – and instructors would go back to their isolated teaching work, pursuing no further contact with management or their peers for many months.

In light of studies conducted on virtual communities, the behaviour exhibited by BU instructors is not uncommon. Indeed, it reflects the five stages experienced in a typical community of practice, as suggested by Tremblay (2002) in citing Wenger et al: “[A]t the beginning, the community is an informal network, a potential community. It then unites itself and acquires maturity, and gains momentum” (p. 72), until discussions eventually die. This suggests that technology, no matter how sophisticated, cannot create a sense of true community, nor can it cultivate trust and feelings of affiliation among its members. Therefore, it was of fundamental importance that this study determine what else the school could be doing not only to motivate instructors to feel a sense of belonging, but also to create stronger emotional ties to the institution.

Research Questions

The key question in this proposed study – posed to both management and adjunct faculty – focused on uncovering strategies by which the institution could foster a stronger relationship with adjunct faculty:

Can periodic face-to-face contact create a more significant social and personal bond between management and online adjunct faculty, instilling in instructors a stronger sense of pride and loyalty that will enhance their performance and potentially increase student retention rates?

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions guided the design and realization of this research:

- With very few exceptions, all instructors invited to participate in the study would agree to complete the questionnaire and speak on the telephone with the researcher.
- All instructors who, for some reason, would not be able or willing to participate would reply to the e-mail invitation expressing their regret.
- All persons in BU leadership positions would accept to participate.
- Conversations with participants would reveal an almost unanimous desire for a stronger bond with other faculty members and school administrators.
- In light of preliminary research on the topic, a grounded theory research design would be the most appropriate.
- The information gathered in this study would be valued by online educational institutions, including Beckwith University, and serve as inspiration for future changes in their practices, policies and strategies.

Significance

It seems that a great deal of work remains to be done in examining the impact of telecommuting and proposing effective ways to manage this growing trend in workplace arrangements (Golden, 2006). Of the limited research undertaken in the area, most seems to revolve around corporations. The literature reviewed for this study has not provided evidence of any research specifically related to the social isolation of adjunct instructors working at a distance from their educational institutions. There have been many studies on the professional development of online faculty, but virtually no attention has been paid to their psychological and social needs.

This study aimed to achieve a thorough understanding of those needs, examining how the sense of isolation from management and peers experienced by instructors teaching remotely might affect their level of motivation, and consequently their job performance in the online education environment. It is hoped that the study's findings can help shed light on social desires and needs which, if met by these individuals' employers, will have a significant positive impact on their loyalty, pride and commitment to the institutions with which they are affiliated. At a time when the competition for online students has become fierce, it is vitally important for distance education administrators to extend the best possible treatment to adjunct faculty. When instructors have clear and strong incentives to remain with the organization, it helps build and maintain a positive experience for both current and potential students.

Limitations

In this qualitative inquiry, findings were based on the opinions expressed by the specific sample population and do not necessarily reflect potential findings from research

with online instructors of other academic institutions. In addition, because some instructors might perceive the researcher to have a connection with management in acting as a faculty coach, it could be that some were not as open as might be hoped in expressing their views. The researcher offered as much reassurance as possible to the participants that her work would not be influenced by, or reported in full to, BU management.

Delimitations

First and foremost, this study was conducted solely with adjunct instructors and members of the academic administration who are currently active at BU. Many of the instructors have had direct relationships with the researcher, who has trained and coached them at some point during their contract work with the school. However, other instructors were also invited to participate in the study. As well, the researcher interviewed management staff in order to gain their perspective on the school's success in nurturing loyalty and commitment among faculty members.

Definition of Terms

While qualitative study proposals typically do not include a section defining terms, it can be helpful to provide some tentative, contextual, qualitative definitions so that readers gain a clearer understanding of what was intended in the research (Creswell, 2003). Here are a few terms that may require explanation:

Affiliation – A fulfilling work relationship in which individuals perceive themselves to be part of a community.

Camaraderie – A friendly, pleasurable and fulfilling sense of relating to others in a group.

Personal connection – A bond established between management and instructors, and/or between instructors and peers, that results in instructors feeling valued for who they are: individuals with distinctive identities, rather than simply members of an undifferentiated group working for the institution.

Psychological distance – The perception of being far from whomever or whatever is important to an individual.

Psychological needs – Fundamental factors ensuring the emotional wellbeing of an individual.

Sense of community – The experience of individuals interrelating within a common environment that nurtures mutual support and recognition as well as opportunities for personal growth through social exchange.

Social capital – A strong connection among individuals who satisfy their social needs through feelings of reciprocity and trust in one another.

Social distance – Similar to psychological distance, with a more significant emphasis on being apart from other individuals.

Social needs – Innate human needs to feel loved, valued and respected by others in a group.

Telecommuter – An individual who works from home and/or at a distance from his or her place of employment.

Trust – In the context of a telecommuting relationship, an individual's feeling of confidence that co-workers and management will meet his or her obligations and commitments.

Water cooler chats – Opportunities for workers to gather informally and exchange a range of ideas, not exclusively work-related, thereby strengthening their social ties.

Organization of the Thesis

This document is comprised of five chapters, followed by References and Appendices. In Chapter I, readers are offered an overview of the problem as well as the purpose of the study, followed by the questions asked in interviews and the researcher's assumptions prior to beginning her work. Also, the chapter covers the significance of the study, as well as its limitations and delimitations. A final section presenting a definition of terms follows that.

In Chapter II, the researcher provides readers with a review of the literature investigating the topic, with a quick paragraph summarizing the previous section.

In Chapter III, the methodology employed in the study is presented. The researcher describes the strategy chosen to conduct her work, her role in the study, the procedures for data collection and analysis, the strategies used to validate the findings and the study's narrative structure.

Chapter IV presents results of the research process, revealing its findings. All of the categories and codes identified during information gathering are explained in detail, supported by samples of opinions expressed by participants that help illustrate the findings. In addition, the researcher provides an explanation of the relationship between the study's findings and current literature exploring the same themes.

Chapter V presents the researcher's analysis based on her consideration of relevant information brought to the surface by the study. This analysis is followed by recommendations to Beckwith University, as well as to other online education institutions

facing similar issues with their faculty members. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research on the topic.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For this thesis, the researcher reviewed an extensive array of studies exploring the treatment of online adjunct instructors by their institutions, as well as issues related to social capital and motivation on the job. These studies focused primarily on topics such as professional development, incentives and rewards, tenure, technological support and management expectations. All are important topics, given that past studies indicate an overall dissatisfaction among faculty members regarding how they are treated by their institutions. Clearly managing faculty who teach from locations around the planet is not an easy task; geographical distance can present challenges and barriers to the integration and engagement of faculty with their institution (Puzziferro-Schnitzer, 2005). Only by providing the means for these instructors to feel well supported, and consequently committed to quality in the delivery of their courses, will schools be able to reap the benefits of attracting and retaining more students.

While there is growing recognition of the value that part-time and adjunct faculty bring to academic institutions, the drive to create a greater sense of community still faces some significant practical obstacles. Although some adjuncts do receive benefits as part of their contractual agreements, most do not. Brewster points out that these instructors cost less than full-time faculty; moreover, they typically do not receive benefits such as health insurance, sick days or vacation time (as cited in Gordon, 2003, p. 3). McGuire (1993) even rationalizes this practice by saying that hiring adjuncts is an important strategy for saving money and maintaining flexibility. In 2003 contingent or adjunct

instructors accounted for 65% of the workforce in education (Abowd, 2008). However, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the pursuit of cost efficiency with a commitment to be more sensitive to instructors' needs.

Moreover, beyond the inequities of compensation, these instructors are often treated as outcasts by mainstream academia. Adjuncts have been referred to by Smith (cited in Gordon, 2003, p. 1) as a "sort of migrant underclass in academia". They are accused of degrading "academic quality and integrity of the institution, because their teaching skills are inferior to full-time faculty" (Gordon, 2003, p. 4). Adjunct faculty members are also variously known as academic gypsies, highway fliers and "roads scholars", among other epithets (Ludlow, n.d., p. 52).

In spite of these attitudes, a great many studies have shown "little or no difference in terms of teaching skills between part-time and full-time faculty" (Gappa & Leslie; Roueche, Roueche & Milron; Brewster, as cited in Gordon, 2005, p. 4). Nevertheless, according to Tuckerman and Pickerill, adjunct faculty seem to be relegated to "marginal status with permanent faculty and programs, while having full status and expectation with students" (as cited in Johnson, MacGregor & Watson, 2001, p.2). According to Unger (1995), "putting an end to the unethical exploitation of part-time faculty members demands a moral awakening" (p. 61). Academic institutions must understand that, in light of the growing number of adjuncts, their integrity and success will depend on these instructors, which means they must be given the respect they deserve. Not only is this a moral awakening, it is also a shrewd "business" move.

Part-time and adjunct instructors frequently endure work conditions such as those described by Rhoades: "lack of office space, provision of materials and/or supplies,

participation in planning or governance issues, as well as the lack of physical proximity to the formal departmental structure” (as cited in Johnson et al., 2001, p. 2). Moreover, part-time faculty members are overworked, receiving an overload of assignments to grade while earning salaries that sometimes barely exceed the poverty line (Hickman, 1998).

Clearly, intrinsic motivation plays a significant role among part-time and adjunct faculty members (Johnson et al., 2001, p. 9). However, widespread dissatisfaction remains a problem: “a large proportion of universally dissatisfied part-time faculty will likely have a pervasively negative impact on the quality of education throughout higher education” (Gordon, 2003, p. 6). If the quality of education declines as a result of disenchantment among adjunct instructors, it is likely that student retention will be negatively affected. Indeed, Roberts, Thomas, McFadden and Jacobs (2006) point out that a key question to keep in mind with regard to the motivation of adjuncts is how the work of faculty learning communities affects students. If these instructors do not feel positively connected to their peers and school management, their commitment to the team – their determination to “not let people down” – will be negligible, perhaps even non-existent. As a result, these faculty members will not put much energy into performing well, which cannot help but affect their students’ learning process significantly. In an online educational environment, it is not uncommon for students to lose momentum due to the lack of proximity with others. If instructors are not willing to be supportive and help such students get back on track, the latter’s feelings of isolation will put their overall performance at risk, and dropout rates are likely to increase.

Many institutions do seem to keep in mind that faculty satisfaction translates into student satisfaction. However, there appears to have been little research into what

satisfaction really means to adjuncts working for virtual schools. Ng (2006) urges academia to understand and improve the work environment for this type of faculty. While there has been a noteworthy number of studies on the experience of online teaching faculty within bricks-and-mortar settings, little is known about the employment conditions of faculty working exclusively for distance education institutions.

In their attempts to retain adjunct instructors, many virtual institutions have been looking for ways to provide a solid professional development program. Although some research has touched on the need for continuous faculty development through fostering a sense of community among peers and management, the main concern for administrators is that faculty learn from one another, especially when it comes to mastering the instructional medium. Online instructors must be able to handle technology well in order to serve their students – or face obsolescence (Camblin, Jr. & Steger, 2000). Through professional development, faculty must be able to acquire the instructional and technological knowledge and skills required to be effective teachers (Eib & Miller, 2006). While institutions focus on strengthening the faculty community so that instructors can exchange best practices and ultimately better serve students' needs, many have forgotten to take into account a basic intrinsic motivator: the need simply to socialize with others. In their quest to deliver quality distance education, many institutions are still struggling to define strategies for creating trust and loyalty in their adjuncts. Isolation resulting from physical distance seems to be a huge obstacle for nurturing meaningful, rewarding and more personalized relationships. Feelings of disconnection from issues and policies affecting students, as well as from the overall organizational culture, appear to impede

efforts in training and development, as well as coaching. The effort to bridge the two sides, management and faculty, will not come easily.

The isolation phenomenon does not occur only in the online educational context. Indeed, many studies have been devoted to the sense of isolation experienced by telecommuters in general. Working in a virtual environment inevitably affects how employees feel about their organization. According to Merriman, Schmidt and Dunlap-Hinkler (2007), “leaders who fail to recognize and adapt to these differences risk alienating a growing segment of the workforce” (p. 6). Limited opportunities for personal interaction appear to be detrimental to morale, which leads to poor performance and low quality of services delivered to customers. Research has demonstrated a correlation between frequency of communication and interpersonal trust, organizational commitment and a sense of affiliation with the organization (Marshall, Michaels & Mulki, 2007). Relating and interacting with other people is inherent to being human (Karnick, 2005). In order for individuals to see the value of organizational membership, a high level of contact is required between management and employees, as well as between employees and their peers. Quite simply, building a relationship grounded in mutual trust is extremely difficult to accomplish at a distance (Morgan & Symon, 2002) – so much so that some organizations are rethinking telecommuting policies and recalling many employees to traditional offices in the belief that “teamwork improves when people work face-to-face” (Shellenbarger, 2008, Work & Family column).

Research has also shown that many electronic communications media lack what is needed to create strong social identification with an organization. Even if organizations provide a state-of-the-art online professional development centre in order to create and

nurture a community of practice, employees' ability to acquire important information about the organization and the business is compromised by the lack of face-to-face contact.

Cummings, Heeks and Huysman (2008) attempt to explain why organizations believe in providing their teleworkers with sophisticated technology to communicate with peers and management by stating that “[t]he facility to create dialogue, learning and collaboration among these [virtual] groups [...] makes these networks a very attractive proposition” for employers (p. 573). However, communities of practice do not necessarily translate into social interaction and the development of emotional ties amongst members, nor between members and the sponsoring organization. In a world where people spend much of their lives working and interacting with bosses, subordinates and colleagues, it is natural that they also develop a stronger need for friendships based on trust and reciprocity. Putnam (2000) contends that “many studies have shown that social connections with co-workers are a strong predictor – some would say the strongest single predictor – of job satisfaction” (p. 90).

There are various definitions for the concept of community. Many emphasize the importance of members' identification with a physical place where they meet to engage in social interaction and realize common ties. The virtual community, on the other hand, “does not include identification with place, but it does require common ties and social interaction” (Driskell & Lyon, 2002, p. 375). In other words, a *true* community is one in which social capital is developed.

Putnam (2000) defines social capital as a prerequisite for individuals to satisfy their social needs, with norms of reciprocity and a sense of trust arising as a result.

Putnam then questions whether *virtual social capital* is a contradiction in terms, given that building trust and goodwill relies so heavily on non-verbal cues. When important messages are inevitably transmitted through facial expressions and body language, computer-mediated communication (CMC) cannot be counted on to convey visually suggested meanings and rapid feedback. Most effective messages exchanged among humans are not verbal; instead, they are expressive (Drentea & Moren-Cross, 2005). Consequently, the lack of non-verbal social cues creates an enormous obstacle to the creation of trust and a heartfelt willingness to collaborate with others – which is certainly a significant problem for institutions relying on CMC to ensure a cohesive and collaborative workforce. Social capital becomes a prerequisite rather than a consequence of CMC; cyber networks should therefore complement rather than merely replace face-to-face contact among people (Putnam, 2000).

Marshall et al. (2007) point out two types of isolation, social and organizational, that may affect the performance of virtual employees. In a similar vein, Fukuyama (1995) defends the position that workers do not want to be isolated, and therefore building bonds of trust with management will not happen easily in cyberspace. Reciprocity – the notion that *I'll do it because you'd do it for me* – can rarely occur via CMC. Physical distance magnifies feelings of being out of touch. Remote telecommuters feel deprived of informal chats and the significant and gratifying “water cooler” discussions that typically strengthen employees’ sense of affiliation, and therefore their commitment and loyalty to an organization. Moreover, remote workers do not feel visible enough to be recognized for their good deeds; they become insecure in the perception that they are the easiest and

consequently often the first to be deemed disposable during layoffs (Shellenbarger, 2008).

It is not uncommon to encounter feelings of frustration in the absence of the social cues that occur in a face-to-face environment. This has a huge impact on motivation, trust, reciprocity and, ultimately, job satisfaction, with many remote employees citing plans to leave their jobs or at least expressing a lack of interest in organizational outcomes. “With high level of social capital, people are motivated, and are both able to and have the opportunity to share knowledge with each other in a network” (Cummings et al., 2008, p. 582). If face-to-face interaction is limited or non-existent, trust cannot be developed (Bergum, 2007). And only through trust, suggest Edwards and Sheperd (2007), will workers be led to civic participation and a spirit of volunteerism in promoting actions aimed at the common good.

In light of these types of findings, some have argued in favour of gathering virtual employees together from time to time. Golden (2006) asserts that managers should organize face-to-face activities with their telecommuting workers so that socio-emotional bonds within the organization can be strengthened. If meeting in person is not possible, then management must find ways to create a more personalized rapport with each virtual worker, and to foster conditions in which social exchanges among remote employees can occur more frequently. Brignall III and Van Valey (2005) attempt to clarify that CMC is not a problem per se. The Internet is simply a tool that can be used in a diversity of ways; the key lies in determining *how* to make use of the medium in order to bond socially with telecommuters. The importance of creating situations for casual interactions, friendship and camaraderie must not be underestimated (Marshall et al., 2007).

A quote by Barry Wellman (as cited in Putnam, 2000) fits neatly with the overall point of this thesis:

Although the Internet helps scholars to maintain ties over great distances, physical proximity still matters. Those scholars who see each other often or work nearer to each other email each other more often. Frequent contact on the Internet is a complement to frequent face-to-face contact, not a substitute for it (p.179).

In an article reporting on a qualitative study of young adult students and the role of the Internet in their lives, McMillan and Morrison (2006) include comments from one woman summing up her views of interactive media and social bonding with others:

[A]s far as I am concerned, the biggest risk about the spread of interactive media [is] losing contact with the world around us. We must not forget that a computer will never be able to replace personal relationships. After all, we all need to interact with real people and places. The emotion that derives from facing such masterpieces as La Giaconda could never be replaced by the most detailed virtual tour of the Louvre. In the same way, a real hug or smile will always transmit emotions that are impossible to feel through an apathetic computer screen (p. 86).

Summary

There appears to have been little research into what satisfaction really means to adjunct instructors working for virtual institutions. One aspect of low faculty satisfaction might be related to their sense of isolation from peers and school administration. If instructors do not feel positively connected to those individuals, their commitment to the team might be put at risk and will potentially disappear. As a result, adjunct faculty members might not put much energy into performing well, which cannot help but affect

their students' learning process significantly. If the quality of education declines as a result of disenchantment among adjunct instructors, it is likely that student retention will be negatively affected.

For this thesis, the researcher reviewed current literature on the treatment of online adjunct instructors by their institutions, as well as issues related to social capital and motivation on the job. A constant topic in the reviewed materials is the online schools' attempt to retain adjunct instructors, with many looking for ways to provide a solid professional development program. Although some research has touched on the need for continuous faculty development through fostering a sense of community among peers and management, building a relationship grounded in mutual trust is extremely difficult to accomplish at a distance, especially when this concern is eclipsed by administrators' focus on having faculty master the instructional medium. Few seem to be concerned with doing the opposite – that is, building and solidifying a strong sense of connection and community among faculty in order to have them master the instructional environment more readily. In light of these types of findings, some have argued in favour of gathering virtual employees face-to-face from time to time, so that socio-emotional bonds within the organization can be strengthened and the desire to create a solid reputation for the school can be shared by all stakeholders, including adjunct faculty members.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Strategy

Strauss and Corbin (1998) articulate the rationale underlying the methodology chosen for this study:

There are many valid reasons for doing qualitative research. One reason is preferences and/or experience of the researchers. Some persons are more oriented and temperamentally suited to doing this type of work. [...] Another reason, and probably a more valid one, for choosing qualitative methods is the nature of the research problem. [...] In addition, qualitative methods can be used to obtain intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods (p. 33).

One of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is that the analysis of data is based on themes and thought patterns identified in information gathered through interviewing and observing subjects. Once the researcher becomes immersed in data, he or she interprets the information in search of meaningful findings (Neuman, 2003). Qualitative research is, therefore, an inductive exercise in which the researcher uses humanistic methods of data collection, interacting with subjects while remaining aware of his or her own personal opinions and biases potentially influencing the findings. Creswell (2003) describes this type of inquiry as one in which “[t]he personal self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self” (p. 182). The process is highly iterative, allowing researchers to reformulate their questions in light of insights gained during ongoing data collection.

This qualitative approach best fit the current researcher’s need to understand in depth the cognitive processes of instructors and management as they applied meaning to

concepts such as trust, loyalty and motivation in the workplace. In gathering information, the “researcher-self” looked for patterns, even if they did not correspond to the personal self’s opinions. However, during interviews, depending on what the researcher-self heard, she might draw upon feelings and experiences of the personal self in order to determine whether they were shared by the participants (i.e., whether a pattern was taking shape). If those feelings and experiences were unique to the personal self, they would be irrelevant to the research. If, on the other hand, there was an overlap between the opinions of the personal self and the opinions of the participants, then the researcher-self would include the personal self’s views in the pool of common patterns. The researcher-self therefore had to exercise a high degree of caution and develop keen self-awareness in order not to let her personal opinions direct the process of finding patterns.

Because the intention of this qualitative study was to move from rigorous observation to abstract generalization, the path chosen was a grounded theory inquiry – a concept first introduced by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s. The researcher developed a systematic set of procedures for inductively deriving a theory about the experiences of members of the BU community. The researcher’s strategy was to use the code system of gathering data, in which she looked for common themes and patterns of meaning in subjects’ responses, and from there developed interpretations that plausibly accounted for the information gathered. In this study, the core variable – i.e., a sense of isolation on the part of adjunct faculty – was the focal issue assumed to be alleviated by face-to-face meetings. This, in turn, would potentially lead instructors to feel a deeper sense of loyalty to the institution as well as to students. Using the constant comparative method in contrasting the content of all interviews, the researcher allowed herself to be surprised by

the results. She then offered hypotheses about the isolation and alienation experienced by adjuncts, along with ideas on how to reduce that alienation.

The researcher has a long-standing appreciation for the value of individuals' personal stories. This type of study would not only satisfy that interest, but would presumably yield a rich source of ideas for effectively changing how adjunct faculty are managed. Asking open-ended questions and giving respondents time to talk about their experiences was deemed the most effective way to gain a significant amount of information, and from there to understand adjuncts' stories and analyze their possible meanings.

This was an iterative and cyclical process; as common themes and patterns began to emerge, new questions were asked in the hope that this could add value to the study. As Neuman (2003) explains, "The purpose of grounded theory is to build a theory that is faithful to the evidence" (p. 52). Given that a significant number of BU instructors were invited to participate in this research, the investigator expected that many would respond and, moreover, that the findings could be representative of what other institutions experience – particularly when most BU instructors work for other institutions as well. That said, the analysis of results still invited future research. This inquiry, therefore, had two main aims: 1) to understand the needs of virtual instructors and the views of management – more precisely, among those working for BU using a qualitative methodology, and 2) to authenticate the findings and inspire the school's administrators to introduce effective changes within the university.

In light of the premise that efforts by academic administrators to strengthen bonds with adjunct faculty can stimulate a deeper commitment to their institutions' success, the

most pertinent questions for this study were those that investigated the value placed by instructors on such efforts. To this end, the research also investigated the perspective of management. The researcher gathered and analyzed the latter's views and then compared them to the views of instructors.

Sample size in this grounded theory study was not predetermined. As the study proceeded, the researcher chose to continue gathering samples until no new patterns and codes emerged – that is, until the data achieved a level of theoretical saturation. In practice, this meant that the researcher needed to interview more than 20 individuals (Thomson, n.d, Morse, 2000). As Marshall notes, “Theoretical sampling necessitates building interpretative theories from the emerging data and selecting a new sample to examine and elaborate on this theory” (1996, p. 523).

Role of the Researcher

BU is a virtual academic institution originally conceived through a partnership between two well-known educational enterprises in a major North American city. The common goal of these two partners was to provide online education to the broadest group of qualified and highly motivated students.

Since 2004, in addition to fulfilling her duties as an instructor, the researcher has worked as a coach for both new and experienced BU instructors teaching in the areas of Organizational Behaviour, Leadership and Management. In fulfilling this role, the researcher is typically in constant communication with approximately 10 to 20 instructors at any given time.

Over the past few years, the organization has been through changes at all levels, with the latest major evolution occurring at the end of 2008. The school's administrative

positions transitioned from business-focused designations such as CEO to more strictly academic ones such as provost and deans. As could be expected in any change implementation process, particularly one affecting management, there have been inconsistencies in vision and expressed goals; this in turn seems to have affected employee morale. Prior to the beginning of this study, it appeared that many BU adjunct instructors felt extremely isolated from both management and their peers. Judging from informal opinions expressed in conversations with the researcher, these instructors felt their needs, suggestions and concerns had yet to receive the attention they deserved. Many instructors also confessed to not knowing exactly what was expected of them. At the same time, management had lately made visible efforts to begin including adjuncts in organizational discussions. Although some changes still seem to be unfolding at the time of writing, studies such as this one can potentially help BU better integrate faculty and build a stronger community more quickly and effectively. The ultimate objective of this study, therefore, was to identify those ingredients that nurture good work, build trust and encourage imaginative problem solving.

Based on the literature reviewed – both for the study proposal and for this thesis – feelings of alienation and lack of motivation in telecommuters seem to be common in any business employing staff who work at a distance. This certainly holds true for online adjuncts; there is no shortage of articles attesting to the marginalization of these educators. Often the problem is attributed to a lack of attention from institutions with which adjuncts do not have strong, personal and positive relationships. These academics work on a contract basis, frequently receiving no benefits, which perpetuates a vicious cycle: confronted with low pay and insensitivity to their needs, they can become

discouraged and often leave their jobs. In doing so, they can create the impression with management that such instructors are not worth serious investment. And so the cycle continues.

The author has experienced firsthand the daily life of an adjunct instructor and has worked with other faculty members in the same position. Thus, it was natural to develop an interest in exploring how adjunct instructors might become more strongly connected to their institutions. It is hoped that insights of this study will enable BU and similar distance education institutions to better relate with their adjunct professionals, which in turn can potentially lead to better student retention rates. The researcher presented BU management with the anticipated benefits of this study, creating a clear understanding that a number of the school's adjunct instructors would be interviewed.

The researcher had already established a strong rapport with many instructors; securing their agreement to participate was not expected to be difficult. Indeed, a few instructors, during informal conversations with the researcher, had already indicated a desire to express their views. In exchange, the researcher provided instructors with reassurance that their responses would remain anonymous; the school would never be able to identify study respondents. At the same time, the researcher presented her proposal to BU management so she could gain their insights as well, making this a participatory study in which the findings would be later discussed with the interested parties.

Data Collection Procedures

Pilot Study

Once the researcher received permission from the thesis committee and the go-ahead from BU to begin interviews with its adjunct faculty members, a pilot interview and analysis of data were conducted (please see the original questionnaire included as Appendix C). Initially three adjuncts who had been coached by the researcher in the past were invited to participate. Two promptly accepted the invitation, and one declined on the grounds of being too busy. Another instructor, also previously coached by the researcher, was asked to participate, but no reply was forthcoming. The researcher then invited a fellow instructor who had expressed interest in taking part in the study many months earlier. This time, the invitation was promptly accepted. Once the three individuals had returned an e-mail to the researcher containing their signed letter of consent, they were sent the original faculty questionnaire, which had been included in the proposal document for this thesis. Following the receipt of written answers from these instructors, telephone interviews were arranged for the clarification of any uncertainties as well as further elaboration on some ideas.

Based on the results of those three interviews, the researcher decided to introduce a few additional questions regarding issues to be explored in the main study. These issues were ones that the researcher had not anticipated before the pilot study – for example, an apparent need by faculty to express their views not only about meeting with peers and management face-to-face periodically, but also about any matters relating to their satisfaction on the job, including their views on the value of face-to-face orientation and training for new faculty. The impression of the researcher at this point was that these

instructors had been looking forward to having their voices heard on a range of similar issues. Therefore, several patterns and categories of information not previously anticipated by the researcher were incorporated into the official inquiry. This pilot phase of the study took four weeks.

Participants

Participants in the study were BU adjunct instructors and individuals in academic management positions. In order to become a respondent, an instructor had to fulfill two fundamental criteria: a) to be a current BU adjunct faculty member and b) to be willing to answer an open-ended questionnaire and later talk on the telephone with the researcher. A member of the BU administrative staff provided the researcher with a list of current adjunct faculty members. All respondents were chosen at random using a very simple methodology: The researcher wrote each instructor's name on a small strip of paper and placed these in a bag. The initial plan was to interview 15 instructors, so the researcher asked an associate who had no contact with any members of the BU community to draw 15 names from the bag. This would ensure that respondents were chosen without bias.

Surprisingly, after a waiting period of four days, only a few of those first 15 instructors responded; some accepted the invitation, two declined it, and the rest did not reply with either a positive or negative answer. Still intending to identify a group of 15 respondents, the researcher once again had her associate to select 10 more names and sent those adjuncts invitations. This time the response rate was more encouraging. This name drawing process continued throughout the initial interview stage until the researcher determined that saturation had been reached for all of the data gathered.

Except for one case, interviews were conducted at a distance, for the simple reason that instructors were located all over North America and in a few other locations around the globe. The travel costs required to meet all respondents in person would have been prohibitive, so only one subject living in close proximity to the researcher's own city was interviewed face to face. The remaining participants were asked to respond to an e-mailed questionnaire. This was followed by a telephone conversation to collect additional details. Of the 28 instructors who participated in the study, only two did not speak on the telephone with the researcher. Of these two, one did not respond to the researcher's request for a conversation until weeks had passed. This perceived lack of response led the researcher to conclude that the instructor was not inclined to participate in the telephone interview. When this instructor's positive response subsequently arrived, the researcher had already moved on to the final data analysis phase and, because that instructor's written answers had been very thorough, decided there was no need to schedule a telephone call.

With regard to the other instructor who did not respond to the telephone interview request, the researcher, after having two e-mail messages bounce back, concluded it would not be possible to speak with that individual. After several weeks, as was part of the validation of findings phase, the researcher sent each participant a document containing the highlights of his or her responses to both the questionnaire and telephone interview. Unpredictably, this time the message to the elusive 15th instructor did not bounce back. He replied confirming that what he saw in the document corresponded to the information he had provided in the questionnaire. The instructor in question also expressed regret when he learned that the message with the invitation for a telephone

interview had bounced back to the sender a few weeks previously. However, at this point he did not demonstrate interest in speaking on the telephone. Moreover, because his written answers (as in the other instructor's case) were clear and thorough, the researcher moved ahead without insisting on a telephone conversation.

The triangulation of data consisted in having participants provide information through a written questionnaire, later speaking with them on the telephone and finally asking them to verify the document containing the highlights of their expressed ideas. According to Pandit (1996), "The use of multiple sources [...] enhances validity and reliability. The latter is further enhanced through the preparation of a [...] database which is a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the [narrative]" (Data Collection Phase section, ¶ 4). The database in this case was composed of completed questionnaires, recordings from telephone interviews, and e-mail exchanges between participants and the researcher, as well as all notes (memos) the researcher kept during the study.

Originally the researcher's intention was to have BU management decide who among the administrative staff should participate. However, the researcher ultimately decided to send her questionnaire to all individuals in management positions, with the intention of having as many perspectives from BU leaders as possible. On the basis of the interviews with the original three instructors, the researcher also modified the initial questionnaire sent to persons in management. In light of the new issues raised in the three pilot interviews, it would be necessary compare perceptions from both sides – i.e., management vs. adjuncts. Nine managers in total were sent the invitation to participate, and five responded positively. One manager expressed his regret over not being able to participate, while three others did not acknowledge receipt of the invitation. Of the five

who gave positive responses, one failed to return the completed questionnaire to the researcher and did not reply to a follow-up e-mail.

For all the interviews, the researcher asked open-ended structured questions, and oral answers were recorded with the use of a digital device.

The researcher continued increasing the number of respondents from the original 15 instructors until the interview responses no longer presented new or relevant data. In the end, views were collected from a total 28 instructors. Theoretical saturation was reached when: “a) no new or relevant data seem[ed] to emerge regarding a category; b) the category [was] well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions demonstrating variation; and c) the relationships among categories [were] well established and validated” (Strauss & Corbin, as cited in Thomson, n.d.). Reaching the level of saturation was a challenging part of the inquiry process. A large number of instructors refused to participate in the study, while many others flatly ignored the invitation. Reaching an ideal number of participants whose views which would ultimately lead to saturation proved to be a more difficult task than the researcher had anticipated.

Recording Thoughts, Ideas and Insights

The researcher tried to observe what Strauss called her “subliminal mind at work” (1998, p. 142). She kept a journal throughout the study in which she recorded any insights arising from the conversations with participants. This journal was kept with the intention of helping the researcher in reaching conclusions later in the process. Some notes were written in a small notebook that accompanied the researcher everywhere; others were written as footnotes in the faculty interview documents, and some were written on napkins at restaurants and even in the palm of the researcher’s hand.

“Although certainly no guarantee, [journal entries] do stimulate thinking, provide for alternative interpretations, and generate the free flow of ideas” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 99).

In her role as a faculty coach, the researcher had open and constant access to all instructors’ current and past classes. However, to avoid ethical conflicts, the plan was to ask participants to grant the researcher permission to observe their courses as a possible source of further information for analysis. Regrettably, this idea was soon set aside, as many participants were not teaching at the time of the interviews, and therefore the source of material for analysis would not be the same for all participants.

Although the researcher did not feel the need to interview BU managers on the telephone after they had submitted their answers to the questionnaire – inasmuch as management was not the main focus of this research, but rather a potential extra source of valuable insight – the provost of the institution volunteered to talk on the telephone with the researcher, which proved to be a valuable exercise for both parties.

All telephone interviews were recorded with a digital device, and the files were kept safe for further reference on two different computers as well as a stand-alone hard drive. Once in possession of a respondent’s answered written questionnaire and a digital recording of his or her telephone interview, the researcher proceeded to code the information before moving on to the next.

The Interview Protocol

The interview protocol used in the e-mail questionnaire included a heading, an opening statement, instructions to answer each question and a note that participants could

choose to stop taking part in the study at any time without encountering any negative consequences.

One advantage of interviewing participants via telephone was that the researcher could study a range of subjects with different experiences and backgrounds without having to travel to their locations. Instructors were located as far away as the Middle East and Africa. However, most participants were spread throughout the United States and Canada. In addition, the opportunity to interview instructors who had taught on the faculty for varying lengths of time led to historical insights that aided in analyzing the evolution of management's approach over several years.

On the other hand, there was one significant disadvantage to this approach: the lack of visual cues from individuals who could not be interviewed in person. Another disadvantage was that some individuals tended not to be as talkative or articulate when conversing by telephone – particularly those for whom English is not a first language. A final possible flaw that must not be overlooked was the potential for bias in the researcher, who is connected professionally to the institution and to the study's participants. The researcher had to take special care not to influence participants' responses in any respect. To avoid a biased conclusion, it was crucial for the researcher not to put words in interviewees' mouths and only share her own views and experiences once the participants had answered virtually all questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analyzing data was central to this grounded theory study, in which the collection of information and actual analysis were interrelated (Pandit, 1996). The analysis of all gathered information was essentially a microscopic examination of the materials. In order

to save a needless extra step, the researcher did not create verbatim transcripts of each telephone interview. Instead she took notes (after listening repeatedly to each recording) of all relevant information that was expressed by the respondent in conversation. This exercise was conducted in order for the researcher to determine where each piece of information fit into the clusters of meaningful data from which all categories, subcategories, properties and sub-properties would derive. The same methodology was used with the completed questionnaires. Codes and categories only emerged once the data analysis process began, and often they derived from words found in the data (Kendall, 1999). Glaser (2002) explains this process of identifying categories:

For grounded theory, a concept (category) denotes a pattern that is carefully discovered by constant comparing of theoretically sampled data until conceptual saturation of interchangeable indices. It is discovered by comparing many incidents, and incidents to generated concept, which shows the pattern named by the category and the subpatterns [sic], which are the properties of the categories (Pattern Naming section, ¶ 1).

As she listened to each recorded interview, the researcher also looked for quotes that would potentially illustrate the main messages to be conveyed in the final document. The creation of a grounded theory could only evolve from the conceptualization of codes, categories, subcategories and properties that were systematically connected in comparing data from all interviews and completed questionnaires. In other words, the conceptualization led the analysis.

There are essentially two major aspects to this microscopic analysis of information, as explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998):

a) the data, be they participants' recounting of actual events and actions as they are remembered, or texts, observations, videos, and the like gathered by the researcher; and b) the observers' and actors' interpretations of those events, objects, happenings, and actions. There is also a third element: the interplay that takes place between data and researcher in both gathering and analyzing data (p. 58).

In the process of microanalysis, all information gathered – both from telephone interviews and completed questionnaires – was scrutinized line by line as the researcher sought significant data that would provide a possible explanation for the phenomenon under examination. A synthesis of meanings and essences was the ultimate goal of this exercise, which could only take place once the researcher had followed the essential steps of a phenomenological analysis: *epoche*, in which the researcher set aside her own biases, understandings and views; the phenomenological reduction process, in which the researcher looked at the phenomenon in question and articulated its likely meanings; and imaginative variation, the description of “the structural elements of the phenomenon and the variation of possible meanings and perspectives of the phenomenon from different vantage points” (Conceição, 2006, p. 34).

In looking at each completed questionnaire as well as information gathered in the interviews, the researcher was able to ask more targeted questions of subjects who were interviewed later in the study. The intention was to better identify and develop properties, dimensions and conditions as well as consequences that reflected *what, why, how* and *when*.

Requiring that a concept's relevance to an evolving theory (as a condition, action/interaction, or consequence) be demonstrated is one way that grounded theory helps to guard against researcher bias. [...] Grounding concepts in the reality of data thus gives this method theory-observation congruence or compatibility" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 7).

The categories that emerged from the researcher's analyses, along with any relationships observed among them, became the basis of the study's theoretical and descriptive coding. As mentioned previously, analyzing data line by line provided the foundation for a conceptual mode of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and ultimately the elaboration of a theory for each phenomenon studied. As Kendall (1999) explains, "[t]he integration and interrelationships of the categories, especially the core categories, form the basis of the grounded theory" (p. 746).

The first step in the data analysis was to look at each completed questionnaire as well as notes from the telephone interview in order to obtain a general sense of the messages conveyed in each medium. The researcher paid close attention to *what* was being said, as well as the tone employed both in live conversation and in written answers. This involved "asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied" (Creswell, 2003, p. 190) by each participant. The aim was to identify not only relevant conditions but also the actors' response to evolving conditions and the consequences of their responses. The necessity of recognizing all of these factors (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) became increasingly clear to the researcher as the study progressed. This exercise was performed after each interview, as the insights gained would determine the route taken in the interviews that followed.

It is important to note as well the manner in which the researcher recorded codes identified in the materials. Originally a large scrapbook was used for recording all relevant information and ideas, which in turn would lead to the identification of categories. Using the main theme of each question as the topic for a page, the researcher inserted the highlights found in participants' questionnaire answers. Then, once she had spoken to subjects on the telephone, she inserted additional relevant comments that had not appeared in the written questionnaire. As she gathered information from more and more instructors, the researcher continued using the same theme pages to accumulate highlights of all interviews. This allowed for an easy comparison of views, quantification of how frequently the same topic was mentioned, and the formulation of potential new questions for participants who had yet to be interviewed. Some themes eventually became categories, owing to the frequency with which they surfaced during conversations with participants. Whenever a respondent made an observation that was similar to one noted previously, the researcher marked that thought in the hope of seeing a pattern begin to develop. Once a thought had been marked several times, the researcher transferred that information, along with its frequency of occurrence, to a computer file. Using a concept mapping software program called *Personal Brain*®, the researcher then constructed four "brain maps" to create a definitive list of categories, subcategories, properties and sub-properties. This progression of concept maps reflects the evolution of the body of codes presented in this study. As the analysis proceeded, some pieces of information that initially had been considered categories were later discarded or received another type of codification – for example, a category might become a subcategory upon further reflection.

Coding

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), in a grounded theory study the researcher must perform three types of coding: open, axial and selective. In open coding, the investigator breaks down the data into similar events/actions/interactions, which later will become the foundation for categories and subcategories. Categories should answer the question, *What is happening here?* The names chosen for each category are dependent on the research context.

In the current study, categories were defined in terms of significant phenomena that pointed to BU adjuncts' main concerns:

- a) *Problems in General*: i.e., worrisome issues with regard to the school's current administrative approach;
- b) *Communication Problems*: i.e., flaws in the way the university keeps adjuncts informed (or not);
- c) *Motivators*: i.e., what keeps instructors enthusiastic about teaching;
- d) *Communication – Positive Aspects*: i.e., helpful features of the channels routinely used by BU for the exchange of information;
- e) *Praise*: i.e., a collection of statements commending the university on different aspects of its management and processes;
- f) *General Suggestions*: i.e., a compilation of ideas for creating a superior and more motivating work environment; and lastly,
- g) *F2F Suggestions*: i.e., proposals focused specifically on what faculty would like to see and do if offered opportunities to meet face to face.

h) *Impact*: i.e., the effect that F2F meetings have on faculty members, particularly with respect to their motivation and loyalty to the institution.

Once open coding was complete, axial coding began. In this phase “categories [were] related to their subcategories, and the relationships tested against data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 13). The relationship between categories and subcategories was established, following a paradigm of conditions, context, strategies and consequences. “Basically, subcategories specify a category further by denoting information such as when, where and why, and how a phenomenon is likely to occur” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 119). For example, a subcategory of *Praise* is *Work Tools*, in which faculty commend BU for learning materials, resources and/or technology used in the delivery of courses. Moreover, a subcategory can be further divided into properties, which are specific labels for various attributes related to the subcategory. In the *Praise/Work Tools* example, one property was the specific technology employed by BU.

Selective coding constituted the third and final phase of the coding process. At this stage all categories should give way to a core category that represents the central phenomenon of the study. In performing this type of coding, the researcher must be able to answer the following questions elaborated by Corbin and Strauss (1990):

- What is the main analytic idea presented in this research?
- If my findings are to be conceptualized in a few sentences, what do I say?
- What does all the action/interaction seem to be about?
- How can I explain the variation that I see between and among the categories?

(p. 14)

These questions will be fully addressed in Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations.

Strategies for Validating Findings

Whatever validation strategy was employed in the current study, the key was to ensure that both researcher and participants checked the accuracy of all recorded information. Indeed, the ability to perform this type of iterative exercise is, according to Creswell (2003), a significant strength of qualitative research – and that strength was fully exploited in this study. Moreover, the researcher paid close attention to all evident and significant interactions between management and faculty in order to gain further insight into management's treatment of instructors.

Once the researcher had transcribed relevant data from the recording of each telephone interview, she e-mailed a highlights document to participants so they could verify the information and confirm that their views had been accurately captured. Out of 28 respondents, only one required clarification as to whether the document she received was meant to represent her interview verbatim. The researcher then clarified that the document included highlights of the telephone interview already inserted into their appropriate categories. While this need for clarification only arose in one case, as a precaution the researcher sent e-mail messages to all other participants underlining what the highlights document was meant to reflect. All respondents expressed satisfaction with how their views were codified.

Glaser (2002) feels that inviting participants to review a study in order to confirm whether it reflects their views is not the best way to test validity, alleging that “[m]any do not understand the summary benefit of concepts that go beyond description to a

transcending bigger picture” (Pattern Naming section, ¶ 4). However, this researcher believes firmly that the organization of information in each instructor’s highlights document, along with their approval of what they read, represents a solid validation of the process by which their views were recorded for analysis.

An additional validation strategy was employed in this study during the telephone interviews with participants: The researcher would pause the conversations at regular intervals and tell respondents her understanding of what they were saying. The researcher often paraphrased what the individual had said in order to confirm that her interpretation was accurate. Paraphrasing faculty’s comments during the interviews, and asking in later e-mail messages for confirmation of the main points covered in the conversations, proved to be an effective way for the researcher to confirm each respondent’s particular views. The researcher would simply explain to respondents how she interpreted the data they had provided and then ask whether this interpretation matched their experience of the phenomenon in question (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If they did not confirm the interpretation, she would ask them to elaborate on the thought once again and repeat the paraphrasing process until the participant concurred with her interpretation. Only in rare instances did an instructor feel that the researcher’s interpretation was not precise.

Another form of validation employed in this study was self-reflection on the part of the researcher in assessing whether any personal bias may have influenced her reporting. According to Creswell (2003), “[a]n open and honest narrative [...] will resonate well with readers” (p. 196). In the same vein, Merriam (1998) explains that for qualitative research to achieve validity, the author’s account must “make sense” (p. 199). Each person constructs his or her own truth, and a qualitative inquiry is restricted to

gathering and analyzing these individual perceptions of what is true. Nevertheless, clearly and methodically organizing data into patterns is a valid way to describe reality, even if it is not exact. For Neuman (2003), “validity arises out of the cumulative impact of hundreds of small, diverse details that only together create a heavy weight of evidence” (p. 185).

Narrative Structure

In choosing a grounded theory methodology for this study, the researcher aimed to derive a theory from the combined opinions of all participants. The intent was to allow the narrative to encompass rich description, explanation and representation of the emerging categories revealed by the study.

In order for the researcher to demonstrate how this theory emerged through an inductive process, quotes have been used to summarize and analyze the subjects’ expressed views. The study had no prior hypothesis; a theoretical proposition has been generated through analysis and comparison of codes and patterns in the gathered information. Originally, the researcher assumed the results would indicate that the institution under study had failed to employ meaningful ways of creating a stronger bond with instructors, particularly when these academics do not have direct and personal contact. The findings and conclusions in the following chapters will determine whether this assumption does indeed reflect reality.

The narrative of this study focuses on the investigation and understanding of participants’ points of view. No numbers are used, given that the comparison and combination of perceptions cannot be summarized in exact, objective terms. Again,

quotations are presented to stress significant points raised by subjects; these are interlaced with the themes that emerge in the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2003).

CHAPTER IV – RESULTS

Introduction

What follows is a realistic portrayal of the experiences of adjunct instructors at BU, in which they relate their views of problematic issues in the workplace. They also discuss what motivates them, along with those aspects of BU administration that please them. In addition, the researcher presents participants' suggestions for improvements at BU. Following the lead of Creswell, "[t]herefore, the results will be presented in descriptive, narrative form rather than as a scientific report. Thick description will be the vehicle for communicating a holistic picture of the experiences" (2003, p. 205).

In narrating her findings, the researcher details the meaning of each identified category and its respective subcategories, properties and, in some cases, sub-properties. In addition, she supports the results with illustrative quotations from the interviews and questionnaire answers.

In the interest of preserving authenticity, no attempt has been made to edit adjuncts' written and recorded comments systematically in order to comply with APA or other style guidelines. However, the researcher has silently emended grammar and (very occasionally) punctuation where it seemed necessary to ensure clarity.

A full description of the research process is provided, including the tone of conversations where relevant. Next, the researcher summarizes BU management's perspective on the investigated phenomenon, if available. And finally, the researcher presents relevant current literature investigating key issues raised in each category of this study.

Three colour codes are referenced in the presentation of the results: the properties within a subcategory are labelled either green, yellow or red (drawing an obvious analogy to traffic lights and the degree of attention demanded by each colour). Green indicates that the problem/topic was raised but with low frequency – i.e., perhaps one to five adjuncts made a comment of this nature. If coded yellow, the problem or topic came to the surface a number of times – i.e., 6 to 15 participants made a similar comment – which may point to an issue that BU and other institutions should pay attention to. Finally, a property receives a red code when most adjuncts (i.e., 16 or more) expressed similar views on the same topic. On the one hand, this may be a strong indicator of a serious concern, certainly for BU and probably for other online institutions as well; or it may simply be an indication that most respondents share that view.

Please note that some subcategories and properties have not been assigned a colour. This is because their constituent properties and sub-properties are labelled with more than one colour, making it impossible to attribute a single colour to the entire subcategory or property.

In general, most topics discussed fit a wide array of categories, subcategories and properties simultaneously. This is because various faculty members comment on the same matters in different ways. For example, if a participant says, “I wish I could have more face-to-face contact with other faculty”, this could be interpreted as a problem. The individual may be resentful at not being given more opportunities to meet others in person. The same statement could also be interpreted as a suggestion, inasmuch as the participant is offering an idea for future practice. Furthermore, the same thought may well

indicate a source of motivation: meeting face to face would make this person more enthusiastic about his or her teaching job.

In light of the above – i.e., the overlap of categories, subcategories, properties and sub-properties – to avoid having too many similar quotations reinforcing the occurrence of the phenomenon, the researcher has chosen to omit many repetitive comments from the narrative. It is hoped that the reader will appreciate the amount of overlap among comments without having to read examples ad nauseam.

Category: Problems in General

Many respondents were candid with regard to issues at BU that are a source of frustration for them. Some expressed their dissatisfaction quite passionately in most of the answers they provided in the questionnaire; others clearly welcomed the opportunity to express their views in person (via telephone interview). Although some participants were more emphatic than others in expressing their unhappiness with aspects of teaching for BU, certain themes were repeated frequently, forming a pattern of concepts that led to the creation of subcategories for the category in question.

Subcategory: Compensation (Code Yellow)

Property: Low (Code Yellow)

Although there was no explicit question on how satisfied participants were regarding how much they are paid by BU, a number of adjuncts took the opportunity to express their unhappiness in this area. This subcategory appeared under two categories of the study – “Problems in General” and “Motivators”. Interestingly, some respondents seemed to find it appropriate to mention how they felt about compensation at BU when they were asked about appreciation and motivation on the job. They also mentioned

monetary rewards as an incentive to keep on teaching. If compensation is a source of motivation and an adjunct is not satisfied with how much he or she is paid, this could mean that discouragement is building.

Some of the most telling comments regarding dissatisfaction in this area cited the fact that pay is not connected to seniority:

At BU I feel like I am a TA [teaching assistant] and I'm being paid like a TA.

I've done a good job [for many years] and continue to do so, and it doesn't seem fair to be paid less [than in previous years] for my experience and good work. [In this last case, the faculty member was comparing current practices by the institution and comparing them to the past, before structural changes were introduced.]

Other instructors compared compensation at BU and with that of other institutions:

BU needs to increase the pay for adjunct instructors as they are one of the lowest paid online instructors.

XYZ University's compensation is way better than BU's!

BU should conduct a salary survey and make a commitment to pay instructors in the 75th percentile of the average pay rate. [...] They should make an effort to be more competitive.

BU pays well below other American online universities as well as Canadian ones.

Other negative comments were:

BU has a punitive form of compensation – if you don't put up with the low compensation, they won't give you any more courses. A huge de-motivator is working for an institution that does not compensate faculty fairly.

According to my calculations, I am paid US\$7.00/hour at BU. Remuneration should be adequate so that a person does not get the sense of being exploited.

Current compensation really works against the school!

I hope they can make improvements, especially when it comes to remuneration. I'm here because I like it.

Clearly the comments above convey a degree of dissatisfaction over how BU compensates its adjuncts and rewards them for what they believe is steady, high-quality performance. Feelings of being underpaid are not transitory, but rather are a source of dissatisfaction that remains constant over time (Conner, 2003) – it will not disappear if a solution is not found for the problem.

The practice of offering low compensation to adjuncts is not uncommon. Virtual schools can hire instructors from anywhere in the world “without paying the significantly higher cost of an equally qualified full-time faculty” (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006, p.10). Anderson (2002) confirms this when discussing the exploitation of nontraditional faculty by colleges that pay “a fraction of what the same course would cost if taught by a full-time faculty member” (p. 2). Indeed, educational organizations can save up to 75 percent on faculty costs by paying adjuncts significantly lower salaries – or “a pittance”, as Edmonson and Fisher (2003) put – compared to what their full-time counterparts would be paid (Hickman, 1998).

Fortunately, the perspective of BU management on compensation seems congruent with that of interviewed faculty members. The managers almost unanimously acknowledged the need for BU to raise adjuncts’ pay. Comments such as these illustrate the case:

I think our compensation is on the low side of average.

I think the pay needs to be increased.

I think we don't get some really excellent adjuncts because the pay is so low but we do have a lot of very good ones in spite of that.

Although there was wide agreement on the need for a pay raise, some administrators expressed the opinion that the situation is not as dire as many faculty seem to believe:

Are we compensating appropriately? Faculty always say no. Administrators always say yes. But the best answer I have is "it's what the market will bear". Given our youth as an institution and all other circumstances, I believe we're getting by without taking advantage of our adjuncts.

Subcategory: Work Tools (Code Green)

Property: Out of Date Materials (Code Green)

In this subcategory of "Problems in General", a faculty member expressed reservations about the materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses, asserting that they are out of date. The respondent's chief concern revolved around the fact that many courses include information dating back up to 10 years, which could seriously compromise the quality of courses as well as the credibility of the institution.

BU courses are way out of date. No one does a thing about it. BU is so behind the times. It's appalling to our credibility. The course development team is a great detriment to the school.

This opinion, expressed during the telephone interview, was the only response regarding out-of-date course materials. However, given that Creswell (2003) describes qualitative inquiry as one in which "[t]he personal self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (p. 182), it seems pertinent to add the researcher's own point of view, because it strongly coincides with the participant's. In this case, the researcher agrees that some BU courses are indeed in need of revision. In one business course, the data

presented in annual reports and quarterly sales summaries are from 1999. This has often elicited negative comments from students sharing their opinions about the materials in end-of-course surveys.

This is not an isolated phenomenon. In reporting their research findings, Causin, Robertson and Ryan (2008) spoke about instructors being very interested in courseware features that allow them “to easily update and post course materials and communicate with students” (p. 15). Outdated materials compromise the credibility of courses offered by an academic institution, and quality assurance activities must be put in place to ensure that “students receive a high quality and relevant education and are awarded credentials that are widely recognized by government and employers” (Belawati & Zuhairi, 2007, Introduction section, ¶ 1).

From BU management, only one individual spoke briefly of the importance of keeping course materials up to date:

Providing instructors with great up-to-date courses is critical – it sends a message of what matters to the institution and challenges the instructor.

Subcategory: Consequences (Code Red)

Consequences refer to the effect on faculty caused by any of the institution’s practices (or lack thereof). In this subcategory, two properties were identified that denoted a problematic issue BU may have to deal with:

Property: Disconnect (Code Red)

Disconnect represents a sense of isolation between an instructor and the school’s leadership body. Schnitzer and Crosby (2003) observe that “[d]istance learning adjuncts, especially those who are physically removed, are particularly vulnerable to feeling

disconnected from the institutional environment” (Orientation and Training section, ¶ 1).

For instance, simple concerns such as not knowing the names or specific roles of

administrators can nurture feelings of alienation from the institution.

I don't know other people. I don't feel particularly connected to anyone in management and long for interaction with peers. The only two people I actually know at BU are Marisa and my faculty coach. I'd be lost as a number on a page if it weren't for Marisa.*

I've never had a conversation with anyone in management position at BU, although I receive impersonal e-mails from the dean, addressed at everybody.

The connections I have at BU are very slim and I have no idea who runs BU or whom to turn to if I experience a problem, beyond the tech folks. It's not exactly a de-motivator, but it does make me vulnerable to being recruited elsewhere.

There have been road bumps with deans trying to reach out to people. They cannot be read or read others. They don't understand the receiver.

I'd like to exchange views with my peers. I'd love to meet the guy who designed the courses I'm teaching!

I've never had customized feedback. No one calls me. I have no chance to discuss my performance with anybody.

I've never had anyone contact me to ask, "Hey, how do you feel? What have you done lately?"

I'm not sure who the players or the rules are. BU is pretty much like a black box to me.

I don't know anybody. I can't talk to anybody about a problem or exchange ideas. Isolation is a hurdle to doing better!

I do not even know who the chair of my department is!

I used to feel that I could pick up the phone any time and call the VP of Instruction, but since the reorganization into Deans, I don't feel that.

* Fictitious name given to a BU staff representative.

For a remote faculty member, the perception of being disconnected from academic issues and policies is not uncommon (Brindley, Zawacki & Roberts, 2002). Adjuncts typically miss formal and informal interactions that only come with being physically close to colleagues and superiors. In fact, the physical and psychological distance from management and co-workers may harm an individual's sense of belonging, which can affect his or her motivation on the job. Wiesenfeld, Raghuram and Garud (2001) warn that "the physical distance virtual employees experience may make their psychological connection to the organization more central" (p. 223).

Whenever the sense of disconnection from co-workers and management flourishes, issues of trust may arise. Only with a sense of proximity, even in the virtual environment, can management ensure a motivating environment that promotes collegiality among faculty members. Fouche (2006) defends the position that if the sense of disconnection reported by virtual instructors is lowered, "staff retention will be improved, which subsequently means that universities will retain valuable experience" (Introduction section, ¶ 2).

When BU managers expressed their views, they seemed to acknowledge the importance of creating and maintaining a strong bond and feelings of trust with instructors. Yet, there were some comments that confirmed that this is an area that requires constant attention, and BU could be doing better.

People generally feel better when they have a connection with people at "work" or "school". When the adjuncts know the dean/dept. chair either personally or virtually, they are more likely to be able to step up to ask questions...a bond of trust supports that. It's the obligation of the administrator to maintain and foster that trust.

Regular meetings between the deans and their respective faculty should be encouraged and maintained.

While these kinds of bonds are something that I think we desire as a university, we don't have a formal plan for nurturing these bonds with our adjunct faculty members.

I suspect that some adjuncts feel alienated, distant and under-informed.

Property: No/Poor Sense of Affiliation (Code Red)

With regard to the sense of affiliation, many adjuncts reported that they do not feel they belong to the organization. A large number do not see themselves part of a team working in synergy with mutual vision and goals in mind. Ng (2006) explains that distance education institutions face major non-technological issues such as lower collegiality among faculty members and the lack of a sense of belonging. Creating circumstances in which individuals will work together for the wellbeing of the virtual organization is clearly a substantial challenge.

According to Nelson (2002), among other obstacles to the success of virtual organizations, there are three of critical importance: “a) people lose interaction with managers and co-workers; b) the ability to participate and contribute to a work team is more difficult; and c) the company culture and sense of bonding around common values of purpose can slowly erode” (p. 1). Therefore, the value of frequent and clear communication throughout the community must not be underestimated.

Some of the comments below from faculty members illustrate a problem raised by Yu and Young (2008) – that “online interaction strips away many of the social cues intrinsic to face-to-face interaction, leading to confusion among group members” (p. 88).

If communication is deficient, engagement in cooperative behaviour and organizational identification becomes compromised.

I do attend my other online college's annual meetings and have much more of a sense of affiliation than with BU.

We should have more regular meetings of teaching/discipline groups. This would increase my sense of affiliation.

I'm not in the loop; I'm not part of curriculum development; I'm not part of the accreditation process... I have so much to offer, but I'm not included or invited to use my skills.

I'm not sure that the frequency of meetings with management is the real issue; more important to me is the content being imparted. I would feel a greater sense of affiliation if I was confident that senior management was sharing – accurately – sensitive information.

My sense of affiliation would improve if we had opportunities to share adjuncts' accomplishments. That would contribute to a personal connection with other faculty members.

I had a surprise once when I saw a BU ad recruiting adjuncts to teach courses I would like to teach. They don't even know I'm qualified to teach them. It's bizarre!

I realize that it is difficult to achieve a happier working environment in a virtual situation, but my feeling is that it can be done. I do not think BU makes any substantive effort to achieve this. I would like to see more opportunities for sharing.

Wiesenfeld et al. (2001) assert that for individuals' organizational identification to be created and nurtured, a multiplicity of arrangements and processes must be put into effect. "[V]irtual work may alter organizational structures and systems, individuals' work roles and required skills, and even how individuals define themselves with respect to the organization" (p. 214). This dispersion can weaken the relationship between virtual workers and the organization, while loss of non-verbal communication can lead to declining job performance (Hill, Ferris & Martinson, 2003).

BU administrators unanimously recognize the need for constant communication with adjuncts, given that this is key to faculty's overall sense of satisfaction on the job. Reflecting the conclusions of the literature cited above, interviewed managers regretted that it is not easy to maintain contact with adjunct members when there are so many of them. They felt more should be done to strengthen the bond between the two sides, and consequently to increase instructors' sense of affiliation.

Nevertheless, the perceived degree of seriousness ascribed to the issue seems to vary slightly. While some administrators are adamant regarding an urgent need for action, others seem to believe the efforts they have put into connecting with adjuncts are appropriate.

While we don't engage in activities that are designed to cultivate loyalty, we have created some structures that we believe will help indirectly. For example, we have structured our university in a way that is designed to integrate the faculty into the university to a greater extent (4 colleges, deans, chairs, etc). Additionally, we have made the adjuncts an important/integral functional part of the institution by including them on the faculty senate, engaging them (recently with pay) in governance activities, and ensured that they have a right to participate in these activities going forward. We do offer adjuncts the opportunity to participate in professional development activities – and we provide funding for these opportunities. I think we are unique in this regard. Interestingly, almost no adjuncts take advantage of these funds. Maybe they don't believe we actually would support their professional development.

I suspect that they feel alienated, distant and under-informed. I have had a small number of adjuncts tell me as much. I am honored that they feel comfortable doing so, but I suspect that others don't have that level of comfort.

In my brief interaction with adjunct faculty I sense that they do not feel as connected as they would like...but this probably is a generalization...some probably feel very much a part of the team.

BU has adjunct faculty representation on the Senate and all key committees. Furthermore, deans actively seek their feedback on a variety of matters. I really believe that adjuncts feel more a part of BU since the latest administration took over nearly two years ago.

This question assumes that there is a level of mistrust between the adjuncts and the BU administration. If there is, I am not aware of it. BU managers need to consistently be as transparent as possible.
[This comment was a response to a question on what could be done to strengthen adjuncts' sense of affiliation with BU and their trust in management.]

I believe the provost speaks supportively of adjuncts often but I don't know how much adjuncts hear that.

Subcategory: Treatment

This subcategory refers to the manner in which BU recognizes adjunct faculty's services, credentials and opinions, as well showing concern for their sense of satisfaction on the job. Participants presented a variety of negative views on how they feel the institution treats them. Issues that were raised constantly became patterns of information, which were then considered properties of the subcategory.

The following quotes are the best examples illustrating each property:

Property: Disregard (Code Red)

On the topic of disregard, many instructors expressed unhappiness arising from the perception that BU does not recognize them as source of valuable knowledge and help. To these participants, there is a perceived failure by management to request instructors' input on matters of academic concern. Moreover, many have the impression that seniority, academic background and credentials are not valued fairly by the institution. Faculty's individual talents, skills and history of success in academia seem to be taken for granted.

In an environment that does not allow for frequent face-to-face contact, it is imperative to make recognition a more deliberate and strategically detailed act (Nelson, 2002), particularly when “[t]here is a fear that colleges are relying too heavily on and taking advantage of their online adjuncts” (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006, p. 9). Merely inviting adjuncts to take part in planning activities can change how they see their value being recognized and increase their sense of belonging (Levinson, 2005). As Edmonson and Fisher (2003) point out, requesting that adjunct faculty members offer their opinions and suggestions, and the effectively acting upon them, is a major form of encouragement.

(Similar issues will be raised later in this document in the “Practices” subcategory – with more focus on the types of recognition events that instructors miss at BU.)

I would like to have some input into the classes that I am selected to teach. There should be some outreach on the part of the college to determine what other talents adjuncts bring to the table, and how they might be utilized by the University.

I am underutilized – teaching at BU is just a job versus a mission in life. This is the same thing most companies do to wind up with performance much lower than their potential. I would be willing to make a major investment in this work if I were given the opportunity to contribute where I can best do so. The message is, “We do the thinking, you do the working.”

The other institution I teach for now truly tries harder to make you feel like you are a part of a team and wants to get your opinions about how to make things better, both in the classroom and for the school as a whole.

I’m at the mercy of one e-mail asking me to teach. Nobody cares if I want to teach six different courses and they only offer me one, sometimes when I don’t like the course.

Of course, I have to admit that I have not been the first in line for the few ventures that have been offered. Motivation is spurred by sharing and by recognition.

We would all benefit if BU sought broader feedback from the faculty and provided more involvement in decisions.

BU really needs to find a way to recognize the efforts of their faculty members, especially when faculty are being asked to put in non-paid service time. I also feel that BU should be seeking more input from faculty for course offerings (and paying them for this – no more volunteer work, thank you).

BU should allow me to teach my own course material (which remains my property).

I have with a few exceptions not been engaged for any additional activities such as instruction manual development (something sorely needed in the instructional technology curriculum) or otherwise had any acknowledgement that I'm out here, except for course scheduling.

They should reach out to the faculty member when students praise them, instead of when students complain.

The people we hear from generally want to tell us what they are doing, which is understandable, but much of it deals with structural changes within management, important for them, but not so important for the rest of us.

I know institutions that I would select before BU and others that I would select after BU. The reason why is simple, there are some (like the one I teach for now) that truly tries harder to make you feel like you are a part of a team and wants to get your opinions about how to make things better, both in the classroom and for the school as a whole.

Perspectives on treatment are somewhat contradictory when one compares the views of instructors to those of management. Regarding the claim by many participants that their value is not being acknowledged, administrators tend to focus on what should be done instead rather than what currently happens. By and large, there is a degree of acknowledgement that little has been done to show faculty how much their input is valued on matters relating to the school's administration.

[It is important to say] thank you for a job well done and paying attention to their work so you can mention highlights with them...people do like to be noticed and thanked.

I realize as I answer these questions that I don't really know what their expectations are. I've not asked (and shame on me for that).

Faculty must be recognized for their good work and accomplishments and regular meetings between the deans and their respective faculty should be encouraged and maintained.

There are two primary factors that affect student retention: 1) [have the students] connected socially 2) have they connected academically. So the faculty involvement is essential to both factors in our virtual environment.

From an administrative perspective, we have much to learn from the adjuncts about our students, our courses, and the adjuncts—how we can provide services and supports that will help them do even better with our students.

Property: Non-Customized Relationship (Code Red)

For a substantial number of respondents, there is a gap in the relationship between management and adjuncts. Many comments revolved around the fact that participants feel isolated from the new BU administration, perceiving that no one has taken the time to know them individually or provide them with customized treatment. The overall perception is that an instructor is a non-entity within the faculty body and is not well known to management.

Fouche (2006) takes the position that if feelings of isolation are curtailed, faculty retention is likely to rise, which means that universities will retain precious knowledge and skills. This is extremely important for keeping turnover rates down and not having to continuously hire inexperienced instructors, which can be damaging to the institution's reputation. One-on-one quick meetings, even if on the telephone, can boost morale and encourage a virtual employee. "Treating [virtual] employees with courtesy and

professionalism will help establish [an organization's] reputation as a desirable employer to work for and they serve as a draw for additional talent when it is needed" (Nelson, 2002, p. 3). Lawler III and Finegold (2000) stress that there are many differences among people; treating them in a standardized manner is not the most effective management approach. People should be treated and acknowledged as individuals.

Wiesenfeld et al. (2001) commend the practice of some supervisors who use weekly meetings "as an opportunity to convey social support for virtual workers, encourage them to share their experiences and their learnings with one another, and provide a means for keeping virtual workers 'in the loop'" (p. 225).

Here are the comments made by faculty during the interviews:

BU administrators should make the effort to know us better. A former manager used to call me. He was a Cardinal fan like me and we used to talk about baseball. He was a real person!

When you're physically isolated as we are in an online environment, we each tend to become just another name scheduled to conduct a class.

As is the case with most adjuncts, we're too often viewed as the extra hired help, and the lack of security that comes from not knowing how your work is viewed by management, tend to leave you wondering what your value is to the college beyond merely generating revenue when you cover a class.

Sometime during the course of a year, each instructor should have a telephone meeting with the head of her/his department and have a performance discussion – a constructive discussion that provides ideas for development.

If they want loyalty, they should know me individually. To me that would be a big step.

I'd love if some day I got a phone call in which someone said, "Hey, X, you've been around a long time, you've had great evaluations, so would you like to...?"

I don't think that appreciation means more unpaid work from adjuncts. There's a sense that we are eager to put a lot of time into BU issues without compensation.

The only time I have personal contact initiated by the Dean or with administration executives is when I am in trouble or when I am being formally acknowledged.

Once I had a problem with a student who reported me as being a racist, which was certainly a misinterpretation of something I'd said. I went straight into panic mode because people at BU don't know me.

Some BU managers believe there is a strong, personalized connection with faculty. Indeed, they advocate fiercely in favour of constant contact. For example:

I do feel connected with most of the adjuncts in my college. I know the type of degrees they have, where many of them attended school and where they presently work in their FT capacities. Once a connection is established, folks are more likely to do a better job.

Another comment about connection, albeit in terms of what the administrator feels is ideal and not necessarily what is happening at BU currently:

People generally feel better when they have a connection with people at "work" or "school". When the adjuncts know the dean/dept. chair either personally or virtually, they are more likely to be able to step up to ask questions...a bond of trust supports that. It's the obligation of the administrator to maintain and foster that trust.

Property: Lack of Professional Development (PD) Opportunities (Code Red)

A great number of comments were made regarding the lack of PD opportunities. Adjuncts do not feel they are offered enough chances to participate in skills development sessions or activities. Many remarks of the same nature are presented earlier in this study as examples of "Suggestions in General". This is because some respondents raised the need for more PD as an idea to be considered by BU rather than an indication of a

problem. Regardless of how the comments are categorized, they demonstrate a clear need for more activities through which faculty members can hone their skills.

At the other school I work for, they really make sure faculty are up to date in their skills. In the long run, instructors are more effective.

My effectiveness decreases if I'm not updating my skills level – which is best achieved through contact and collaboration with others.

PD would improve my teaching. I'm a people person!

Eib and Miller (2006), in acknowledging the challenges for distance education universities, suggest that “[c]arefully designed faculty development approaches can create a culture that supports thoughtful focus on teaching, while nurturing the sense of connectedness and collegiality that is vital to continuous innovation and improvement in post-secondary institutions” (Introduction section, ¶ 2). Encouraging professional development of faculty by providing support and resources is critical if an institution wants to increase its credibility (Ng, 2006).

Gaillard-Kenney (2006) calls school administrators’ attention to the fact that even if monetary resources are not plentiful, an effort to develop adjuncts’ skills can only bring benefits on the educational and instructional levels. Gordon (2003) agrees that faculty development can be costly; however, it is “highly effective in building organizational loyalty” (Part-time Faculty Integration section, ¶ 3).

Property: Lack of Support on Student Issues (Code Green)

Under this property of “Treatment”, a few instructors reflected on how frustrating it is to feel that they are alone in dealing with student issues that arise from time to time.

The common dissatisfaction lies in a perceived lack of assistance in resolving student issues. The impression is that BU places students' interests before those of faculty.

Conceição (2006), following a review of recent studies in this area, stresses the importance of institutional support for faculty members: The time and effort spent on developing and teaching online courses is significantly greater than in the traditional context; therefore, it is imperative for instructors to be able to count on staff support regarding administrative and technological issues. The lack of prompt, reliable help can be extremely frustrating and isolating for faculty members (Brindley et al., 2002). According to Schnitzer and Crosby (2003), feeling of not being supported by the educational institution is not uncommon among adjunct instructors, and this can be detrimental to faculty retention. "Excellent, committed, quality instructors are retained by excellent, committed, quality faculty support" (Administrative Organization section, ¶ 2).

When I have sought help or clarification, the answers have often not been timely or useful. I've improvised and, based on feedback in the instructional technology curriculum, believe that I have fulfilled students' expectations.

Reducing student pressure, harassment and threats generally regarding grades would be useful. Also people should be able and willing to help you without sending you to someone else with the problem.

Once again, for the properties revolving around PD and support on student issues, managers' comments focus on what *should be* and not necessarily on what *is*:

Our hope is to give them tools to become better; to enhance their skills; to ultimately provide a better experience for students.

Faculty need to know and can learn strategies to increase student motivation and performance along with well-designed courses. We should be helping with that.

When there is an issue with a student, it makes a huge difference addressing a familiar person than a stranger—so building the bonds is critical in anticipation of the future need to problem-solve together. [This comment alludes to the need mentioned previously for a stronger connection with faculty and greater support on student matters.]

Subcategory: Practices

Under “Practices”, all matters related to administrative routines adopted by the institution are covered. Ten properties denoting issues of concern were identified in this subcategory.

Property: Quantity of Students / Sub-Property: Too Many (Code Green)

Study participants expressed a degree of frustration over the number of students allocated to each class. BU’s stated ideal class size is no greater than 20. Results from the interviews reveal dissatisfaction over the fact that in some instances instructors have been required to teach more than 20 students in a single group; in some cases the total has exceeded 30 students.

Beck (2007) believes that payment should increase as the number of students in a class go up, stating that “[a] larger enrollment maximum should come with a higher salary” for instructors (2007). Indeed, Conceição asserts that “delivery of online teaching is more labor-intensive because faculty complain[...] about the amount of time needed to grade papers and respond to questions” (p. 30).

Here is the perspective of BU adjuncts:

Not all courses have the same workload in terms of grading, primarily due to the presence or absence of group work. As the class size has risen, increase in # students/class, the educational philosophy has changed! Rather than being about learning, we are about achievement. And, I won’t resist that shift because I can’t afford to spend the time it takes to take a learning perspective over an achievement perspective. That translates to an intrinsic de-

motivator.

I had a huge surprise the other day when I first opened my course and saw that I had more than 30 students to teach!

Property: Lack of Academic Freedom (Code Green)

This property refers to the perception of some adjuncts that they have little control over the content or design of course materials. They cannot create their own courses, and no content can be modified within the courses they teach. Paradoxically, this matter is also covered under the “Praise” category, in which the inability to change course content is welcomed by some. The rationale is that when a course is fully ready to be taught, faculty can dedicate their energies to satisfying their students’ needs and not waste time tinkering with course substance.

Brindley et al. (2002) defend the practice of giving autonomy to adjunct faculty members to develop and teach their own courses. The belief behind this conviction is that if instructors can author and control their own materials, they can keep courses attractive and the academic program vibrant and current. In addition, Thompson (n.d.) warns school administrators that when they do not ask their instructors to provide input in decisions related to curriculum and/or academic policies, faculty satisfaction is put at risk. Conversely, Hickman (1998) believes that asking adjuncts to teach courses already created allows them to be better instructors, given that they do not have to spend time researching or working on curriculum development.

Respondents’ comments were:

I don’t think enough emphasis is placed on creativity, innovation, improvement, adding greater value.

[At the other school I work for] I feel very much a part of the community there and have been given many opportunities to teach new courses, create courses and revise existing courses.

I feel more connected to my other institution because it provides the following: better and progressive compensation, allows me to teach my own course material (which remains my property), clear communication. The other institution treats me with respect. For example, I have full control over my course material, as well as my course deadlines. There is no nonsense of a 48[-hour] assignment return window etc. The other institution recognizes me as an academic who deserves to be compensated well as who is able to run their own course. [This comment was made strenuously by the faculty member. Numerous times during the conversation, the participant went back to reiterate this dissatisfaction over the fact that BU faculty cannot author their own courses.]

Not giving faculty personal interest in the design of courses is a reason for them to leave.

Property: Response. Sub-Property: Slow/Ineffective (Code Red)

It was not uncommon in the interviews for adjuncts to express frustration over BU's slowness or lack of action in response to an instructor's concern over an academic issue. Some instructors seemed angered at having to find solutions without much guidance from the school. Others complained about "useless department meetings" in which instructors are asked to offer suggestions for change only to see the same situation perpetuated, as if they had never provided any innovative ideas.

Usually online courses are relatively short in duration, which means that urgent action is often needed in response to a problem. Prompt response to faculty's inquiries is of vital importance in order that they can be effective in the delivery of their courses. As Ng (2006) observes, "[i]f students' quality of learning is intricately tied to faculty's teaching effectiveness and [...] productivity, then it is crucial to understand and improve its faculty members' work environment" (Introduction section, ¶ 4).

Brindley et al. (2002) cite fundamental elements of faculty support that contribute to their effectiveness in class:

...[T]he unfailing availability of the academic support [staff] for both pedagogical and technical issues, the provision of greatest support when it [is] most needed with an intention of helping [instructors] become more autonomous, the mentoring and feedback from [a coach, mentor or supervisor], and the continual communication of a strong culture of collaboration and teamwork (What Contributes to Effective Teaching/Learning in the Oldenburg Model section, ¶ 4).

The most descriptive comments by faculty in this regard were as follows:

Prompt and relevant response to faculty's concerns is the main issue, together with the stable schedule etc. When I ask for improvement, it depends on the case. I don't know what is the table for the college to address our concerns.

Lack of action has come since previous administration. Maybe the workload for staff is heavy and increasing and pay must be low. So maybe they cannot help us do good stuff.

Right now, when I contact students' advisors, it's the rare circumstance that I get any response.

I have stopped filling out the faculty end of course surveys because even though I have put in some deliberately provocative statements, I have never heard back from anyone nor seen any changes as a result of my comments and suggestions.

When changes are communicated it is important that BU follow through. I, for one, no longer take declarations that BU will be addressing issues with faculty compensation, etc. seriously since these "promises" have been made for years with no results.

Well, my department has monthly meetings where the same topics and issues are brought up over and over again with no results. These types of meetings are a huge waste of time and do very little to motivate me. Less frequent meetings where items are accomplished would leave me feeling like my time was not being taken advantage of.

Property: Recognition. Sub-Property: Poor (Code Red)

Here the chief complaint arises from a high degree of frustration over poor rituals of acknowledgment for outstanding performance and seniority on the job, as well as limited opportunities for advancement within the academic ranks. The reader will note some comments that would also fit under “Treatment/Disregard”.

Pratt (2000), in his musings about being an adjunct faculty member himself, asserts that these instructors are not given the attention they deserve: “They receive little recognition, low pay, frequent criticism, and some condemnation – when we think of them at all. This marginalization in turn leads to the isolation inherent in the adjunct teaching role” (“Confessions”, ¶ 2). In any type of work environment, traditional or online, managers must make sure they are rewarding desired behaviours with recognition that is truly meaningful to their employees. This is even more important in the online context because, when employees work from a distance, there is a strong chance they already feel left out from most organizational affairs (Nelson, 2002).

Recognition does not necessarily imply significant costs. As Levinson (2005) suggests, “[e]ven simple gestures like publicly thanking [...] faculty can enhance their motivation to continue their good service” (“What do adjunct faculty want?”, ¶ 9). Or, as Edmonson and Fisher (2003) explain, electronic messages or thank-you notes can be also a good incentive for good performance.

Adjuncts’ comments in this regards included:

BU could have programs like adjunct instructor of the month/quarter/year awards. This lets the faculty know that their work is being reviewed and appreciated and that the school does know what is going on in their classrooms. [This comment overlaps with another category/subcategory/property, i.e., suggestions for face-to-face events. The faculty member worded

the observation in a way that either underlines a problem – the lack of recognition events – or offers a suggestion for future practices by the school.]

A piece that's still missing is recognition events. Those beginning of the year "Teaching Excellency Awards" that we used to have were motivating.

At my other university, they have term awards to faculty for various standards of excellence. Also, they award Senior Faculty status to long-term adjunct faculty with consistent records of excellence. I have achieved a senior faculty status with them, which gives me a higher rate of pay and usually two classes per term. Senior faculty status is achieved with three years of consecutive teaching, with exceptional student ratings, continuous professional development, and attendance at all required online meetings.

BU should have a pay scale that recognizes seniority and professional credentials such as degrees, publications, conferences, service on committees etc. Every other institution I have taught for rewards faculty for service and their contribution to the overall university, which really builds a faculty member's sense of affiliation with the institution. Seniority is not recognized. My sense is that a Ph.D. is paid the same as someone with only a Master's degree. We're being whores... Pardon my French. Right now I am submitting a research paper and I will not say I am affiliated with BU because I don't feel any support from them.

For my sense of affiliation to increase, a real response from BU would be some recognition of my seniority. Not only have I stayed with them for many years but have taken on any challenge and responded well to it.

Just having someone say "I see you" or the distance, electronic equivalent would go a long way. This informal recognition practice is something on which we need to work hard.

Property: Quality of Students. Sub-Property: Low (Code Green)

A few instructors discussed their impression that students who are accepted into BU's academic programs are ill-prepared for the task. Ironically, other instructors voiced

their admiration for the high quality of students admitted at BU, which is shown later within the “Praise” category.

Mandernach & Dennis (2008) observe that some employers and graduate school admissions committees are negatively biased toward students who receive their degrees from an online institution. However, they also stress that the foundation for this perception remains unclear after a number of studies.

BU adjuncts’ comments were:

At my other school, they are constantly improving their courses to best achieve the learning objectives of students. Further, their student success rate is typically higher.

It looks like BU is dumbing down in objectives for classes. There’s been a reduction of standards for students. It seems that there is a close correlation between lower-quality students and students from related firms inside the [Xxxx] empire. The number of kindergarten teachers that are coming in seems high. [In this particular case, the instructor was referring to an American foundation – here designated as “Xxxx” – led by a philanthropist who supports education and medical research. The participant’s impression is that this individual has too much influence over how BU is administered.]

Smaller class sizes, especially at the graduate level would be appreciated, as well as a higher level of academic accomplishment expected for graduate students to enter such classes.

Property: Lack of PD Opportunities (Code Red)

This problematic property under the “Practices” subcategory overlaps with a similar property in the subcategory “Treatment”, which was discussed above. The comments cited in that earlier section reflect some frustration over the treatment that adjuncts receive at BU, in that they are not fully satisfied with the PD opportunities. At the same time, these comments can convey an overall perception that BU does not put

enough emphasis on skills development among its faculty members and therefore lacking practices to that end.

Property: No Guarantee of Work (Code Yellow)

A few participants expressed feelings of job insecurity and aggravation over not knowing beforehand how many courses they will be teaching in a given year. Because of this uneasiness over their ability to meet financial commitments, it seems they are constantly looking for job opportunities elsewhere in the hope of finding more stability.

Not being able to count on future work is a reality that looms over most adjuncts. Fouche (2006) presents reasons why such instructors constantly feel insecure about their jobs. First, these are temporary contract positions, which inevitably leads to uncertainty over what the future holds. Moreover, “such uncertainty stemming from job insecurity can be exacerbated in an environment where tutors are isolated from their colleagues” (Coordination section, ¶ 2). Therefore, it is of paramount importance for online universities to offer more security and offer greater rewards if they want to stay ahead of competing institutions in attracting and retaining adjunct faculty.

One challenge for online universities is to retain competent staff. With adjuncts beginning to organize, seeking better work conditions – as happened a few years ago in the state of Alaska (Gaillard-Kenney, 2006) – educational institutions will gradually be forced to rethink their practices, especially regarding compensation. Anderson (2002) confirms this (citing Leatherman) in raising the question of exploitation of non-traditional faculty: “There is a movement among [non-traditional] academics to unionize in order to improve their pay and working conditions” (Summary section, ¶ 4).

BU adjuncts’ comments included:

Nobody cares if I want to teach six or more courses a year.

The number of classes for me to teach has certainly gone down.

At my other school, I get to teach a course every six weeks. They are very dependable and reliable, which makes a great difference. There I know I will be teaching 14 times a year.

Maybe they don't give us more courses because they hire new instructors to teach them, so they can pay them less.

Unfortunately, there are only a few classes offered in my area. At the other school I work for, I have a guaranteed number of classes I'll be teaching. That's my economy base.

Stable and regular course scheduling is important for many if not all adjuncts.

As a contract adjunct, BU has no commitment to me, nor I to BU. I do not have any long term [commitment] for courses to teach nor income. BU always assigns fewer courses than I request in the semi-annual survey of adjuncts. I have come to expect that and act accordingly.

I would like to be appointed on a yearly basis, with some guarantee of a level of work. This will make me feel part of a team. Getting 6-week contracts make me feel like an outsider, not part of a team. I need to get more work (more courses) from BU. Sometimes I get the idea they like having a big pool of adjuncts as this reduces their risk and pressure to increase pay. It is hard on the adjuncts as they cannot survive solely on the BU work.

The number of classes I teach has been reduced, and the courses that I cover are now down to two from five, and at no time did anyone address any of that with me. [This issue was also raised in the "Communication Problems" category, in which faculty complain about not being informed of critical matters.]

Property: No Paid Benefits (Code Green)

Only two instructors voiced regret at not having access to full employee benefits such as health insurance, a pension plan, etc. Therefore the green code was chosen.

Nevertheless, this topic is not rare in the literature investigating adjunct faculty's work

conditions. Anderson (2002) addresses the topic of part-time instructors' compensation, explaining that very few institutions provide any kind of medical or retirement benefits. Indeed, they pay lower salaries and provide very little support for other academic activities. Hickman (1998) provides a rationale for institutions not paying benefits to adjuncts: by keeping benefits to a minimum and paying just a few thousand dollars a course, they can save a substantial amount of money on faculty costs.

Interestingly, Brindley et al. (2002) discuss how educational institutions justify the need for fair remuneration and benefits for full-time faculty: These instructors are required to make important decisions, participate in research, dedicate themselves to the success of students, and nurture the institution's good reputation. "However, if the demands placed on [adjuncts] are similar in terms of responsibility taken for teaching, it raises the question of what can reasonably be offered in return" (Challenges and Ongoing Issues section, ¶ 3).

Participants' comments on benefits were:

Access to health insurance – this is one issue that can loom large for self-employed people like me.

A sense of affiliation with BU would require standard employee benefits such as paid vacation, health insurance, etc. [This comment is certainly relevant as well to the subcategory "Consequences", in which an individual shows how his or her sense of affiliation is negatively affected by some aspect of the way business is conducted by the institution.]

Property: Lack of Incentives for CTL Discussions (Code Yellow)

Several participants mentioned their lack of interest in joining discussion threads of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), an online space created for faculty to exchange ideas. Based on the comments, BU does not offer clear, persuasive and/or

advantageous incentives for instructors to be active in general and academic discussions with other faculty members. This practice has not become essential in the lives of BU instructors. Neither has it been an imposition on instructors by BU – as evidenced, for instance, when they claim a lack of time for participating in conversations. Although there are expressions of concern from respondents, many comments are not necessarily negative (hence the Code Yellow) but rather an indication that the purpose, mechanics and benefits of the CTL have not been effectively communicated. This lack of clarity regarding the benefits of the CTL nurtures adjuncts' perception that they are not given adequate opportunities for exchange with their peers and management.

In her discussion of working conditions for online adjuncts, Beck (2007) expresses her indignation regarding the unrealistic expectations placed on these instructors when they are paid “insulting salaries” (p. A2). While the invitation to participate in discussions is indeed a good way to exchange ideas with peers, making it a requirement is, in her view, absurd. Eib and Miller (2006), in describing triumphant communication spaces, choose Wenger and his colleagues as reference, stating that “[w]hat makes communities of practice successful is their ability to generate enough excitement, relevance and value to attract and engage members... [N]othing can substitute for this sense of aliveness” (Conclusion section, ¶ 2).

Selwyn (2000) describes online discussion groups as transitory, in which good and fruitful discussions can only happen if they are spontaneous and voluntary. They are also unpredictable, which means that interest by members of the community can become higher or low depending on what is being discussed.

Matters related to the CTL space are also discussed in the “Perspective” subcategories within both “Problems in General” and “Communication Problems”. The CTL resource is also briefly covered in “Communication – Positive Aspects”.

*The CTL is a great idea, but I do **not** see huge amounts of activity there. The CTL is **not** a good substitute for face-to-face meetings. [Boldface used by the respondent.]*

I get very little from webcast events, and less from the CTL discussions.

The CTL is like the auto section in a newspaper. I will only look at it, first, if I am interested in buying a car at that point, and second, if they are showing the car I'm actually thinking of buying. Otherwise it has no meaning to me.

I'm not sure I understand the mandate of the CTL. I don't find it that helpful. Not sure what I should be going there for. The discussions are asynchronous and often out of date.

I have not been motivated to take advantage of live meetings or CTL.....I do not feel the sense of affiliation to take the time to participate in these.

I wasn't aware just this technology was available.

My impression is that there is much competition in the CTL discussions. Something like, "I know more than you."

The CTL fluctuates in terms of benefits.

You'd have to have a sense of community to use the CTL, so...

Some people are trying to say something good in order to create change; however, many are there just to be seen in order to be able to continue teaching and get more money.

Property: PA System (Code Yellow)

Given the expressed concerns regarding BU's current performance assessment (PA) practices and an overall desire for more helpful feedback, this property of BU's practices is clearly one that requires attention. The discontent lies in the fact that many

instructors do not receive tailored comments on their job performance, at least not from someone in a management position. Few have received individual feedback from a faculty coach; moreover, a coach will not necessarily have expertise in the faculty member's teaching area. Some expressed unhappiness regarding the practice whereby coaches review one course at random when conducting an assessment of an instructor's performance. They feel this may not be a fair practice, given that some courses may go better than others.

A significant number of respondents indicated that they never heard feedback about their performance, other than in student end-of-course (EOC) surveys – which are subject to biases, especially when students express their views only after learning their final grades for the course. There is also a distinct impression among many adjuncts that if someone in management contacts them regarding their performance, usually it is to discuss a problem and not a situation in which the instructor deserves praise.

Ng (2006) acknowledges how challenging performance evaluations of virtual workers can be. Nevertheless, managers must provide “provide clear descriptions of performance measures, evaluate and provide feedback regularly” (Issues for the Organization, Remote Management section, ¶ 2). The reliance on student evaluations is problematic and certainly flawed. Hickman (1998) underscores this serious problem in quoting P. D. Lesko, head of the National Adjunct Guild:

How can a professor teach when her only evaluation comes from her students? I've heard stories about adjuncts giving nothing but Bs. They were so afraid of losing their appointment that they didn't even bother to teach and just tried to keep the students happy.

Gordon (2003) alludes to the same issue in noting, “it has been stated that part-time faculty tend to be more concerned with student evaluations than their full-time

counterparts, because their term to term employment is often based on this feedback” (p. 5). Edmonson and Fisher (2002) emphasize that faculty must receive direct feedback from management, with transparency in all evaluation procedures, as well as in how feedback will be given and used for improvement.

The comments that follow overlap with some of those made in the subcategory/property “Treatment/No Customized Contact with Management”. Here are the descriptive comments offered by participants:

Why are we evaluated based on only one course taught during the past year? When I have a course that has not gone well in my view, I usually think, “Gee, I hope they don’t pick this course.”

I have no idea how my performance is evaluated by management. I haven’t seen any guidelines for how performance appraisals are conducted, or how often they occur, or even if they are done. I’d like to hear occasionally that what I’m doing is right.

Students have A LOT of power when they complete the EOC surveys. What do people really know about me at BU?

Another thing that needs to happen is better one-on-one meetings with chairs so that faculty can be aware of what they are doing well and what they can improve. These should be done at least every other year. I don’t feel that faculty members outside of our own department can offer the kind of fair evaluation necessary. Also, coaches should not snoop into my courses without being invited.

In order to have longevity at the institution, you need to know how you’re doing.

Tell me something I’ve done that is good. Once I made a minor mistake and I had the most patronizing call, in which the manager said, “Don’t you ever EVER do that again!”

I’ve had talks in which I felt I was being sent to my room.

I guess I’m doing a reasonable job because I still keep receiving courses to teach. The only time I have personal contact initiated by the Dean or with administration executives is when I am in trouble

or when I am being formally acknowledged. There is no informal contact to “touch shoulders” or give encouragement.

They should reach [out] to the faculty member when students praise them, instead of when students complain.

For me, the primary factor is feedback. I want to know what kind of job I am doing. And, this should not be solely predicated on student evaluations, nor should feedback be given only when there is problem or concern.

Administrators’ views on what will keep faculty members satisfied on the job are by no means far from those expressed by participants during the interviews.

Administrative staff understand the value of constant, customized communication, opportunities for professional development, high-level response and support systems, recognition of adjuncts’ services and facilitating interaction with other members of the school, regardless of their ranking. The great divide between their perspective and that of faculty reflects the distance – as discussed earlier – between idealistic views on what *should be* and the reality of what *is*.

Managers did not speak specifically about academic freedom, benefits, guarantee of work for adjuncts or even current professional assessment systems. However, they certainly touched on the need for constant communication, including via virtual means such as the CTL. They also spoke of the importance of professional development events. And they seemed to want to make clear that practices established by the school will never satisfy everyone’s needs, given that individual faculty members have differing preferences and life/work circumstances.

Administrators’ comments included:

I think their needs are across the board. Some want to be involved in as many university activities as possible while others only want to teach and otherwise be left alone.

I do suspect, however, that we could easily over-generalize here by lumping all adjuncts into one group and assume they all want the same socialization.

Generalizations are not helpful. It's the diversity and the range of adjuncts' interests that are important.

Other specific comments were:

From an administrative perspective, we have much to learn from the adjuncts about our students, our courses, and the adjuncts—how we can provide services and supports that will help them do even better with our students. [Response/Support]

Faculty must be recognized for their good work and accomplishments and regular meetings between the deans and their respective faculty should be encouraged and maintained. [Recognition/PA]

We have established professional development opportunities for adjuncts which are not used very much and we need to do more of that. [PD]

We have to pay attention to their work so you can mention highlights with them...people do like to be noticed and thanked. [Recognition/PA]

Some may be reluctant [to participate in CTL discussions] because they don't know each other and don't want to speak up in a crowd of strangers; for others, they are more interested in one-on-one communication. I believe that many read the discussions thoughtfully even if they don't contribute. [CTL]

Faculty need to know and can learn strategies to increase student motivation and performance along with well-designed courses. We should be helping with that! [PD]

I think the quality of the students is really important and that will keep faculty here if that's an issue – if we recruit good students and have good support networks and systems for them. [Quality of students]

We have traditionally engaged in some front end activities that could indirectly build some loyalty (training, coaching, etc), but we don't sustain it very well. [Recognition/PA/PD]

We do offer adjuncts the opportunity to participate in professional development activities – and we provide funding for these opportunities. I think we are unique in this regard. Interestingly, almost no adjuncts take advantage of these funds. [PD]

We offer blogs, groups, asynchronous meetings, and the like, but some colleges/deans do it more than others. [CTL]

The personal bond with administrators, other faculty members, and/or students is what gives us a sense of camaraderie. Frequent contact and interaction is a must. [Recognition/PA]

Category: Communication Problems

When creating this category, the researcher considered merging it with the previous “Problems in General” category, for obvious reasons: They both expose issues of concern that arose during the interviews with faculty. However, on deeper reflection, it was decided that this should be a distinct category, given the magnitude of negative comments specifically related to if, how and when faculty members are informed of school matters, and to the exchange ideas with management and peers. Indeed, because many issues raised in the previous category overlap with the ones covered here, in the third phase of analysis (i.e., selective coding) the researcher considered “Communication Problems” as the chief category in this whole study. Most of the adjuncts interviewed in this research identified a critical need for more depth and frequency of information exchange between BU and its faculty, regardless of the means used.

Four subcategories were identified:

Subcategory: Perspective

Under this subcategory, faculty members’ individual points of view about a particular issue are explored. They described some problems related to the technology employed by BU, as well as their personal preferences with regard to blogging activity. It

is of essential importance, however, to note that all properties under this subcategory received the code green. The reason for this colour is simple – less than five individuals complained about any BU technology-related matter. In fact, as will be seen later in this document (in the “Praise” category), technology is one of, if not *the* main reason that adjuncts continue teaching for BU.

Property: Technology (Code Green)

Sub-Property: CTL Design (Code Green)

This relates to negative opinions regarding the location of the CTL portal on the BU website and how difficult it is to find threads of faculty’s interest. Two individuals were frustrated by their inability to easily identify new messages posted in the CTL space, and by the confusing navigation of all the blogs. One individual described a faculty lounge at another school as if there is nothing similar at BU.

At the other institution they have a very active faculty lounge, which I always visit to see what’s happening. Usually the discussions are about schoolwork and technical issues. We don’t have that at BU. I’m not sure if it’s the format of the CTL, but it does not call my attention.

The CTL blogs are confusing. It’s hard to keep up unless you access it on a daily basis.

Sub-Property: Clumsy Synchronous Technology (Code Green)

In this case, a few instructors expressed their belief that the current synchronous technology used by BU is not being used to its full potential because of audio-visual shortcomings. They also spoke of their irritation over the fact that faculty can only participate in webcast discussions by typing their comments in a chat box; while presenters use the audio-visual resources, individuals attending the presentations cannot

do the same. In the event they wish to express an opinion or ask a question, they must use a chat box, which to some can be distracting, confusing and tedious.

The audience is too big, the conversations too disjointed.

Synchronous discussion is TERRIBLE if technology is not there. So far technology is being developed and tested by Cisco and IBM. I don't like Adobe, the one used by BU. Also, live meetings are good as far as the topic is good. Bad presenter = bad webcasts.

The webcasts are good only for groups of small people [sic]; otherwise it's not.

The Webcasts are probably far better than the message boards, but BU doesn't really use the tool as much as they might. We generally use it when there is something that needs to be conveyed by Admin to the adjuncts, but there isn't any real interaction among the faculty themselves.

I like the idea of live meetings. It provides more of a sense of connection. However, once again, in my opinion, there really is no substitute for face to face contact.

Property: Personal. Sub-Property: Dislike of Blogging (Code Green)

A couple of instructors, in discussing their own tastes and preferences related to technology, admitted to having virtually no interest in posting individual opinions and thoughts for others to read online. This arose when the CTL resource was being discussed.

I'm a different generation. Technology just doesn't come naturally with me.

I'm not a blog person. The CTL doesn't work well for me.

Brindley et al. (2002) articulate the importance of providing faculty with technical training in order for them to find technology useful and beneficial in their interactions with students, colleagues and school administrators. They recognize that it is challenging

for some faculty to fully embrace technology, but with steady guidance this obstacle can be overcome.

Conner (2003) points out that individuals working from a distance will put more or less effort into engaging in virtual discussions and understanding how the environment works, depending on their need for affiliation: “A highly educated worker with low affiliation needs may find adapting to a job with high social isolation far easier (even desirable) than a worker with high affiliation needs” (p. 144). Still, Jackson and Gharavi (2006) explain that a well-managed virtual discussion space has the potential to “increase staff identification with the organization not by increasing admiration for the culture, but by placing the organization in a position of providing the forum for the self-realization of the individual worker through professional expression and relationships” (p. 240). Leask and Younie (as cited in Selwyn, 2000) underline the fact that, “however well established online forums become, there will continue to be a continuum of teacher participant user types, from the phobic to the fully integrated, with a sizeable proportion of teachers failing to make full use of such resources” (p. 774).

Subcategory: Consequences (Code Red)

Once again the “Consequences” subcategory emerges, this time reflecting matters exclusively related to any communication practices (or lack thereof) by the institution. Four properties were identified. Given the overwhelming number of comments in which faculty are conspicuously hoping for more interaction with peers and management, all properties have received code red. Moreover, there is a great deal of overlap among them.

Topics such as isolation, low sense of camaraderie with peers, and distance from management are all interrelated. There are many studies in the current research literature exposing the social drawbacks of working at a distance from co-workers and leadership.

In a study designed to explore structures that can encourage the enhancement of teaching skills and practices among virtual faculty, Kanuka, Jugdev, Heller and West (2007) found plenty of comments related to isolation. Some examples worth-mentioning:

- Tele-commuting has failed as an experiment because it has virtually killed collegiality, intellectual cross-fertilization, and the social dimension of the workplace
- Distance teaching is a very isolating experience
- [Faculty want and] need many more opportunities for collegial interaction
- Social exchanges are invaluable and cost of doing so every two months worth it (p. 162).

Typically, faculty who work in isolation must end up achieving proficiency on their own (Selwyn, 2000). Eib and Miller (2006) speak about isolation from colleagues and management, contending that if feelings of isolation, lack of camaraderie and lack of belonging linger for too long, they may “progress toward exasperation, disillusionment, and the eventual alienation of faculty” (Literature Highlights, Faculty Isolation and the Impact on the Organization section, ¶ 1).

Nelson (2002) contends that as an organization increases distance from its workers, communication levels must be increased in the same proportion. Both parties, management and workers, have to make an honest effort to keep in touch. Technology must be used for real communication and not merely for the delivery of data. Wiesenfeld et al. (2001) state that when individuals feel strongly connected to management and colleagues, and are socially supported, they are prone to feeling more valued and thus have an incentive to remain loyal to the institution. And, according to Hill et al. (2003),

“[a] motivated employee will be more likely to use individual talents and discretionary time to achieve organizational objectives” (p. 233). On the other hand, feeling disconnected from others in the organization can have harmful effects on performance, because the individual may feel he or she has no one to rely on when problems surface.

Brindley et al. (2002) describe this phenomenon in detail:

Being in a remote location means not having anyone that you can spontaneously chat with about practice, not having someone immediately present when you run into technical glitches or other problems (mostly due to inexperience but which could be cleared up so easily if one could run next door to an experienced colleague), not having anyone with whom to share perceptions and reflections at the time they occur, and sometimes, quite literally, not knowing how to do something and spending a great deal of time trying to figure it out independent of assistance (Challenges and Ongoing Issues, ¶ 1).

Property: Isolation (Code Red)

A number of respondents talked about their feelings of alienation from others – of being on their own, unable to count on help from management or peers.

I do not interact with anyone at BU much at all, except for during my first class when I receive emails from my mentor on a regular basis.

Besides management, I don't know the faculty as well, although there are a few that I connect with from time to time in meetings or pilots. I notice that the core faculty has less connection with us than in the past...

I do not know any other team members to be part of a team. I am in no way connected to other faculty members.

Sometimes, I think I ask for help because I'm not confident. And, I relate that lack of confidence to my feelings of isolation. If I had more interactions with faculty, I would have more than my own experiences to draw from when faced with issues.

I find part time teaching a lonely pursuit and on-line teaching exacerbates that experience (not sure if it would be different for full time). I think this is the prime contributor to any dissatisfaction I experience. I don't feel particularly connected to anyone in

management and long for interaction with peers.

I only communicate with Marisa and even then it's only to discuss scheduling. I had my coach in the beginning, but after some time, never heard from him again. I'd love to know who else is teaching.

Property: No Sense of Camaraderie or Community (Code Red)

One of the greatest sources of aggravation that surfaced during the interviews was a perceived lack of fellowship among faculty members. According to many respondents, there is a strong sense of disconnection from the faculty group; few recognized any sense of mutual interest and support. Respondents talked at length about wishing they had opportunities to work in collaboration with others.

At [X] University and [Y] University where I taught for quite some time, the supervisors would call each of us at least once every two months to keep us in the loop and make us feel like we were part of a team. Things like that go a long way to making a person feel as part of a community. This doesn't happen at BU.

I highly value a sense of camaraderie with management and peers, but it is pretty non-existent in both cases as I have experienced it over the past four years working at BU.

[Camaraderie] could be important, if we were united in pursuing some meaningful purpose and vision, adding value, learning, growing, improving, aspiring to be the best we can be, instead of doing the same things over and over, going through the motions, cranking out courses and graduates. Given the current approach, it's not very important to me. I feel kind of alone in trying to do these things.

I greatly appreciate working in an environment where there is a sense of camaraderie. It serves as an excellent socialization tool and also makes for a happier working environment. I realize that it is difficult to achieve this in a virtual situation, but my feeling is that it can be done. I do not think BU makes any substantive effort to achieve this. I feel that the journey is hardly underway and there is a vast road ahead on which team options can be regularly built.

I have a busy job so am not looking for friendship per se, although BU is somewhat amiss in terms of building a learning community

of its faculty. The connections I have are very slim and I have no idea who runs BU or whom to turn to if I experience a problem, beyond the tech folks. It's not exactly a de-motivator, but it does make me vulnerable to being recruited elsewhere if I had the gumption to look for another online teaching appointment.

There isn't much holding me back at BU. I don't know others. There is no peer pressure to stay because there is no sense of community.

Property: Discomfort in Contacting Unknown Management (Code Red)

A significant number of instructors shared their feelings of unease over contacting members of senior management who are largely unknown to them.

I've never had a conversation with anyone. The only reason I see rare e-mails from my dean is because there are general announcements and not because this person is touching base with me individually.

Besides Marisa, I only interact with student advisors because I have interest in improving things for my students.

I used to feel that I could pick up the phone any time and call the VP of Instruction, but since the reorganization into Deans, I don't feel that. I am sure that I could call, but I don't have a relationship with the deans and would feel uncomfortable making that first call.

BU management seems to fully appreciate what can result from less-than-ideal communication between management and faculty, as well as among faculty members. They also speculate about why many instructors are not fully involved in CTL discussions, citing lack of time plus personal preferences, among other possible reasons.

I think I would be one of them—not much time and no questions ☺! Some may be reluctant because they don't know each other and don't want to speak up in a crowd of strangers; for others, they are more interested in one-on-one communication. I believe that many read the discussions thoughtfully even if they don't contribute. I think the instrumental answer is that they want to get an answer to a question or a sense of where their ideas stand among their peers and colleagues. Others are grandstanding. Others find the conversation to be valuable to them. Again, generalizations are not

helpful. It's the diversity and the range of adjuncts' interests that are important.

I don't imagine [adjuncts] value too much camaraderie with managers, but I suspect that they do have a strong desire to connect with fellow faculty. Absolutely the presence or absence of that bond/connectedness will affect motivation. I've seen many, many faculty members (adjunct and FT) motivated by peers (i.e., to not let them down, to impress them, to help achieve the goals, to fight for the cause, etc.) and motivated by leaders. I'm always concerned about motivation, but have a great deal of trust in our faculty.

I know what most of them do in their other "lives", but I don't have a personal relationship with any that I haven't met personally for the most part.

From my limited involvement, I think there is a value in camaraderie. I would think the bond would affect an instructor's motivation.

I believe that all online instructors have to be very self-motivated and, not ironically (considering this survey), they need to be able to work in isolation. They don't get to have hallway conversations, interactions in the dining hall, in the coffee shop, etc. – and that seems to be the nature of the beast for online instructors in general. Perhaps even more true for online adjuncts faculty.

I think you must assess this on a college by college basis. In [my college], we have regular faculty meetings and daily interaction via the email.

We offer blogs, groups, asynchronous meetings, and the like, but some colleges/deans do it more than others.

The last two comments echo what Roueche and Roueche (as cited in Gordon, 2003) describe when referring to the integration of faculty with their institution and peers: in cases where an integration strategy is used by leadership, it "is a product of each individual administrator or department head, resulting in vast inconsistencies in the way integration is approached and carried out" (p. 7).

And once again, a manager makes the need for communication relevant:

The personal bond, with administrators, other faculty members, and/or students is what gives us a sense of camaraderie. Frequent contact and interaction is a must.

Subcategory: Practices (Code Red)

The focus in this subcategory is those administrative routines adopted by the institution in trying to keep its faculty members informed. This is another red-coded subcategory, in which all properties resonate serious flaws in communication as reported by instructors.

Levinson (2005) contends that in order to retain online adjunct faculty, institutions must put significant effort into ample and frequent communication. Often, long periods of time pass without adjuncts having any awareness of the latest events at the institution they teach for. Keeping workers informed and providing feedback on their performance is critical to reduce feelings of insecurity and to promote self-esteem (Conner, 2003). When communication is already compromised by the absence of visual cues in the virtual work environment, it is of utmost importance for organizations to find the means to keep their employees up to date on critical matters.

Briggs (2005) also alerts institutions to the danger of leaving faculty uncertain as to what exactly is expected of them, as well as what roles various individuals play in the organizational structure. In citing Marrelli and Rizzo et al., Briggs emphasizes that if organizations are to respond effectively to change, roles must become clear to all stakeholders: “[L]ack of role clarity is the root cause of many organizational personnel problems and [...] role clarity gives a sense of belonging, a feeling of personal significance and a sense of continuity” (p. 258). Additionally, clarity of communication

helps prevent threats such as employee dissatisfaction, problems in performance and low retention.

Nelson (2002) affirms that virtual workers must be constantly reassured that they are trusted so they can trust management in return. Managers must make clear to virtual employees that they have faith in their competence, and this should be done “through open, honest and regular communication to sustain strong, trusting relationships” (Build a Foundation of Trust section, ¶ 5).

Property: Lack of Clarity (Code Red)

Many respondents spoke about feeling “left in the dark” regarding essential academic and institutional matters. They expressed surprise and even indignation over the fact that they are not clear on BU’s mission, vision, goals, policies, strategic plans, structural matters and so on. Worse, many complain about not knowing who is who on the management team.

I refer back to the conference calls each quarter so that we can actually learn the names of the people we work with! Like I stated, I do not even know who the chair of the department is.

I have not attended any of the webcasts as of this point, nor have I ever received an invitation to attend (and that is a bigger issue towards feeling like a part of the team)!

I would like more interaction with BU management to better understand the vision of the new organization.

Each faculty member and adjunct should have a clear understanding of what’s expected, and then be evaluated based on the formalized criteria.

There have been a lot of changes/growth in those positions and I’m not sure they know who I am.

BU is abstract for me and as far as I can tell, is run like a business. I am not even sure what city it's based in; that is somewhat confusing: Chicago or New York?

It could be nice to be informed. The accreditation approval date was not provided to faculty, for example, until well after the fact. The changes to the course platform are not spelled out.

Although the organizational chart changes regularly, there is no way that I am aware of to determine who sits in what role at a point in time, nor how to contact them.

Just basic stats on the university -- # of students by program, future plans, and such would give a sense of where the institution is going. BU is not doing enough. Even email communications or, heaven forbid, paper, would communicate more.

I would feel a greater sense of affiliation if I was confident that senior management was sharing – accurately – sensitive information.

Whatever happened to Charles Green? No one ever told us what happened. [This comment refers to the abrupt exit of one of the managers and the fact that faculty only learned of the individual's departure casually, as if the matter had already been covered in a formal announcement.]*

Communication at BU is passive, not active.

Getting information out of BU is like pulling teeth from a pitbull.

Property: Poor Frequency of Communication (Code Red)

Here the overall concern was over the lack of opportunities to exchange ideas with others or to communicate with management. Respondents say they are often left wondering, without answers, regarding matters related to the school.

I note that faculty meetings are less frequent in the last couple of years than they used to be. I think that it would be good to improve the communication between management and adjunct faculty, as I find that there is less communication now than in the past.

* Fictitious name given to former manager.

I think that periodic meetings would deepen my sense of affiliation with the university.

I'm not really satisfied with the frequency of communication.

I consider that interaction is good considering that we face an on-line teaching environment. However, this could be improved incorporating personal interaction through scheduled meetings twice a year.

It's important that faculty's concerns (such as course updates) are addressed in a timely manner.

As was evident in the previous subcategory, “Consequences”, BU management seem to recognize the value of regular communication with and among faculty; however, there is an apparent discrepancy between what BU leadership considers good communication practices and faculty’s perception of reality.

Subcategory: Strategy (Code Red)

In discussing feelings of isolation, many instructors explained how they cope with not having easy and prompt access to peers, school staff and management. For some, the most negative aspect of isolation is the fact that they cannot discuss academic issues with others whenever they feel the need; for others, it is the social isolation that is disturbing at times, given that most of these adjuncts work from home and have no opportunities for “live chats” with work colleagues.

Menchaca and Benkele (2008) note that at least two factors play a critical role in determining instructors’ and students’ success in the online educational environment. One is technology-related: the course platform, infrastructure and support are vital to their success. Having access to a variety of interaction resources, such as asynchronous, synchronous and multimedia materials, is key to ensuring a satisfactory experience in this environment. Moreover, users’ level of comfort and experience with technology must be

taken into account. The second vital success factor is the level of administrative support. This includes “helpdesks, support teaching staff, technical training, faculty professional development opportunities, and update of the technologic pool” (235).

Brindley et al. (2002) agree on the critical importance of faculty support provided by the institution, noting that support staff must be able to help instructors “move in the direction of self-support in order to remain scalable” (Staff Support section, ¶ 19). They assert that support staff must function like educational consultants rather than merely offering technical advice. Help must also be delivered promptly to avoid a significant level of anxiety and frustration, which will only further exacerbate faculty’s and students’ feelings of isolation.

Here are the comments by instructors on how they deal with isolation on a routine basis:

If I have a problem, I’ll go after someone to help. I’m extroverted enough to ask questions.

I drop by at BU from time to time just so I don’t feel so disconnected.

I try to make contact with other faculty.

I know there is one person I can contact in the instruction department if I need help.

If I don’t get the quick help when I need it, I improvise. I find my own solutions.

I just go about my business with my students.

I scan the CTL to see if there’s anything that interests me.

I contact Marisa and my coach from time to time, but I have to put up with isolation because I need the job.

I teach my courses and assess my own performance. I don't worry about if and how much BU values me.

I interact with other educators to not feel alone. Either educators or people who understand my work.

I go about my business in my courses. But then I go out for coffee with friends so I can satisfy my need for face-to-face contact with people.

Once again, BU managers seem to have arrived at the correct formula for dealing with faculty's sense of isolation. During the interviews, they talked about the importance of supporting their instructors while acknowledging the importance of satisfying social needs:

Providing excellent service to adjuncts – timely responses to their questions, pleas for help, technical assistance, and listening to their advice...very important.

I suspect that this reality causes adjuncts to feed their social/psychological connectedness needs in other ways (external to the university engagement).

Category: Motivators

The magnitude of the impact on faculty of the problems discussed so far can be better assessed in light of the factors that stimulate positive performance in the online educational environment. Under this category, the researcher presents motivators that appear to inspire enthusiasm for the job among instructors interviewed in this study. Taking into account the two previous categories (“Problems in General” and “Communication Problems”) as well as one of the categories to follow (“Praise”), it becomes even easier to recognize what BU is providing in these areas – and what the institution should be working on to better satisfy faculty's needs.

Gordon (2003) aptly declares that “[a] large proportion of universally dissatisfied part-time faculty will likely have a pervasively negative impact on the quality of education throughout higher education” (p. 6). Therefore, satisfying the needs of these instructors should be a goal of every institution. And, contrary to speculation, research has shown that adjuncts, despite earning lower salaries than their full-time peers and receiving virtually no benefits, are productive and reasonably satisfied with their jobs (Anderson, 2002). Gordon (2003) adds that “many of these [instructors] are not teaching for the financial benefit, but for other reasons, such as to stay fresh in the field or just the satisfaction of teaching” (p. 7).

Giannoni and Tesone (n.d.) identified intrinsic or personal factors as being the main sources of motivation for online instructors. These factors included: “(a) providing innovative instruction; (b) applying new teaching techniques; (c) self-gratification; (d) fulfilling a personal desire to teach; (e) recognition of work; and (f) peer recognition” (Attraction, Motivation and Inspiration section, ¶ 4). Baker, Redfield and Tonkin (2006) concur by stressing that online faculty are moved by a deep desire to make the learning experience increasingly rich for their students. For the experience to be more rewarding for students, most adjuncts seem to agree that successful integration to the institution is also essential (Gordon, 2003).

The following quotations reflect respondents’ own tastes and preferences in reflecting on what makes an online education workplace exciting and motivating. Interestingly, they faithfully exemplify what was elucidated in the literature cited above.

Subcategory: Sense of Camaraderie (Code Yellow)

A number of instructors spoke enthusiastically about how a sense of mutual trust and collegial regard among faculty can be energizing:

My motivators are multiple – from supplementary income to potential collaboration with other faculty.

Contact with others online is important because we lose the personal touch.

It would be nice to visit other courses to see how other people might teach the same course.

Task forces for adjuncts can be motivating and it reduces the workload for the university. Having good colleagues is very important, and they do exist at BU.

Connection with the students and some faculty at BU is motivating. I have not had enough connection with other faculty.

It is helpful to be able to know who your colleagues are; some who understand what you're going through.

Learning from one another – that's a great incentive.

Subcategory: Learning While Teaching (Code Green)

A few instructors talked about the pleasure of acquiring additional knowledge and experience, either from students or through exploring the technology used in teaching.

What motivates me is learning, keeping up with the field, enabling the learning and performance of others, making a difference, sense of competence, interest. [This comment also fits under the properties labelled "Service to students" and "Recognition".]

I find I learn something new every time I teach a course because students come from such different work settings.

I use the content to tune up my own understanding, since up to 20% of my time is involved with instructional technology.

I am positive that I learn more from my BU students than they learn from me. Because they are all working in the real world with fabulous jobs they bring so much to the table.

Subcategory: Service to Students (Code Red)

An overwhelming number of instructors spoke about feeling a great sense of accomplishment when they see evidence that they have made a positive difference in their students' lives.

The biggest intrinsic motivator for me is to see my students being able to apply (almost) immediately what they learn in class.

The best intrinsic motivator for me is watching the proverbial “light bulb” go off for the students. That moment where we can see that they “get it” and understand what you are trying to teach them! While it is more prominent in an on-ground classroom because of facial expressions, I can still tell when it happens in the online environment because the level of detail in the assignments increases and the papers (should the class require them) have a better flow to them regarding the material.

I am motivated by doing a good job, by getting positive feedback from my students and from knowing that I helped them to understand the course material and to do well in the courses. [The comment above also fits under “Recognition”.]

I want to inspire at least a few of my learners to go above their comfort level and recognize coasting through an MBA program is a waste [of] out-of-pocket costs and opportunity costs.

Intrinsically, I love knowing that the students I teach are participating in furthering their teaching abilities. I get so many ideas from them! They share examples of lessons, classroom management, children’s literature, and other resources!

Intrinsic motivator – that is easy. I love teaching and this love really motivates me to do my very best.

I try to constantly remind myself that teaching is not about me. It is about helping others.

Subcategory: Online Education & Lifestyle Combination (Code Green)

This property reflects faculty's personal preferences, as well as their appreciation for the flexibility of teaching in an asynchronous environment, without space or time restrictions.

I like the flexibility of teaching online. I like to be able to fit it into my schedule.

I like working at my leisure and from home.

I'm retired, so this is a great way to continue having a positive impact on other people.

Teaching in an on-line environment suits my personality and lifestyle. It's interesting work and there is flexibility in terms of schedule and location.

I also like teaching classes within my discipline for which I have a passion.

Subcategory: Compensation (Code Red)

Compensation and financial rewards or incentives seem to be given serious consideration when faculty are discussing the topic of motivation. As was suggested in the literature reviewed above, most instructors value getting paid after each course, even though compensation seems less important than their love for teaching and serving their students well.

I am motivated by being paid for doing a good job.

I am motivated by fair compensation.

Money is always a strong motivator.

I value an adequate compensation for the time dedicated to my teaching activities.

The extra salary is appreciated and commiserate [sic] with the amount of time I spend teaching.

What motivates me is working for an institution which treats faculty fairly and by this I mean an institution that compensates fairly, recognizes effort and performance and is transparent and clear in their communication of policies, procedures as well as what is happening at the university. [This comment clearly fits under “Recognition” as well.]

My only extrinsic motivation is money... I have three kids in college!

Subcategory: Practices (Code Red)

Administrative routines adopted by the institution are once again explored in this subcategory; however, here the focus is on practices as source of motivation on the job. Other than isolated comments regarding the value placed on guarantees of work (see “Practices” under “Problems in General” above), recognition seems to be a crucial element in motivating many faculty members.

Property: Recognition (Code Red)

For a substantial number of respondents, acknowledgment of outstanding performance, as well as opportunities for advancement within the academic ranks, play a critical role in creating satisfaction on the job. For many, recognition seems much more important than financial compensation – once again, as covered in the literature review that introduced this category. These individuals are moved by the desire to make a difference in their students’ lives and be recognized for their value.

Although not many comments have been included below, the researcher nevertheless decided to code this property red. The urgency of the label reflects the significant number of times that faculty spoke about recognition during the interviews and in the questionnaire responses – not only as a motivator, but as a problem in

situations where they do not see their value fairly acknowledged by the institution (see “Problems in General”/”Treatment” above).

Extrinsic motivators include public recognition of work well done.

I like receiving positive comments form students.

I value challenging goals and recognition.

For me, the student evaluations are extremely important.

Subcategory: Work Tools (Code Yellow)

In this subcategory, the focus is on materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses as a source of motivation for instructors.

Property: High-Quality Technology (Code Yellow)

Two instructors expressed their enthusiasm at being able to count on reliable and intuitive technical resources for teaching. Only two quotes are included below; however, the property received code yellow because it is explored again under the “Praise” category. High-quality technology seems to be the main reason why some instructors remain teaching for BU.

Money is always nice, but a crisp learning platform, readily used by even low-skill, computer inexperienced students helps to reduce time spent dealing with students’ confusion unrelated to the course content. I am motivated by the opportunity to represent a top-notch university, which provides modern technology and multimedia to the students rather than mere words on a page threaded courses.

I like the skill development involved in teaching virtually on-line across the continent or between continents. Using the BU platform and Adobe Connect is very value adding for me. [This comment also characterizes the “Learning while teaching” property, as well as praise for the technology adopted by BU, to be covered later in this chapter.]

As has been the case in previous categories, BU administrators seem to have keen awareness of what motivates their adjuncts. Here are their comments:

I think the intrinsic motivators are the individuals' dedication to professionalism and the genuine desire to want to do a great job. Extrinsic rewards would be remuneration.

That we have a lot of adjuncts earning what we pay them can mean a lot of different things – that they are so desperate for additional income that they will work for such a little amount of money; that they do this for the intrinsic reward of helping people achieve their goals or share their knowledge and enthusiasm about their field with others; that they don't need the money, but have extra time and this is a pleasant way for them to spend it. There is no way to generalize [about] this. ... I think we don't get some really excellent adjuncts because the pay is so low but we do have a lot of very good ones in spite of that. Would I recommend paying them more? Absolutely.

As a former adjunct, I'll tell you that this one is all over the place too. Money is always important, but for some, it's less important than we think. We have a number of adjuncts who could make (and do) much more money than they do as adjuncts (i.e., consulting or more hours at their "day job"). Yet, they choose to teach. Well, that has to speak to motivation. Recognition, respect, interaction, idea generation, desire to change lives...these are all motivators beyond money that seem to be important to our adjuncts.

I do think that BU has some sense of [what motivates faculty]. I hope and believe much of it comes from the core values of the place – and the commitment to be something a little better than other online institutions. I think people are proud of being affiliated with BU. Perhaps the legacy schools afforded us that luxury (U of Chicago, Stanford, etc), and perhaps the platform/virtual campus helps. I think that pride goes a very long way to make up for any perceived shortcomings.

Category: Communication – Positive Aspects

Given the value that faculty place on communication with the institution and fellow faculty members – and recognizing the problems already reported in this regard – it seems only fair to present as well the positive features of the channels routinely used by

BU to exchange information. Thus, BU and other online institutions can deepen their understanding of what works well when the goal is to keep faculty informed on institutional affairs.

(To avoid repetition – and once again demonstrating how the themes and patterns found in this study seem to overlap extensively – research literature related to this and the following section has not been included.)

Subcategory: Work Tools

The subcategory “Work Tools” emerges once again, particularly in participants’ positive impressions of the materials, resources and technology used in course delivery.

Property: Suitable Technology for Orientation and Training (Code Yellow)

A number of respondents were of the opinion that BU’s current technology platform can be used effectively for orientation and training, without the need for an initial face-to-face session. Some instructors expressed enthusiasm for face-to-face orientation and training of new faculty; this was especially true for those respondents who had the opportunity to experience this type of session in BU’s formative years. Nevertheless, many of these faculty believe BU is now well equipped to accomplish the same task from a distance with very good results.

With the tools that are available today, I think we can do it virtually.

Learning to use the platform and becoming familiar with the structure of the courses was achieved at a distance, and that is the way students will learn. Good for orientation, training.

I don’t wish my initial training had been conducted face-to-face because it worked the way I did.

There's no need for face-to-face orientation. We have what it takes at BU. Besides, it would be a paradox – why do we need that if students never get to meet in person?

I had face-to-face orientation when I started and it was great. But now technology is much better for orientation.

F2F orientation? No, it doesn't matter. What BU offers online is good; unless you have no experience in online teaching.

Property: CTL/Webcast (Code Red)

Here are some positive views of BU's online communication channels – the CTL space (for asynchronous exchanges) and Adobe Acrobat Connect technology (for synchronous discussions):

We should continue to learn to use the best methods to work together remotely, so that the absence of face-to-face contact becomes less and less of an issue. The current methods are a start.

The CTL and webcasts are good substitutes for face-to-face meetings! I would still recommend at least one yearly face-to-face meeting, but conference calls and webcasts will work as good substitutes until the yearly meeting arrives.

The Center for Teaching and Learning discussions are a good start. It is satisfactory to me.

Blogs and discussion forums are probably filling the void.

CTL and webcasts are an excellent vehicle for substituting for face to face meetings and disseminate information very efficiently and effectively.

I choose BU because of the value of learning to use its advanced technology platforms and program designs to teach in virtual world. I do a lot of face2face in the corporate environment. I am just starting to offer webinars in corporations. BU experience adds value to my services.

I've used the webcast to be informed about issues at BU. Even though I consider it very important; I do not think it is a substitute for face-to-face meetings. Human nature perhaps.

Property: Feedback Channels (Code Green)

The comments below illustrate faculty members' opinions on the media used by BU to help instructors communicate their ideas and provide feedback on issues of interest.

BU is doing a good job with the live meeting facility in the courses. It could be used more frequently for faculty updates.

As long as such meetings are held throughout the year, they can be a good substitute for face-to-face meetings.

One school uses live chats, which are good. Live chats or meetings make the connection with faculty and management more personal. I can ask questions (type) that are answered immediately.

I personally enjoy webinars and Go to Meetings with live synchronous participation.

Property: Course Platform (Code Red)

Respondents showed a significant level of satisfaction with BU's web-based course management and delivery system.

I feel that the online platform better facilitates a relationship with students than other platforms that I have used.

BU has a platform which is user friendly while the other institution uses newsrooms.

The BU platform is quite dependable and stable.

The learning platform is aesthetically pleasing. It is user-friendly. The course materials are top-notch. There is a live go to meeting portal and an instant message communication avenue for students. There are audio video materials in many of the classes. This reaches more students than just words.

BU provides instructional and material support so that instructors only have to concentrate on the students. There are small groups so that every student gets personal attention. The administration

backs you all the way and provide webcasts and a variety of communications to make sure that you are in the loop.

BU has all the tools available for communications and I don't know of anything that is available that BU doesn't have, except projected holograms.

The BU platform is definitely an incentive to stay. It's good and I'm very comfortable with it.

I like the BU platform. It's worth to me. I stay.

I love the course platform!

Category: Praise

While many issues of concern were raised during the interviews, there was also no shortage of praise for the services provided by BU. Therefore, somewhat paradoxically, many of the same subcategories that highlighted problems or complaints in previous categories now focus on positive factors. The very few properties that appear under both negative and positive lenses – i.e., simultaneously under “Problems in General”, “Communication Problems” and “Praise” – seem to be what quantitative analysis would characterize as outliers. For every instance where a significant number of respondents spoke negatively about a property under the two problem-related categories, there were likely just one or two comments in “Praise” contradicting that view. If, on the other hand, many respondents said something positive in “Praise”, it is likely that only one or two respondents talked about the same issue from a negative point of view.

Moreover, new properties are introduced in “Praise” that did not appear in any of the preceding categories. These relate to positive views on the specific arrangement of services and practices by BU, or “Structure”.

Subcategory: Treatment (Code Green)

In this section, the manner in which BU values adjunct faculty's services, credentials and opinions is presented from a positive angle, with clear examples of what pleases instructors in the treatment they receive from the institution. Unlike the criticism seen in the problem-related categories, this subcategory demonstrates that some adjuncts have had positive experiences, for example, with staff and management.

Property: BU Overall Environment (Code Green)

Under this property, readers will notice faculty's feelings of satisfaction with regard to some aspects of working for BU – from technology, to quality of staff and students, to curriculum and administrative support.

I would teach with BU over any other option. I feel very comfortable and feel confident that any improvement will be successfully implemented. I haven't and do not plan either to look for another teaching option.

Property: BU Staff and Administrative Support (Code Green)

Faculty spoke enthusiastically about the personal characteristics of some individuals who provide clerical and administrative assistance to all instructors, and often noted the high-level quality of their support.

I have received great follow up and follow through from everyone. Tech support has been great.

I've had great interaction with Marisa. Also, I'm in constant contact with student advisors, who are very helpful.

The school meets my expectations...BU provides every type of support a professor would ever need. I know I can pick up the phone or email anybody there and they will be back with me in no time at all. It is a huge motivator because it feels like you have a

safety net beneath you at all times. I can talk to any of them whenever I want.

I'm grateful that people in the administrative areas (scheduling, coaching) know who I am and continue to keep me 'employed'.

I have taught the longest for BU, and I have always liked and connected with the people who work there. People are nice. They are similar to the people that I am used to working with. So, while I am paid less by BU, I prefer to work for BU.

Property: Management's Approach (Code Green)

A number of respondents praised the administrative style of some members of the BU leadership team.

The chair of my department has this human element in her actions. Her tone is always welcoming. You can tell when people are distant and too formal, even online. I feel I can be straightforward with her and our relationship is very open.

The important thing is [to] be able to have a contact when a problem or question comes up. Usually my contact is my chair and she has always been very responsive.

I like the current strong, no-nonsense male (Psychological gender reference meant here, rather than biological gender reference. Biological gender is inconsequential to me and should be inconsequential in any workplace of course.)

My chair gives good advice and it is brilliant. BU appropriately leverages learning goals with technology.

Subcategory: Work Tools (Code Red)

As was discussed above, a very strong aspect of BU's instructional approach is the quality of materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.

Property: Technology in General (Code Red)

Based on participants' enthusiastic comments regarding the quality of technology used in delivering courses and facilitating communication, BU emerges as a champion in

this area. Many instructors reiterated that they were extremely satisfied with BU's learning platform and all the technical resources at their disposal.

BU has the best technology – the best platform and a great tech support team.

BU is the best online educational college/university with which I have personally been associated. I am motivated by the opportunity to represent a top-notch university, which provides modern technology and multimedia to the students rather than mere words on a page threaded courses.

There is a live go to meeting portal and an instant message communication avenue for students. There are audio video materials in many of the classes. This reaches more students than just words.

I am very satisfied with the online platform at BU. In my mind, it is very faculty friendly.

Technology at BU is absolutely great!

I feel most connected and loyal to BU because I feel that the online platform better facilitates a relationship with students than other platforms that I have used.

I definitely think that BU is doing enough [in terms of technology] as I have never had an issue from BU in regard to that personally, nor have I had a complaint from a student!

Subcategory: Structure (Code Green)

This subcategory covers concepts related to the specific arrangement of services and practices at BU.

Property: Curriculum (Code Green)

Some instructors indicated that they were very happy with the prescribed content presented in BU courses, as well as the quality of the academic programs.

Courses are better than the other universities, for they have some real life experiences.

The school materials are good and the content is all ready for us to work with the students. This is more one-on-one service than face-to-face teaching. I can dedicate myself to my students.

I like the subjects I teach at BU more than the other place.

The courses are well planned.

Property: Course Development Team (Code Green)

Another aspect of BU that merits praise, in the opinion of some faculty members, is the group of professionals working in the creation, development and design of courses.

The course development team is a conscientious group. It's good when I see my suggestions being implemented. They seem to listen to me.

People in course development are very skilled and experienced.

I enjoy working with the course development team. They are very supportive.

Subcategory: Practices (Code Green)

Respondents also took the time to speak about their approval of specific administrative routines adopted by the institution.

Property: Frequency of Communication. Sub-Property: Good (Code Green)

Contradicting what was covered in a previous category, "Communication Problems", two instructors mentioned their satisfaction with the quality and frequency of information exchanges among members of the BU faculty.

I'm pleased that we're asked to contribute to the CTL discussions. So far, the communication has been excellent.

BU communicates the expectations and university plan very well.

Property: Quality of Students. Sub-Property: High (Code Green)

A number of respondents expressed satisfaction with the quality of students admitted to BU programs – again, contradicting some opinions gathered under “Problems in General”.

I find the BU course environment very rich for interaction because the quality of students admitted into the programs is high.

Working at my other school would keep me from working at BU and the BU classes are more fun and the students are generally better prepared for class, poignant in their essays written to me, have better grammar and spelling overall, and are way cooler.

I’ve found BU to have very high quality learners, which makes interacting with them fun. I get to discuss rather difficult concepts and receive great responses. It makes teaching so much easier; grading essay is enjoyable (I know, hard to believe) because the students submit thoughtful essays.

So far, I have enjoyed my relationship with BU. I have found the students and the online platform at BU to more than meet my expectations.

The quality of students admitted at BU is very high.

Subcategory: Perspective (Code Green)

This is a unique subcategory presenting faculty members’ subjective points of view on particular issues.

Property: Personal. Sub-Property: Sentimental Ties to BU (Code Green)

Expressing their own tastes and preferences, a few participants admitted having an emotional attachment to the institution in so far as it has become part of their life.

A face to face connection would make the interaction more meaningful. That is not to say that I don’t feel what I do is meaningful right now! I love teaching for BU!

I won't give up on BU. I have a very sentimental feeling for it and, as far as I know, the relationship is permanent for me. BU means a great deal to me.

I love BU. BU is the best! University X sucks and I'm in favour of competition.

Category: General Suggestions

In speaking candidly about their impressions and feelings toward BU, all instructors interviewed in this study seemed eager to offer suggestions for making the school a better workplace, and for helping ensure online teaching is more rewarding for distance educators generally. This category includes many ideas to improve aspects of BU's work tools, structure, practices and treatment of faculty.

A large number of suggestions reflected faculty members' strong desire to meet in person with one another and with school management. This category is therefore followed by a separate one dedicated exclusively to ideas for face-to-face activities.

Subcategory: Treatment (Code Green)

Many comments reflected adjuncts' wish that their contributions were valued more highly by BU. Clearly these individuals want to feel more closely connected not only to the institution, improving their sense of affiliation, but also to their peers and students.

Research has shown that it is not uncommon for adjuncts to be treated as if they are not genuine academics. Schnitzer and Crosby (2003) state that "some mainstream faculty still regards [sic] distance learning with skepticism, and adjunct faculty teaching distance learning may bear the brunt of these perceptions" (Building a Teaching Community section, ¶ 1). Because of the undeniable value that adjuncts bring to educational institutions, particularly those that are increasingly taking advantage of this

working arrangement, it is important to listen with attention to the changes adjuncts propose.

One suggestion that was made relates to the creation of social networking channels, in which faculty can exchange all kinds of ideas, not necessarily of academic nature. Nelson (2002) advocates using technology to “reinforce the human element at work and increase the opportunity to provide meaningful recognition and appreciation to others. ...Technology can assist in building trust and developing relationships at work as opposed to simply getting more work done faster” (Use Technology; Don’t Let it Use You section, ¶ 2). Yu and Young (2008) contend that group identity can only result in cooperative behaviour once there is a true desire for members of a group to receive others’ feedback and help. In the online context, maintaining group identity is a challenge; leaders must not take the seriousness of the task for granted. As Cooper and Kurland (2002) sum it up, “interpersonal networks in organizations benefit employees because they allow people to establish relationships and gain access to information that can advance their professional careers” (p. 513).

Another topic raised is the creation of merchandise bearing the BU brand. This may seem like a less serious concern for an employer; however, branded products can elevate the sense of organizational attachment among employees, particularly those who work from a distance. Wiesenfeld et al. (2001) state that items such as coffee mugs and other manufactured products displaying the organization’s visual identity reinforce a worker’s sense of belonging and degree of affiliation.

Providing an institutional e-mail address is another recommended practice for helping adjunct faculty feel they are members of the team. Edmonson and Fisher (2003)

emphasize that a college e-mail address is of fundamental importance. This relatively low-cost integration strategy can only bring benefits to the institution (Gordon, 2003).

The following are some of the interviewees' ideas on how BU could show that it values their services, credentials and opinions, and is concerned that they achieve satisfaction in their jobs.

Property: Attendance at Graduation (Code Green)

A few respondents reported a desire to attend commencement ceremonies at BU's expense.

I think that we could be invited to participate in an annual conference, training, graduation, or combination of the above.

I have yearned to attend the BU graduations these past few years, but paying the entire travel cost was not possible in my budget.

I think it would be great to maybe get to go to a graduation ceremony once but I wouldn't want to travel a lot.

It'd certainly be a great experience to meet everyone at the School at least once a year during graduation, where students can also see and meet their instructors.

Property: E-mail Address for Adjuncts (Code Green)

Another pair of adjuncts felt that having a BU e-mail address would increase their sense of affiliation to the school. Currently each member uses his or her own "non-affiliated" address.

For my sense of affiliation to increase, they can start with giving each BU adjunct faculty a BU email address.

It would be nice to have a BU e-mail address.

Property: Merchandise (Code Green)

A veteran instructor reminisced about the early years of BU, when the school gave new faculty branded merchandise such as hats, sweatshirts, pens, bags, etc. The faculty member believes such merchandise is beneficial for BU, as faculty members “advertise” its name and invite inquiries from people interested in knowing more about the school. Those respondents who commented on this topic believe that even simple branded products have the power to increase job satisfaction and pride in belonging to the organization.

At my other workplace they give us a windbreaker and a bag. They really go out of their way to treat people nicely!

This probably sounds crazy, but merchandise would help with my sense of affiliation. A poster to put in my office, shirts or caps that display logos, a coffee cup....people tend to ask about programs if they see you sporting information. If I wear a t-shirt, people ask me about the school. This brings outside attention to the school. It's important to have things you can put your hand on.

Property: Networking Solutions (Code Green)

Networking solutions create opportunities for faculty to interact socially in an online space, discovering mutual interests and strengthening their sense of camaraderie.

Create networking pages – one-page profiles that contain essential information for networking – backgrounds, interests, help/information one is seeking, help/information willing to share, etc. This might be a start to see whether there is any mutual interest/benefit.

It would be great if we had a faculty “lounge” with areas for different interest groups where we could talk about courses, ask questions to course developers, propose changes, and of course compare notes on students:>). This would work if there were some moderation by full time faculty who would respond to questions.

Property: Profile of Adjuncts (Code Green)

Some adjuncts felt it would be motivating if faculty members were profiled monthly on the BU website and in other communications.

What about a profile of adjuncts on the website? This will indicate our affiliation with BU.

Perhaps on a twice-a-year basis have a small newsletter that highlights the achievements of members of the faculty...and shares information about them.

Subcategory: Prerequisite (Code Green)

In proposing ideas for improvement, some faculty recognized that change is not easily implemented, especially when it involves financial resources that might not be readily available. Therefore, they presented their suggestions taking the school's investment into consideration, and suggesting specific conditions under which changes could be implemented.

Property: Good Performance → Participation in F2F Events (Code Green)

As will become clear in this chapter, faculty members seem to have a strong desire to meet in person with peers and management. In order to make this viable, the respondent below suggested the terms on which adjuncts might be invited to participate in face-to-face gatherings.

Perhaps attendance in F2F meetings might be a reward for outstanding performance...I also think it would be a positive factor for BU to occasionally pay for instructors to take courses or participate in professional development workshops.....select criteria could be established and participation would probably be limited...but it would enhance the role of the instructor.....then, an individual who went to a workshop might be required to share the new information with the rest of the faculty.

Property: Two-Year Commitment Post PD (Code Green)

Professional development represents a significant investment for an institution, as the faculty member below states. His proposal was to allow adjuncts to participate in PD programs provided they commit to remaining with the school for at least two years post-training.

They should allow us to take free courses, of course with a commitment to serve BU – for instance, three courses taken will bind the adjunct faculty for two years.

Subcategory: Practices

Once again, this subcategory surfaces in the overall opinions expressed by adjuncts. In this case they offer suggestions regarding administrative routines adopted by the institution.

Property: Professional Development / Social

Many interviewees favoured creating opportunities to increase knowledge or skills through study, travel, research, seminars, workshops or courses, as well as social events and other activities aimed at creating a stronger sense of community.

Sub-Property: Departmental Meetings (Code Green)

Some faculty members saw a need for frequent exchanges of ideas among members of a particular department. They seem to crave conversation with other faculty teaching in the same disciplines.

The department chair should hold in-person department meetings and the college an annual faculty conference.

Departmental meetings would be very helpful.

Some type of web based department meeting would be good.

I think that it would be helpful to have scheduled quarterly virtual meetings with instructors who are teaching the same course. Perhaps due to the size of a group teaching the same course, it might make sense to establish smaller teams of cohorts to meet. This would build a sense of teamwork and also strengthen instructors' knowledge of what is working.

Sub-Property: F2F Annual Meetings (Code Red)

The following quotes reflect respondents' desire for yearly in-person gatherings of BU faculty members. Opinion appears to be unanimous that such events would be helpful for instructors to bond and learn from one another. Some individuals expressed this wish quite passionately, while most felt that hosting regular face-to-face meetings would be an astute decision on the part of BU.

Some topics cannot be discussed from a distance. An annual meeting that is paid by the instructors to a good location outside Chicago where the University is headquartered would be an excellent idea.

It would be so good if we were invited on campus. Wouldn't it be a nice thing? F2f meetings are three dimensional, unlike online. It would be a major move in the right direction, even with the same pay.

I would think that one of the biggest issues with on-line teaching is the lack of personal interaction among peers to share information mainly. I think that if we could meet on person twice a year could be great for interaction.

At least once per year, I'd love to be able to connect with BU in person. We don't get the full faculty experience online; that's why we should get together. You can talk online all you want, but f2f connects us even better.

Some type of annual or semi-annual conference would be helpful in creating personal and professional relationships with other BU faculty and administrators.

A "conference" with management and peers once every year (or even every 2 years) would be great. Meeting all my peers would strengthen my sense of belonging.

Getting all together once a year would be way superior to communicating on the faculty lounge.

I really think that a conference, perhaps every other year, where BU brings everyone together would be a great way to have faculty meet one another. And, this conference would not only allow faculty to see what their colleagues are working on but it would also allow some time to meet regarding university issues, changes etc.

If possible face to face meetings of the learning community could be held once a year to share and collaboratively create new knowledge.

An opportunity to meet with Deans and colleagues once a year would help my sense of affiliation. An annual faculty meeting/retreat would be good.

Sub-Property: F2F Meetings on Rotational Basis (Code Green)

The idea expressed here is the same as in the previous sub-property, with the added suggestion of having instructors attend these meetings on a rotating basis due to financial constraints.

The expense of getting f2f would not be that great if faculty rotated and attended every three years, for example.

Sub-Property: F2F Orientation/Training (Code Yellow)

The possibility of having face-to-face orientation and training was a topic that surfaced in the initial stages of the interviews. Therefore, in subsequent questionnaires and telephone conversations, the researcher decided to include a question on the idea of having new hires meet the BU leadership in person and learn about the institution before they begin teaching. Some instructors, particularly the veterans, seemed to support this potential practice by BU quite strongly. This was somewhat unexpected, given that a

great many respondents also expressed the view that BU was in a good position to provide new instructors with virtual training and orientation.

When I first joined the institution in (if you can believe it) October 2000, my orientation was in Chicago, all expenses paid. That went a long way to help me connect and feel comfortable. And, it was cool to interact later with people I had actually met.

I really appreciated the f2f orientation I had back in 1999. I lived pretty close to the school and got to know people. I felt comfortable dropping by.

My initial training was conducted face2face in Chicago. It made me feel valued as a perspective [sic] faculty member and that the University was investing in me for better performance as well as for my own development.

I remember that back in the old days, our training was face-to-face for all new faculty. I think these meetings help [us] to know each other better, which in turn is beneficial for a positive interaction. It's extremely important to put a face [to] a name.

Sub-Property: Free BU Courses for Faculty (Code Green)

The following quotes illustrate the desire expressed by faculty to take BU courses for personal growth without having to pay tuition fees.

Let us faculty take other BU courses for free!

We could have discounted (or free) courses, so adjuncts can specialize in fields of their choice to enhance future service to BU.

Sub-Property: Teleconferences (Code Green)

Two respondents stated that telephone meetings among adjuncts from the same department, or who are teaching the same courses, should be a routine practice at BU.

Face-to-face meetings are always beneficial for reasons that do not need to be explained, but a teleconference would help greatly, too!

BU needs to create sub groups and find a way for them to connect on a regular basis. I'd be happy with a conference call with people

who teach the same courses I do. Maybe the coaches are the best people/level to work at for this problem.

Sub-Property: More Frequent Interaction Opportunities (Code Yellow)

A great number of adjuncts noted an urgent need for faculty and management to exchange ideas, independent of the means – i.e., whether face to face or via the Internet. Although this sub-property receives code yellow, the thoughts expressed here overlap with what has been presented under other properties of the present subcategory.

More frequent meetings would make sense so we can learn from one another.

I think that a mixture of CTL and webcasts would be better for interaction among faculty.

Interactive webinars designed to encourage faculty to collaborate on projects and to exchange ideas would be very welcome.

There should be some kind of personal interaction on occasion. Whether that is in person or by telephone, it allows an opportunity for spontaneity and brainstorming that is often lost in a virtual environment where simple dialogue can take days to complete.

I'd like an opportunity to interact with other faculty members. The easiest way to do this would be to lurk in their courses and have them lurk in mine and then share observations and ask questions.

With another online university I teach for, we have monthly faculty meetings via live chat/whiteboard/conference call sessions. It helps to hear other 'voices' with the same concerns I have regarding classes and students.

More regular meetings of teaching/discipline groups would definitely help. Personal contact with administrators and others in Chicago helps a great deal, as does being on one of the faculty committees. Technology improvements will undoubtedly help to bridge the gap.

Sub-Property: Online Follow-up Discussions Post F2F Meetings (Code Green)

Two instructors proposed the creation of opportunities for faculty to meet online and further discuss matters covered earlier in face-to-face meetings.

I would think that meeting face to face might be a springboard or dynamic start for a new feeling toward the organization and colleagues. [...] I have found that when ideas emerge in face-to-face real-time, and feedback to those ideas is immediate and naturally occurring, more depth of relationship results. Follow-up discussions would be more likely via distance methods, I would predict.

Face to face meetings are important and they would have to be followed up with regular e-mails that provoke a continuing conversation via a community blog site. The model for the blog would be Fast Company's Today's Big Idea email, which proactively arrives in one's mailbox everyday, inviting comment and conversation. The BU Learning Community email would not have to be that frequent.

Sub-Property: Quarterly Conference Calls (Code Green)

Still exploring the need for more interaction among faculty and management, in this sub-property some instructors offered the specific suggestion of having mandatory telephone meetings every three months with the Chair or Dean and all faculty of each academic department.

BU could offer quarterly conference calls with other faculty within the schools they teach for (for example, accounting specifically, or school of business as a whole). This way we get the chance to speak with other faculty and offer best practices or experiences we have had in the classrooms. It provides a chance to get to know the other members of the adjunct team so we know there are actually others out there (so to speak)!

I also think that some quarterly live meetings could be held to keep us informed as in the past when our previous dean of instruction was there. He did a good job of keeping in touch with the adjunct faculty.

Sub-Property: Quarterly Regional F2F Meetings (Code Green)

This is another sub-property that overlaps significantly with those above. The differentiator here is the idea of having in-person gatherings, every three months, of faculty who live within a reasonable driving distance of a predetermined meeting venue.

An idea might be to hold regional face-to-face meetings in major cities from time-to-time to allow faculty to meet and interact with one another.

I have no idea who is on the faculty from my state. There could be faculty members right down the street. Starting some regional networking could be very beneficial. Of course, I realize that this would not be possible in all regions...but it might be worth a “try” where there are many faculty members.

Get the provost to meet people around the country. People would be less reluctant to give him a call.

Property: Surveys (Code Green)

A pair of instructors proposed two related ideas: (a) faculty surveys, in which BU instructors complete a questionnaire providing their feedback after completing a course, and (b) mandatory completion of student surveys, whereby students would not receive their final grades unless they have completed the end-of-course survey. The latter suggestion is related to frustration over how BU instructors' performance is currently assessed – i.e., if faculty are to receive feedback from students only, then end-of-course surveys should be a mandatory practice.

Create an after class survey for adjuncts regarding students and improvements to the class.

I would like every student to give me individual comments since I don't get much feedback from the school.

Based on the comments included in this subcategory, it seems clear that BU faculty members favour deeper and more frequent communication with their peers and

administrators. The common denominator among all the properties and sub-properties is this desire for more interaction, with the primary purpose of learning from one another's knowledge and experiences. Jackson and Gharavi (2006) speak of the same kind of isolation reported by respondents in the current study, observing that virtual workers crave professional development opportunities that will help create and strengthen their own organizational identities. Kanuka et al. (2008) cite Fouche's research in providing a recipe for reducing this sense of isolation among online faculty: "regular contact and collaboration amongst colleagues" (p. 151). And, as one can readily see from the interview comments presented above, many online learning institutions still face roadblocks when it comes to offering training and development for faculty (Brindley et al., 2002). This is an issue of great magnitude that must not be taken lightly. As Gaillard-Kenney (2006) notes, investing financial resources in faculty development can only bring benefits, in so far as it "positively impacts the overall morale and perception the adjuncts have of the institution" (p. 12). An investment in PD also increases faculty's sense of commitment (Gordon, 2003).

The importance of gathering virtual employees under the same roof from time to time is also heavily covered in the research literature, albeit not with a focus on virtual educators (hence the need for the present study). Conner (2003) stresses the criticality of creating opportunities for employees to engage in social contact with fellow workers; the same author acknowledges that it is extremely difficult to establish mutual trust and loyalty to the organization through technology. Citing Alexander, she argues that social interaction between virtual workers "will have to be managed differently as long as technology provides anything short of a total replication of physical presence" (p. 143).

While the crucial need for face-to-face interaction will be fully covered in the next category, “Face-to-face Suggestions”, it is appropriate here to present some of the recent literature regarding face-to-face orientation and training for new faculty (in as much as the subject was raised several times in this context by respondents). Baker et al. (2006) speak of the need for new hires to undergo training prior to teaching online. Meeting in person for training under the guidance of experienced faculty is the most appropriate way for new instructors to fully engage in dialogue and networking. Such a training session can serve a “getting-acquainted function” (Edmonson & Fisher, 2003, p. 7):

It should be held as a fairly informal affair, with enough structure to adequately cover the topics at issue but enough lightness to make these important faculty members feel comfortable with the full-time faculty and the university environment. The orientation [should] offer [...] a non-threatening social setting for adjunct professors to learn important components of their job, as well as meet the people with whom they [will] now directly or indirectly work (p. 7).

Brindley et al. (2002) also advocate face-to-face orientation and training, as it enhances teacher effectiveness while contributing to the overall success of academic programs. (The benefits of face-to-face gatherings in general will be covered in the next category.)

Subcategory: Structure

As discussed in the previous category, many instructors praised the arrangement of specific services and practices provided by BU. Nevertheless, faculty members made a number of suggestions for improvement.

Property: Faculty Competencies Bank (Code Green)

The suggestion below envisions a formal system in which every faculty member’s competencies are recorded for potential future needs – e.g., the development of a new course for which the school must find qualified instructors.

There should be some outreach on the part of the college to determine what other talents adjuncts bring to the table, and how they might be utilized by the University.

Property: Online Suggestion Box (Code Green)

Some instructors thought a space where faculty could make suggestions for improvements or present innovative ideas would benefit all BU stakeholders.

What I'd suggest is an online suggestion box, so to speak. You know, an instructor posts something like, "I think if we did X instead of Y, it would probably be better for the students." Then let them take into account, I don't know, the faculty senate, the curriculum committee... whoever... and then if they agree, incorporate the idea into all of the courses.

It is interesting to hear and comment about same sentiments and how BU could be better if adjunct suggestions could be implemented.

Property: Semi-Annual PA by Management (Code Red)

It seems that the school should pay close attention to the matter of formal evaluation of instructors' performance every six or 12 months by the Department Chair or Dean. This idea was covered as a critical problem in the first category of the analysis, and only once was it offered as a specific suggestion. Therefore the property received code red.

I would like to see formal feedback from administration on a semi-annual basis, and I would also like to see and participate in peer-reviews at least once a year. Each faculty member and adjunct should have a clear understanding of what's expected, and then be evaluated based on the formalized criteria.

Subcategory: Work Tools (Code Green)

The following suggestions were made with regard to the materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.

Property: Improvement in Synchronous Technology (Code Green)

A few suggestions were made in relation to the enhancement of real-time meeting solutions. The goal would be to have faculty heard and seen, instead of just typing their comments in a chat box. (Currently only presenters have that option.)

I don't like Adobe. Cisco has synchronous environments that are much better.

The use of Elluminate, Wimba, or Webex for live online departmental meetings each term or periodically throughout the year is a relatively inexpensive way to keep connected with adjunct faculty. Better than Adobe.

Property: Videos in Webcasts (Code Green)

A single respondent stated that video would make webcast meetings more interesting and beneficial. Although this is only one opinion, it overlaps with the view that face-to-face meetings would enhance faculty's teaching experience. The comment below does not specifically reference in-person meetings; however, it stresses the importance of literal face-to-face communication.

It would be great if we could include video in webcasts. Facial expressions cannot be substituted by any other thing.

Given that this category and the one following overlap significantly, relevant comments from BU administrators will be included at the end of the next section.

Category: Face-to-Face Suggestions

As discussed in the previous category – and as is made evident in the related comments from respondents – opinions converge emphatically around the idea of face-to-face meetings among faculty and management. So many respondents expressed their desire to meet in person with other BU members that a special category was created to explore the types of activities they envision for face-to-face events.

In Chapter II, covering the literature reviewed in preparation for this study, the reader will have noted that many academics and professionals speak about the crucial need for virtual workers to meet face to face periodically – regardless of the communication technology used by their organizations. Given the importance placed on this type of activity by study respondents, a deeper examination of the research literature is in order.

Kanuka et al. (2008) assert that gathering online faculty face to face is a shrewd strategic decision: “Given that a university’s most valuable and expensive resource is its academics, and a university’s future is dependent upon the success of its academics, providing funding for time and travel would almost certainly be a wise investment” (p.162). Notwithstanding recent advances in technology, adjuncts can still benefit from face-to-face events such as conferences and institutional meetings, which can solidify a much-needed sense of affiliation and community in promoting the success of their institutions (Eib and Miller, 2006). In the same vein, Ng (2006) strongly advises institutions to hold face-to-face meetings and social events in order to reduce feelings of isolation and avoid declines in job satisfaction and productivity.

Nelson (2002) contends that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact “when it comes to building trusting relationships. Managing is a people job – so naturally, [one needs] to take time for people” (Make Time for People section, ¶ 1). Cooper and Kurland (2002) assert that the type of learning experience made possible by face-to-face meetings is invaluable and cannot be compared to professional development delivered from a distance. Some learning only happens spontaneously, when people are face to face and information can be more easily exchanged. Jackson and Gharavi (2006) observe that

“voice dialogue nurtures the inclination to be more open, intimate and display care, encouraging the development of trust and closeness” (p. 239). Moreover, Lally and Kostner (as cited in Conner, 2003) argue:

Remote employees can easily lose out [on] those moments when people are most likely to share ideas and information informally – the time they spend around the water cooler, in the cafeteria, or even passing in a corridor. An avalanche of e-mail or voice mail can’t replace this interaction (p. 144).

Brindley et al. (2002) consider face-to-face faculty gatherings precious opportunities for brainstorming ideas and providing mutual support. Such events also enable institutions to ease the “schizophrenia of being ‘included but not included’” (Course Development and Teaching Support section, ¶ 9). Fruitful topics for discussion among faculty include facilitation techniques, policies and specific teaching tasks.

The overall goal of having faculty meet face to face is “to ensure that participants develop meaningful professional relationships and receive personal attention related to their instructional needs” (Baker et al., 2006, Faculty Training and Networking section, ¶ 3). Social and formal professional development activities become interlaced, with every opportunity to exchange ideas about strategy, goals and experiences helping to energize faculty members. Moreover, this positive feeling is sustained long after the actual meetings are held (Jackson & Gharavi, 2006).

Subcategory: General Interest (Code Yellow)

In proposing ideas for discussion topics or activities, a number of instructors made clear their strong interest in meeting face to face with other faculty members and management. The focus for many was to stress how beneficial such meetings could be, independent of the specific activities they might include.

There's only so much you can learn online. Different things will come out f2f that are definitely worth discussing. Some things must be done f2f. And I know it is expensive, but I've got material showing ROI on f2f meetings.

F2F meetings would be motivating if they could improve my quality of work life, performance, and added value.

BU updates, presentations and discussions about how to be successful online teachers, personal development, social/networking sessions. It doesn't need to be long...the benefit would be the interaction.

F2F meetings are more personal. At my other school they go above and beyond, inviting us for annual conferences and social events. So when you hear the person on the phone, you know who they are.

We can talk online all we want, but f2f connects us even better. When you get people together, it's dynamic, you cannot get that any other way.

We're getting there with the technologies. What we can't get are the serendipitous meetings that occur in hallways or in the faculty lounge in brick and mortar institutions, and I'm not sure we are ever going to get that. Some topics can only be discussed face to face.

It would be tremendous if they could at least give us an incentive for a ticket to Chicago. This is in their interest because it cements faculty to the school. I know the ROI would be significant. Having me there with other faculty would give me the message, "I value you and I'm spending time with you", which would be quite intriguing to me. You've pushed a button! [This last point refers to the researcher's raising of the topic in question.]

Subcategory: Topics and/or Activities

During the interviews, faculty offered a great number of suggestions on what they would like to do or see when meeting face to face with other BU members.

Property: Attendance by Outstanding Students at F2F Faculty Meetings (Code Green)

Some ideas were quite original. For example, one instructor suggested allowing top-ranked BU students to attend face-to-face faculty meetings and provide their perspective on a range of topics.

Perhaps even a few outstanding students should be invited, to participate and maybe to be recruited to teach for BU. I've met a few in the courses whom I would recommend.

Property: Course Development Activities (Code Green)

Working in collaboration with other faculty on the creation and/or enhancement of courses was another topic touched on by several instructors. These faculty are eager to share their insights toward the design of new courses and to have a say in the choice of learning materials.

Course development and social gatherings are what I would be most interested in.

Property: Professional Development/ Social

Many faculty members expressed their desire to participate in events aimed at developing their knowledge or skills.

Sub-Property: Exchange of Ideas in General (Code Yellow)

Here faculty members envision sessions (workshops, seminars, etc.) in which they can discuss their teaching experiences and the strategies they have adopted to overcome problems, giving others the opportunity to learn from their experience.

Exchanging ideas on teaching methods, etc., would be invaluable!

We must get the chance to speak with other faculty and offer best practices or experiences we have had in the classrooms.

It would be great to go to a distance learning conference just for BU faculty. Meeting peers and learning latest trends.

The number of people could be large or small (faculty or teachers of the same course) but the critical piece would be to set the meeting up to have a conversation about real issues such as using the technology platform to deliver knowledge in a different way – in a way that generates collaborative knowledge. The process for the meeting would probably be designed and executed as a “World Café” event, i.e., intimate groups of four sharing knowledge with each other and then moving to other small groups to build a collective concept and collective energy.

I would love to participate in break-out sessions involving: “the difficult student”, enhancing your course, CDA process, or other topics.

Open forums with an opportunity to ask questions...presentations by the leadership regarding important happenings...faculty presentations...choices of small workshops on various topics...open time to mingle and get to know one another...forums with experts in particular areas...discussions about individual courses (what is working...what is not)...I think there could be great benefit derived from such gatherings.

Sub-Property: Faculty Presentations (Code Yellow)

A number of respondents would welcome opportunities for faculty to present their portfolios as well as any recent research or projects they have been working on.

It would be best to have a faculty presentation on a topic or topics of current concern that are now being addressed on the CTL.

Faculty members [should be] permitted the opportunity to present papers, participate in panel discussions, and interact with guest speakers.

We could share best practices – not self-selling presentations, but PD interactions.

I'd like to exchange views with my peers about new tools, new software. In this online environment we lose the human side. Contact with others in person is important.

An option may be to team faculty members together to share best practices. Allow us to exchange knowledge...But fix compensation

and recognition first...My goodness, I feel no connection to these people!

Workshops and presentations by full time faculty, as well as the opportunity for adjunct faculty to showcase their work, would be good.

Sub-Property: Guest Speakers (Code Green)

Some respondents proposed extending speaking invitations to prominent experts in the field of education, as well as to other individuals who could enrich faculty's knowledge.

Having guest speakers would also be an option.

The way to encourage this type of event would be to make the meetings higher value by offering opportunities to meet thought leaders in organization, leadership, etc. People like Warren Bennis, Dave Ulrich, Jim Collins, etc.

Sub-Property: Meetings with Student Advisors (Code Green)

One kind of proposed activity was a session in which faculty and student advisors would meet to compare experiences on student matters and learn from one another's points of view.

It would also be great to hear from advisors about what their life is like...

Meeting with student advisors would be also helpful.

Property: Management Presentations (Code Red)

A frequent comment from study participants was that they were not fully informed on school affairs. Many instructors professed to be entirely lost regarding matters of organizational structure, as well as BU's mission, vision, goals, strategies, policies, etc. There was no shortage of suggestions for sessions in which management representatives would present general updates and institutional information. Due to the

frequency with which this topic surfaced – either as a problem or a suggestion – the property received code red.

I'd like to see presentations on mission, vision, purpose, some kind of principles...Ongoing mechanisms to test how things are going...Like a business. They should talk about how people can become involved in the process. Ask things like, "How can we improve people's work life? What would be the most possible satisfying experience for them and arrive at our vision?"

I would like to see discussions about where the school is now, where they plan to go in the future and what we, as adjunct faculty, can do to help get us where we want to be. We need to know what's going on.

I'd like to hear about how they use the money. Where do they spend it?

They could have an introduction of the administration and staff. Management presentations. Strategy sessions on the state of the university and plans. How will they distinguish themselves? Marketing plans. Org charts. Some social interaction. [Emphasis added by respondent.]

Property: Social Gatherings/Networking Activities (Code Yellow)

Although most participants emphasized the serious intent of face-to-face meetings – as one member commented, “It’s not because we want to have fun!” – many also mentioned the necessity of finding opportunities for faculty and management to mingle socially, in order to create a stronger sense of community and camaraderie.

We would have luncheons where we could talk openly with each other to get to know each other better and share best practices, exchange of ideas or what did not work well.

I would like a presentation about BU's strategy, etc. (by management), followed by best practices by key faculty, then an interactive workshop, followed by a buffet lunch or dinner.

Social gatherings would provide knowledge of who to call, presentations could cover practical helpful ideas.

Presentations are fine, but these can and are accomplished readily via the online environment. I should think that discussions, casual teaming development activities, and social opportunities would be the best use of time. [Emphasis added by respondent.] Materials could be sent ahead of the meeting for study, so that less time sitting in formal meetings would be required on site. Some engagement with walking, swimming, kayaking, walking in a garden or on a trail, or boating, should be included. We should experience life together in nature at some point and not just sit and veg and eat and drink and be unhealthy and enclosed in stuffy meeting rooms. Nature engenders creativity and refreshment. Nature inspires and heals. People forget that they can both walk and talk sometimes.

I'm not suggesting meeting socially, but having a great social component for those face to face meetings would be great.

Faculty presentation, course developments and social events to know each better more. Knowing more [about] each other could help us to mention [colleagues'] names to our students for any inquiry related to our teaching activities.

Property: Innovation (Code Green)

One instructor discussed the importance of brainstorming sessions in which faculty could offer suggestions for pedagogical innovations to be adopted by the university.

I'd like to see learning methodology innovation and course development, possibly skill development.

With respect to BU management's views on the question of gathering faculty members together, once again there is clear agreement that this type of meeting would be of great value for all participants, and ultimately for the institution as a whole. However, budgetary concerns were often raised in the comments; BU leaders felt this could be a worthwhile investment but were concerned about the costs involved. It is important to mention that a few adjuncts have recently participated in face-to-face meetings with

management; however, as one administrator acknowledges, there are no clear criteria for choosing which adjunct faculty should be invited.

Here are the administrators' comments:

With a [sic] faculty spread out throughout the country and other countries as well, face to face is not very prudent though we try to do some of that with the faculty retreats.

There are challenges to what can and should be done because adjuncts are generally very busy people and far-flung, so even a face-to-face event would not touch a majority of them. We could be more creative with virtual activities.

I think faculty forums are an important way to build connections. It's not that virtual friendships or animosities cannot be built and fostered but face-to-face really makes a difference. I for one am really eager to meet many of our adjuncts in person – they are so interesting online! I think being visible is important to most people. Faculty working virtually who don't have outlets to meet people in other venues might have more dependence on social contact with the University than others. We are social animals but as I have said, for some it would be very important, for others not at all or not very much.

If we had social time just to meet and chat, that would be very pleasant and a way to build a bridge to the virtual contact that necessarily would follow.

When I was dean of a large ground college, I had face-to-face orientation at my home followed by meetings on the campus. It built great bonds and helped me as the leader of the college to guide my new hires along with their chairs and it helped the new folks to see that administrators were allies and amenable to conversation and discussion. That can avert many a problem and prevent a tense situation from blowing up (and these come up with the best of faculty!). I would advocate this but there are so many resource-dependent needs at a new place like ours that I am not sure this would be the highest priority, but I think it would be a very good thing and the only objection would be \$\$\$.

If money were no object, we'd bring [adjuncts] in several times a year, provide development opportunities, essentially "engage" them with our core faculty to a greater extent. But, we're geographically dispersed. Even our full time faculty members don't

engage with one another in physical proximity on a routine basis. We are working to increase the number of faculty retreats to two a year – and to include greater numbers of adjuncts at these events, but it's going to come slowly as the university grows. I suspect you can never do too much to create the strong bonds you ask about. There is more that we could do – and that we hope to do as we grow.

Yes, [meeting face to face] puts faces with names and provides a forum for social and academic dialogue difficult to replicate virtually.

Category: Impact

The last category in the present analysis explores the effect that face-to-face meetings can have on faculty members, particularly with respect to their motivation and loyalty to the institution. Without exception, all of the comments presented below indicate either a neutral or an overall positive view of having opportunities to meet in person. No participant made negative comments regarding the possibility of meeting face to face with peers and management.

Subcategory: Consequences (Code Red)

Instructors shared their thoughts on how face-to-face meetings would affect their motivation, sense of camaraderie and affiliation, as well as their feelings of loyalty toward the institution.

Property: Chain Rationale (Code Red)

In advocating strongly for meeting other BU faculty in person, some instructors talked about the domino effect that this could have: Face-to-face meetings would nurture better communication among faculty, and between faculty and management. This in turn would allow instructors to develop their skills more quickly and efficiently, which would benefit their students. And when students enjoyed a successful learning experience, they

would tell friends and family about BU, which would enhance the school's reputation and attract more talented students and faculty.

This property was coded red because, once again, many of its concepts overlap with others in this study – and in general, faculty members expressed opinions that were favourable toward meeting face to face for skills development, which would result in the provision of better services to students.

In the long run, instructors are much more effective if they feel they are part of a team.

These annual events [i.e., at another institution] create a sense of camaraderie among faculty and adjuncts that is often lost in the online environment, and they permit adjuncts to feel that they are part of the institution. BU could definitely benefit from a similar type of event.

The benefit would be the opportunity to discuss the major improvements that must be made to BU courses and benefit students.

I will gain more academic specialization, needed interaction with peers and management; and course developer interaction and insight. Better for everybody.

Definitely yes, meeting in person would certainly enhance our communication channels and create a better environment.

It could help to unify a lot of the teaching policies for better services to students so that the students are getting better instruction and BU builds a strong name for itself in the online education market.

Property: Enhanced Sense of Community and Affiliation (Code Red)

Some respondents felt that meeting others across the BU community in person would help build a much stronger connection with them. Moreover, face-to-face meetings would potentially create a stronger sense of connection with the institution as well as pride in belonging to the organization.

Meeting face to face would certainly increase my motivation and sense of affiliation.

If they brought us together, this would enhance a collegial relationship and it would be beneficial for BU.

I believe that face-to-face meetings will deepen my sense of affiliation.

This would be awesome, and would greatly enhance motivation due to the intrinsic and extrinsic needs being better met.

I am in support of face-to-face meetings. I know that this is difficult for everyone. It would do positive things for me in terms of an increased affiliation with BU.

Contact with management will improve the feeling of being part of a team.

I believe meeting f2f would deepen my sense of affiliation with the institution and increase motivation some. However, I am still going to do my job and do it well (or at least I think I am doing it well) even if they do not do anything.

It would enhance the feeling of community and foster a spirit that would make instructing more joyful and meaningful. Having the opportunity to share with others is a positive factor.

It would go a long way to building a team/department especially since it would also allow faculty to meet one another.

Meeting f2f would be very good. It would definitely increase our connection with the institution, as whenever you meet people in person, it is more genuine and rewarding than online communication.

I'd feel I've become part of a team.

Meeting all my peers would strengthen my sense of belonging.

If you assume that affiliation is a factor in my motivation, my motivation on the job would increase.

I have found that when ideas emerge in face-to-face real-time, and feedback to those ideas is immediate and naturally occurring, more depth of relationship results.

I am always interested in meaningful connections with colleagues. The technological world does not displace my need to connect with others on a more personal level.

Property: Loyalty (Code Red)

A good number of adjuncts explained their enthusiasm for meeting face to face by stressing their belief that it would help them provide students with the best possible educational experience and that this would motivate them to continue working for BU. Others stated that they would maintain their loyalty to the institution for reasons not connected to meeting in person with colleagues.

Where are loyalties the strongest? When people are in the same building meeting constantly throughout a long period of time.

Any organization that wants to make a difference needs to have clear governing ideas. If BU used f2f meetings to communicate their mission, vision and goals, then those meetings would probably increase my loyalty to the school.

It would not affect my motivation much as I am doing this for the students first. However, it would strengthen my loyalty to the school as I would finally be able to meet the people I work for and know who they are (and they would know who I am too).

If I don't feel respected, I'm not loyal to do. Right now BU doesn't show me they value me.

I am loyal to BU, in spite of the lack of physical interaction with faculty and management – as I believe that the curriculum is sound and I enjoy my role in delivering it.

I am loyal already. But will sharpen my sense of loyalty even more.

It might enhance loyalty and motivation. I'd be more loyal because I know them, they're not just names.

You can do a good job through technology, but if you have other means to connect faculty and exceed expectations, you end up nurturing more loyalty to the institution.

They are not doing much towards longevity at BU.

I'd certainly interpret [an invitation to meet face to face] as serious acknowledgement of me as valuable! I guess I would feel that I would be contributing in a different way. That type of contribution would help me feel more loyal (I don't not feel loyal, but just disconnected, and lonely).

It would strengthen the loyalty considerably as bonds of friendship and shared knowledge through conversation are created. There would also be the sense of being part of something unique.

Subcategory: Perspective

Once again, individual points of view are presented in this subcategory. Faculty expressed a range of personal opinions on the possibility of periodically meeting peers and administrators in person, perhaps once a year.

Property: Opinion

Under this property, the researcher identified themes related to adjuncts' personal points of view on the value of meeting face to face with other members of the BU community.

Sub-Property: Nice, But Not Critical (Code Yellow)

A number of participants stated that face-to-face meetings for online faculty are not essential for delivering quality services to students. However, they acknowledge that such meetings could yield many benefits, including a heightened sense of affiliation, community, camaraderie and even motivation on the job.

It would be nice to see people, but not vital. As an adjunct, I'm not interested in traveling. If I were full time, it'd be different.

Although it's not essential, still, I might be more delighted ;-) to teach for BU if I could be more connected with the individuals within the faculty and management.

Distance learning with periodical [sic] on-site visits would be an effective combination to create a better realization that this is not

ephemeral cyber-space ghost personalities in the machine, but solid, real, actual, colorful personalities.

A face to face meeting would be nice but not necessary for loyalty.

While I think it would increase my sense of connection, it would not be that great a difference.

Sub-Property: Great Learning Experience (Code Green)

In the view of some adjuncts, face-to-face meetings could enhance faculty's opportunities for professional growth and therefore their ability to provide better services to students.

I think they would be very beneficial, as they would provide an opportunity to bring us all together and pass on vital information about where we are as a university and where we plan on going in the future.

Direct interaction helps you learn much more. More communication means more improvement.

This would be a fantastic opportunity to learn from others.

Sub-Property: Not Important for Motivation (Code Yellow)

Some respondents expressed the opinion that meeting in person with others had nothing to do with motivation. In their view, face-to-face events would not necessarily increase or decrease their efforts to provide students with good services and would not have any impact on their attitude toward their job or their loyalty to the institution.

As for motivation on the job, it would not really be affected [by face-to-face meetings] since I am highly motivated to teach online already.

I am not sure it would affect motivation for the job so much as it would be personally satisfying.

Meeting f2f would not increase my motivation. I motivate myself and "seeing" people will only make it easier to know who to speak to, putting a face with a name.

If [meeting in person] were essential to me, I would choose a face-to-face school, where there is more of it.

It would not affect my desire to teach.

Will not increase motivation, for my main motivations is students' outcomes and well being, course development by real life professionals and peer to peer relationship.

Sub-Property: Little Desire to Attend if Faculty Members Have to Pay (Code Yellow)

Regardless of their expressed interest in attending face-to-face meetings, it seems that faculty's motivation to attend such sessions decreases if they are told they would have to pay for their own expenses.

I live a long distance from Chicago, so there would have to be a real important reason for me to attend. I would want to, but I might not be able to afford to attend.

I would be willing to pay my airfare, but not the hotel/eating expense, particularly if it is held in New York. Otherwise, it's just not possible in my budget – considering the income that I earn from BU.

I'd be willing to go, but the fact that I'd have to pay for them may prove to be an impediment to my actually being able to attend.

I must be compensated to go to Chicago. I cannot forgo opportunities.

Pay to go? Heck no!!!

I would be much less motivated to go; some cost sharing would be reasonable, but we are not paid that high a stipend that it would make economic sense to go.

The hourly rate for teaching BU classes does not support that luxury.

Leaving aside the specific issue of financial support, it is clear that many faculty members believe face-to-face meetings would have a positive impact on their motivation and loyalty to the institution. And recent research confirms that institutions, for their part, hope to nurture a deeper sense of community and affiliation among faculty. A basic step in that direction, as suggested by the comments in this category, is the opportunity to exchange ideas with other members of the school community. Selnow and Gilbert (1997) discuss the value of maintaining honesty in communication between managers and employees in order to cultivate trust and organizational loyalty. It is critically important to keep communication channels consistently open and to ensure workers are fully informed of the organization's mission, vision and goals, as well as planned structural changes. Sujansky (2007) explains that "leaders must create employee loyalty by communicating in a forthright manner, by making sure employees are well trained and by listening attentively to employee input" ("Issues of Trust", ¶ 8).

By providing opportunities for faculty to bond, institutions can only improve collegiality and friendship (Baker et al., 2006). "[F]aculty networking and collaborative coaching have the potential to help not only improve faculty attitudes and experiences with online instruction but also produce higher retention and student satisfaction rates" (Conclusion section, ¶ 1).

With all that said – and, once again, as the comments from interviewees demonstrate –institutions must be prepared to invest in creating events that enable the exchange of knowledge and experience, regardless of the means. This includes incurring all expenses related to face-to-face meetings. Faculty must be paid for attending those in-

person events; otherwise this may create resentment (Beck, 2007; Gordon, 2003), if not a low level of participation.

CHAPTER V – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The decision to conduct this study did not crystallize overnight. It was only after many years of experience, both as an online adjunct instructor and as a faculty coach, that the researcher posed the principal question of this investigation: *Can periodic face-to-face contact create a more significant social and personal bond between management and online adjunct faculty, instilling in instructors a stronger sense of pride and loyalty that will enhance their performance and potentially increase student retention rates?*

This question reflected the researcher's own experience of the online teaching environment, in which she frequently felt isolated and without adequate opportunities to enhance her skills. Moreover, while coaching other faculty members, she often found that her sense of isolation and alienation from the school was shared by peers. On many occasions colleagues made comments such as *I refuse to spend more time working on my course because BU clearly does not care about me*, or *I will not speak on the telephone with my students because my efforts are never recognized by BU*.

If BU provided adjunct faculty members with regular opportunities to share knowledge and learn from one another, the researcher wondered, would their sense of being isolated and unrecognized begin to dissipate? By the same token, would their sense of belonging, job motivation and loyalty to the institution then receive a boost? And, once again, would the best way for BU to show how much faculty are valued not be to gather them in face-to-face meetings and events?

There were two assumptions behind these thoughts: First, adjuncts would develop their skills more efficiently, and therefore become better teachers, if they met periodically in person to exchange knowledge and experience with others. And second, as they found their skills improving, these instructors would become more motivated on the job and feel increased loyalty to the institution.

The researcher's assumptions were largely corroborated by what this study revealed. However, as will be explained in the summary that follows, there was one surprising element in participants' responses that led the researcher to reconsider her own rationale for wishing to meet in person with other faculty members.

Summary of Findings

This investigation did not have its origin in any preconceived theory but, rather, pursued reasonable conclusions derived directly from the research data. The methodology followed the process described by Creswell (2003):

The theory or general pattern of understanding will emerge as it begins with initial codes, develops into broad themes, and coalesces into a grounded theory or broad interpretation. These aspects of an unfolding research model make it difficult to prefigure qualitative research tightly at the proposal or early research stage (p. 182).

The researcher read and listened to the experiences of her fellow adjunct faculty members in order to identify any correlations between her initial assumptions and her ultimate interpretation of those firsthand experiences. At the same time, she sought the benefits outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) for this type of grounded-theory study – i.e., that they “are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (p. 12). Throughout the investigative process, the researcher remained self-conscious, trying to ensure her own biases did not colour the findings. In the best tradition of qualitative research, she worked to “remain open to the unexpected,

[and] willing to change the direction or focus of a research project, [or even to] abandon the original research question in the middle of a project” (Neuman, 2003, p. 146).

From the analysis of completed questionnaires and telephone interview recordings, it was clear that participants welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences in teaching online for BU. In presenting their views, adjuncts articulated what they felt to be sources of dissatisfaction on the job, as well as aspects of working for BU that they saw as positive. Moreover, they were eager to suggest changes that in their view would improve the quality of the teaching experience and, consequently, their ability to further enrich the learning process for students. They placed particular importance on the need for constant and clear communication between administrators and faculty members, on the improvement of recognition practices and on the creation of more opportunities to learn from other members of the BU community.

Of those BU adjuncts who responded to the study questionnaire and subsequently spoke with the researcher, most expressed a strong need to become better informed on a range of institutional matters, including BU’s mission, vision, strategic goals, policies and planned instructional and technological changes. It is clear that when administrators do not communicate often with adjunct faculty, providing constant updates on the institution’s management priorities, the sense of isolation increases among these instructors. When faculty are not kept informed on issues that concern the school, it is detrimental to their satisfaction with the work environment. Feelings of job insecurity tend to escalate, as instructors are not sure whether the school is in a position to continue giving them teaching assignments. This in turn can make faculty members restless and inclined to pursue teaching opportunities elsewhere.

Another area of concern is instructors' sense that their value is not recognized. When faculty feel isolated, without adequate awareness of institutional affairs, it appears that they often perceive management's "silence" as disregard for the value they could bring to discussions on improving the institution. They have the impression that their opinions do not carry any weight and their suggestions are not welcome, as the administration has concluded they could not say anything that would be of help. As one faculty member put it, the school's message is perceived to be, "We do the thinking, you do the working."

Associated with this lack of acknowledgement of faculty's value is the absence of feedback on performance. Many instructors say they are left wondering whether the institution holds them in high regard and if they are even seen as competent educators. In this "guessing game", they conclude they are doing reasonably well because they continue to be offered new classes to teach – but their uncertainty seems to be a source of anxiety. Not knowing how they have scored in performance rankings gave rise to a common question among many respondents: Why can they not have customized feedback from time to time, in order to feel reassured that the school values their performance and contribution?

Issues of communication go beyond the perceived lack of feedback from management. In fact, a situation that seems to require even more attention is the absence of events that connect faculty members with one another. In the view of these instructors, learning from their peers' knowledge and experience would provide inspiration that could only make them better teachers.

Members of BU management were also invited to answer a number of questions. Topics covered in their questionnaire were directly related to those that surfaced in the inquiries conducted with faculty. The researcher's hope was to compare views of the same topics from both angles – i.e., from the perspectives of adjuncts and administrators. The findings held the promise of giving BU management – and presumably administrators at other online institutions – solid insights that could only help improve their relationships with faculty members, and ultimately benefit their students. The two sides presented similar views regarding the issues raised. However, adjuncts seemed more focused on the current reality, whereas management – except in a very few circumstances – spoke about ideal practices for faculty retention and not necessarily what they saw happening at present. Management's wishful thinking may not be sufficient for faculty to remain attached to the institution. As discussed in the review of literature, when educational institutions are making increased use of adjuncts, they must strive to find ways of attracting and retaining the best academics in order to perform well against the competition. School administrators must go beyond good intentions; listening to what faculty have to say could help these organizations become and remain employers of choice.

This investigation also provided insights into the value that these instructors give to sound and reliable technology, which is their main channel of communication with students. These academics seem to be mainly interested in serving their students well; they count on a state-of-the art course management system to help them do their job effectively.

All of the suggestions offered by these instructors revolve around the need for clear, more frequent and wide-ranging communication. Many suggested that face-to-face gatherings of faculty would allow better exchanges to happen. It appears, however, that regardless of the channels people choose for communicating with one another – i.e., via technology or face to face – what is critical is the creation of opportunities for all stakeholders to share their ideas regarding the ongoing improvement of the institution's services and reputation. This in turn will provide students with a more positive and fulfilling experience.

Unexpected Events and Possible Explanation

When the researcher decided to conduct this study, she had high expectations as to the number of faculty members who would be willing to share their views. Indeed, she predicted that the point of saturation would be reached within two months of beginning the investigation, if not sooner, given the potential volume and scope of views to be collected from all adjuncts participating in the inquiry. It therefore came as a surprise when comparatively few faculty responded positively to the invitation to participate in the study. Many cited a lack of time to respond to the questionnaire. Still more disappointing was the fact that some adjuncts did not even acknowledge receipt of the invitation.

The same was also true for some members of the BU management team. One administrator could not participate due to lack of time; another agreed to take part in the study but never sent the completed questionnaire back to the researcher. Other members of the administration, as was the case with some adjuncts, did not even acknowledge receiving the request from the researcher. Those who accepted, though, were gracious in

their responses and made a noticeable effort to be candid and helpful in sharing their views.

One possible reason that some administrators failed to respond was the fact that they were too busy with other, more important priorities at BU. Another possibility is that some did not fully grasp the importance of their input to the study and therefore chose to ignore the request. In the case of non-responsive adjuncts, the interpretation is necessarily more speculative. Although there could be many explanations for some adjuncts' apparent lack of interest in taking part in the study, the researcher wondered if it might indicate a weak sense of camaraderie and collegiality – which of course was one of the potential concerns the study was designed to investigate. Had these faculty members felt a deeper and more cohesive connection with one another, one wonders if the refusals and lack of acknowledgement would have been evident with the same frequency.

Interpretation of Results

The researcher believes that a study reaches its pinnacle when the essence of the information that has surfaced in interviews is finally captured and an interpretation of the phenomena under investigation can be presented. As Creswell (2003) points out, the lessons learned “could be the researcher’s personal interpretation, couched in the individual understanding that the inquirer brings to the study from her or his own culture, history, and experiences” (p. 194-195). Neuman (2003) adds that qualitative researchers do not distance themselves from study participants: “This does not mean arbitrarily interjecting personal opinion, being sloppy about data collection, or using evidence selectively to support personal prejudices. It means taking advantage of personal insight, feelings and human perspectives to understand social life more fully” (p. 141).

With these general interpretive principles in mind, the first critical point worth noting is that many of the experiences related by adjuncts do not differ greatly from those described in existing research on the sense of isolation reported by all teleworkers. The researcher found virtually no studies focusing on the need for face-to-face meetings among adjunct faculty members, or between faculty and their educational institutions. However, there has been plenty of research on virtual employees in general that highlights the importance of creating opportunities for periodic face-to-face contact between management and employees. Indeed, topics such as the absence of trust and motivation on the job, as well as feelings of unfair treatment among remote staff, have been explored extensively in the research conducted to date on virtual work environments.

Based on all of the information collected in this study, it is clear that similar issues arise in the distance education environment, as adjuncts frequently express feelings of disconnection from other members of the school community. At the same time, this new research points to an underlying reason for adjuncts' frustration that is unique to the academic environment: isolation from the institution and from their peers means that instructors lack opportunities to develop their skills in order to better serve their students. Indeed, the desire to better serve students' needs was an important, if not the most important, source of motivation for all interviewees. It appears that the ultimate goal of faculty who crave more contact with administrators and one another is to become better educators in order to give their students a more fulfilling learning experience. They want to be better informed on institutional issues so they can utilize that awareness in creating more efficient ways to enable successful learning. They want to learn about technology

developments so they can optimize their use of the online platform in connecting with students. They want feedback on their performance so they make any necessary improvements in their approach that will enable them to become better teachers. They want their value recognized so they can share with others their individual insights and contributions to the teaching profession. In short, improving communication will satisfy an overwhelming intrinsic need among BU's adjunct instructors – to make a positive difference in their students' lives. Apparently, an overall goal of all study participants is to connect with other faculty members so they can learn from one another's knowledge, experience and firsthand stories. Most adjuncts agree that having occasional opportunities to meet their peers and administrators face to face would allow them to develop their skills in a more effective, efficient, inspiring and indeed pleasant manner. Many envision benefiting from lessons that current technology would never allow them to gain. Connecting directly with colleagues would motivate them to continue discussions through the school's CTL forum as well as via e-mail, because they would now feel more comfortable contacting people they had met in person. Moreover, meeting personally with peers and managers would enable them to grow as teachers. Again, their main interest is clearly in finding ways to become better educators – a fundamental insight that points to the overall conclusion of this thesis.

The core question posed by this study was whether face-to-face gatherings of online faculty would increase their sense of loyalty to the educational institution along with their motivation to perform well and thereby increase student retention. From their responses, it appears that adjuncts' first loyalty is to their students rather than to the institution per se. The school merely serves as the means for these instructors to satisfy

their love of teaching. When asked whether they felt their loyalty to BU would increase after meeting with colleagues in person, many stated clearly that it would not; their loyalty lies, first and foremost, with their students. Similarly, most respondents expressed the view that their motivation on the job would be unaffected by face-to-face meetings. They remain motivated to give their students thoughtful attention and guidance even if their feelings toward the institution are not positive.

Where faculty feel face-to-face meetings would have an impact is on their sense of affiliation and collegiality, of belonging to the BU community. In their comments, instructors stress that such gatherings would strengthen their bond with the institution and its stakeholders considerably. By getting to know others in the community better, faculty believe they would gain a deeper sense of team spirit, welcoming the guidance and experience of others as they work to improve their own performance as educators. And this in turn would enable them to better pursue their ultimate loyalty – to their students.

The overall conclusion one can draw from this research, therefore, is that the *absence* of face-to-face meetings apparently does not decrease faculty's loyalty and motivation. However, the *presence* of such events is likely to increase loyalty and motivation, for the simple reason that these meetings would allow instructors to enrich their skills and consequently serve their students better – which most adjuncts identify as the ultimate object of their commitment. If the school, in arranging face-to-face meetings, enables faculty to enrich their own academic life and thereby become better teachers, then the sense of loyalty that faculty feel toward their students will presumably extend – by virtue of its intermediary role – to the institution as well.

Implications of the Study

One possible rebuttal to the above conclusion is that if faculty's only loyalty is to their students, then presumably they would be just as willing to work for any other educational institution that offers them students to teach. There is not much evidence, however, that this is the case in practice – which underlines the significant role of other factors in the retention of faculty. By satisfying faculty's expressed demand for recognition, fair compensation, reliable technology and, above all, better opportunities to exchange ideas with their peers and management – especially in face-to-face meetings – schools can remain competitive and win their faculty's loyalty, even if indirectly. The results of this study strongly indicate that providing face-to-face opportunities for professional and social development is not the sole determinant in earning faculty's loyalty. However, if an institution adds this practice to fair compensation, clear communication and sincere efforts to recognize faculty's value, it will seemingly have found the ideal recipe for keeping faculty members satisfied and willing to perform in ways that continue attracting and retaining students.

The key lesson from this study for online educational institutions is that adjunct faculty members' need for crystal-clear, honest and frequent communication with management and fellow instructors should be considered their chief concern. Everything that can be done to assist adjuncts in learning from others in the school community will work in favor of their retention. And, as Levinson (2005) rightly suggests: "Retain the instructor, retain the student ("What Do Adjunct Faculty Want?", ¶ 14).

Future Research

In light of the results achieved in this investigation, the researcher recommends at least three variations of this inquiry for future studies:

- As was already suggested in the opening of this chapter, in order to better understand adjunct faculty's needs and sources of motivation, it would be interesting to perform similar research taking into account specific attributes of the surveyed population. Empirical information such as age, gender, cultural background and length of service in the online teaching environment would provide broader and more profound insights into issues of motivation, loyalty and the sense of community.
- One important question in investigating the value of face-to-face meetings for online faculty is whether age plays a role in the expressed need for gathering in person with colleagues. It could be that younger faculty who are more accustomed to online communication technologies do not feel as strong a need as their older counterparts for that type of personal contact. Distinguishing respondents by age and experience could add an interesting twist to the interpretation of results.
- Lastly, this type of inquiry should be conducted with faculty members of other online educational institutions. The results presented here can in many respects be applied generally to the management of all such faculty members and its resulting impact on student retention. However, there are some aspects of the current study that may only reflect the unique practices and realities of teaching at BU, such as the school's particular course platform and its CTL resource. It would be interesting to see comparable studies at other schools uncovering parallel

evidence of general trends and highlighting differences that will refine our understanding of an important challenge in online education – how to keep adjunct faculty fully engaged and working effectively with their institutions to educate, inspire and retain students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Letter of Informed Consent for Faculty Members

September 2008

Dear fellow adjunct faculty member,

I am currently working on a Master's of Distance Education degree at Athabasca University. Under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Michael Welton, and with the support of thesis committee members Dr. Mohamed Ally and Dr. Jon Baggaley, I am conducting research for my thesis entitled: *The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on loyalty to their academic institutions and student retention.*

The study has been inspired by my years of working as a faculty coach at Beckwith University (BU). I have had the opportunity to work closely with many of my peers and to gain a deep appreciation for what motivates BU instructors in putting their best efforts into teaching. Now I intend to investigate the subject more thoroughly, still focusing on motivation but now examining whether the physical distance from peers and management has an effect on adjunct faculty performance – and how much impact this may have on student retention levels. This will be a grounded-theory inquiry, and it is my hope that the findings will be representative of what other virtual educational institutions experience, particularly when many BU adjunct faculty members teach for other schools as well.

The purpose of the study is to explore possible ways of nurturing a stronger

personal connection between academic management and adjunct faculty – a connection in which these adjunct instructors' psychological and social needs are respected, motivating them to work as a team on behalf of BU and ultimately provide students with the best possible learning experience.

With the consent of both the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board and BU management, I invite you to become a participant in the study. Participation, in whole or in part, is voluntary; you are under no obligation to participate to any degree.

If you are willing to participate, here are the steps I ask you to follow:

- Send an e-mail to me in response to this consent form stating that you have read its content and agree with all its terms (see below).
- Respond to the questionnaire I will send you immediately after I receive your reply. This should not take more than 30 to 45 minutes to answer. All of the questions are open, and you can include any amount of information you find necessary to answer.
- Once you send your answers to me, I will review them and if I need additional information or clarification, I will contact you by telephone. This call should not take more than 30 minutes and will be recorded for my future reference while writing the thesis.

If any changes are made to the study or new information becomes available, you will be informed. Permission to conduct the study has been gained from the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. A copy of the research will be made available to you upon request.

While I have also gained permission from BU management to conduct this study

involving its adjunct instructors, rest assured that the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and your identity will never be revealed under any circumstances. Your written answers to the questionnaire as well as the recording of our telephone conversation will be securely and confidentially stored on my personal computer and a backup drive. As the sole researcher in this study, I will be the only one with access to the information you provide. All records of your participation in this research will be erased from my computer and backup drives within three months after my thesis has been approved, which should occur by early 2009.

You have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time before the analysis of results begins. After that point, all the gathered information will be taken into consideration. In the event of an early withdrawal, all gathered information, no matter its extent, will be immediately erased from my computer hard drive after I receive your request.

Once this research thesis has been approved, the entire document will be publicly available online through the Athabasca University Library's Digital Project and Thesis Room.

It is my hope that the results of this study will help BU – as well as other online institutions seeking to increase adjunct faculty satisfaction and consequently student retention – to provide adjuncts with more effective means of bonding personally and socially with co-workers. This study will potentially shed light on whether online educational institutions, by satisfying the social need of adjunct faculty to interact with one another, can enhance these instructors' enthusiasm for their jobs, as well as their determination to provide students with an outstanding educational experience. For these

reasons, your participation in this study would be sincerely appreciated.

Should you wish to discuss this project with someone other than the researcher, please e-mail or call my supervisor, Dr. Michael Welton, Adjunct Professor at Athabasca University (telephone 604-221-8379; e-mail mwelton@athabascau.ca).

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

Vera Dolan
115 Chiswick Crescent
Aurora, ON
L4G 6P1
Canada
Tel: (905) 841-0924
vdolan@sympatico.ca

To express your interest in participating, please reply to me at vdolan@sympatico.ca indicating your wish by using the wording in the following statement:

I consent to participate fully in Vera Dolan's thesis research, including completing questionnaires and being interviewed over the telephone. I understand that I may refuse to answer any question or withdraw entirely without penalty any time before the analysis of results phase begins. After that point, I understand that all the gathered information will be taken into consideration. In the event of my early withdrawal, all gathered information, no matter its extent, will be immediately erased from the researcher's computer hard drive after she receives my request. It is also my understanding that any information I release to the researcher will be kept strictly confidential and that my identity will never be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. In addition, it is my understanding that all records used in this thesis

research will be destroyed three months after its defence and approval. I am also aware that once this research thesis has been approved, the entire document will be publicly available online through the Athabasca University Library's Digital Project and Thesis Room.

Appendix B – Letter of Informed Consent for Management

September 2008

Dear academic manager:

I am currently working on a Master's of Distance Education degree at Athabasca University. Under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Michael Welton, and with the support of thesis committee members Dr. Mohamed Ally and Dr. Jon Baggaley, I am now conducting research for my thesis entitled: *The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on loyalty to their academic institutions and student retention.*

The study has been inspired by my years of working as a faculty coach at Beckwith College and now Beckwith University (BU). I've had the opportunity to work closely with many of my peers and to gain a deep appreciation for what motivates BU instructors in putting their best efforts into teaching. Now I intend to investigate the subject more thoroughly, still focusing on motivation but now examining whether the physical distance from peers and management has an effect on adjunct faculty performance – and how much impact this may have on student retention levels. This will be a grounded-theory inquiry, and it is my hope that the findings will be representative of what other virtual educational institutions experience, particularly when many BU adjunct faculty members teach for other schools as well.

The purpose of the study is to explore possible ways of nurturing a stronger personal connection between academic management and adjunct faculty – a connection in which these adjunct instructors' psychological and social needs are respected, motivating

them to work as a team on behalf of BU and ultimately provide students with the best possible learning experience.

With the consent of the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board, I invite you to become a gatekeeper participant in the study. Participation, in whole or in part, is voluntary. You are obviously under no obligation to participate in any way.

Should you desire to participate, here are the steps I ask you to follow:

- Send an e-mail to me in response to this consent form stating that you have read its content and agree with all its terms (see below).
- Respond to the questionnaire I will send you immediately after I receive your reply. This should not take more than 30 to 45 minutes to answer. All of the questions are open, and you can include any amount of information you find necessary to answer a question.
- Once you send your answers to me, I will review them and if I need additional information or clarification, I will contact you by telephone. This call should not take more than 30 minutes and will be recorded for my future reference while writing the thesis.

If any changes are made to the study or new information becomes available, you will be informed. Permission to conduct the study has been gained from the Athabasca University Research Ethics Board. A copy of the research will be made available to you upon request.

Fortunately, I have already received formal permission from BU IRB to conduct this study with the school's adjunct instructors. Now, in addition to providing me with your consent to participate in the study answering questions from the academic

management's point of view, it is my hope that you will also permit me to observe their courses from time to time in order to gain further insights. Rest reassured that your written answers to the questionnaire as well as the recording of our possible telephone conversation will be securely and confidentially stored on my personal computer and backup drive. Participants' identities will never be revealed under any circumstances. As the sole researcher in this study, I will be the only one with access to the information you provide. All records of your participation in this research will be erased from my computer and backup drives within three months after my thesis has been approved, which should occur by early 2009.

You have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time before the analysis of results begins. After that point, all the gathered information will be taken into consideration. In the event of your early withdrawal, all gathered information, no matter its extent, will be immediately erased from my computer hard drive after I receive your request.

Once this research thesis has been approved, the entire document will be publicly available online through the Athabasca University Library's Digital Project and Thesis Room.

It is my hope that the results of this study will help BU – as well as other online institutions seeking to increase adjunct faculty satisfaction and consequently student retention – to provide adjuncts with more effective means of bonding personally and socially with co-workers. This study will potentially shed light on whether online educational institutions, by satisfying the social need of adjunct faculty to interact with one another, can enhance these instructors' enthusiasm for their jobs, as well as their

determination to provide students with an outstanding educational experience. For these reasons, your participation in this study would be sincerely appreciated.

Should you wish to discuss this project with someone other than the researcher, please e-mail or call my supervisor, Dr. Michael Welton, Adjunct Professor at Athabasca University (telephone 604-221-8379; e-mail mwelton@athabascau.ca).

Thank you very much for your attention.

Sincerely,

Vera Dolan
115 Chiswick Crescent
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To express your interest in participating, please reply to me at vdolan@sympatico.ca indicating your wish by using the wording in the following statement:

I consent to participate fully in Vera Dolan's thesis research, including completing questionnaires and being interviewed over the telephone. I understand that I may refuse to answer any question or withdraw entirely without penalty any time before the analysis of results phase begins. After that point, I understand that all the gathered information will be taken into consideration. In the event of my early withdrawal, all gathered information, no matter its extent, will be immediately erased from the researcher's computer and backup drives after she receives my request. It is also my understanding that any information I release to the researcher will be kept strictly

confidential and that my identity will never be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. In addition, it is my understanding that all records used in this thesis research will be destroyed three months after its defence and approval. I am also aware that once this research thesis has been approved, the entire document will be publicly available online through the Athabasca University Library's Digital Project and Thesis Room.

Appendix C – Original Questionnaire – Faculty Members

The questions and answers in this document will serve as the foundation for Vera Dolan's thesis entitled: **The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on loyalty to their academic institutions and student retention**. Please complete all the questions below and feel free to write as much as necessary. If you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to call the researcher at 905-841-0924 or send an e-mail to vdolan@sympatico.ca.

Your responses will be held in strictest confidence, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. This questionnaire should not take more than 30 - 45 minutes to be completed.

Your voluntary participation in this study is very much appreciated!

1. *In order to feel that you are part of a team, and that your service and dedication are deeply appreciated, what would BU have to do or offer? Is the school corresponding to your expectations in this regard?*
2. *What enhancements could be made to strengthen adjuncts' sense of affiliation with the institution and your personal connection with other faculty members?*
3. *What are intrinsic motivators for you? How do they figure in your work for BU? What about extrinsic motivators?*
4. *How much do you value a sense of camaraderie with management and peers? Why is it important/unimportant to you? How much does its presence or absence affect your motivation on the job?*

5. *Are you satisfied with the frequency and means of interaction with your BU peers and management? If not, what would help you get to know one another better and develop stronger social bonds?*
6. *Would periodic face-to-face meetings between management and adjunct instructors deepen your sense of affiliation with the institution? Would they increase your motivation on the job?*
7. *Do you teach for other online institutions? How do they compare to BU when it comes to socialization of adjunct instructors? Do you feel more strongly connected to these other institutions?*
8. *If you had to choose between teaching for the other institution(s) and teaching for BU, which would you choose? Why?*
9. *What technologies could make up for the absence of face-to-face contact between adjunct faculty and management? Is BU doing enough?*

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please e-mail this document back to Vera Dolan at vdolan@sympatico.ca. The researcher will contact you after she has reviewed your answers in order to arrange a convenient time for a follow-up telephone call.

Appendix D – Final Questionnaire – Faculty Members

The questions and answers in this document will serve as the foundation for Vera Dolan's thesis entitled: **The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on loyalty to their academic institutions and student retention**. Please complete all the questions below and feel free to write as much as necessary. If you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to call the researcher at 905-841-0924 or send an e-mail to vdolan@sympatico.ca.

Your responses will be held in strictest confidence, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. This questionnaire should not take more than 30 - 45 minutes to be completed.

Your voluntary participation in this study is very much appreciated!

1. *In order to feel that you are part of a team, and that your service and dedication are deeply appreciated, what would Beckwith University (BU) have to do or offer that it currently doesn't?*
2. *What enhancements could be made to strengthen adjuncts' sense of affiliation with the institution and your personal connection with other faculty members?*
3. *What are intrinsic motivators for you? How do they figure in your work for BU and why are they important to you? What about extrinsic motivators?*
4. *How much do you value a sense of camaraderie with management and peers? Why is it important/unimportant to you? How much does its presence or absence affect your motivation on the job?*
5. *Are you satisfied with the frequency and means of interaction with your BU peers and management? If not, what would help you get to know one another better and*

- develop stronger social bonds?*
6. *Do you know how your performance is evaluated? Are you satisfied with the current system? How often would you like to receive personalized feedback from management?*
 7. *Would periodic face-to-face meetings between management and adjunct instructors deepen your sense of affiliation with the institution? Would they increase your motivation on the job? Please, explain.*
 8. *Can all subjects between management-faculty and faculty-faculty be discussed virtually (i.e., from a distance) or are there any that should be done in a face-to-face context? Why?*
 9. *If given the opportunity to meet in person with management and other faculty periodically, with all expenses paid by BU:*
 - a) *How would that affect your motivation on the job?*
 - b) *How would that strengthen your sense of loyalty to the institution?*
 - c) *How beneficial would face-to-face meetings be for faculty in general?*
 - d) *What kind of activities would you like to see in those meetings (e.g., faculty presentations, course development, social gatherings, etc)?*
 10. *What would you think if BU started training new faculty face-to-face? What advantages do you see? Do you wish your initial training had been conducted face-to-face? Why?*
 11. *If given the opportunity to meet in person with management and other faculty*

*periodically, **but you would have to pay for your expenses**, would you be willing to go? What could you gain from those meetings?*

*12. Do you teach for other online institutions? How do they compare to BU when it comes to **socialization of adjunct instructors**? Do you feel more strongly connected to these other institutions?*

13. Having the human connection in mind, if you had to choose between teaching for the other institution(s) and teaching for BU, which would you choose? Why?

14. What technologies – if any -- could make up for the absence of face-to-face contact between adjunct faculty and management? Is BU doing enough? How much do you benefit from the Live Meetings (Adobe Acrobat Connect/Webcasts)? Are webcasts and an online Centre for Teaching and Learning discussion area a good substitute for face-to-face meetings?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please e-mail this document back to Vera Dolan at vdolan@sympatico.ca. The researcher will contact you after she has reviewed your answers in order to arrange a convenient time for a follow-up telephone call.

Appendix E – Original Questionnaire – Academic Management Members

The questions and answers in this document will serve as the foundation for Vera Dolan's thesis entitled: *The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on loyalty to their academic institutions and student retention.*

Please complete all the questions below and feel free to write as much as necessary. If you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to call the researcher at 905-841-0924 or send an e-mail to vdolan@sympatico.ca.

Your responses will be held in strictest confidence, and your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher. This questionnaire should not take more than 30 minutes to complete.

Your voluntary participation in this study is very much appreciated!

1. *Is the creation of a solid psychological and sociological bond with adjunct faculty important for a virtual institution such as BU? Why?*
2. *What is BU doing to cultivate loyalty from its adjunct instructors? Currently, how committed would you say these instructors are to the wellbeing of the institution? To what degree do you think they feel they are part of a team?*
3. *Ideally, what kind of support and means of interaction do you believe BU should provide to faculty? Is BU doing enough to create a strong bond with instructors?*
4. *What, do you believe are adjunct faculty members' expectations when it comes to socialization with management and their peers? How is BU meeting these expectations?*
5. *What kind of personality must a virtual instructor have, or what traits must he or she present that differ from traditional faculty?*
6. *What enhancements could be made by BU in order to strengthen adjuncts' sense of affiliation with the institution and trust in its management?*

7. *What, in management's view, are intrinsic motivators for these instructors? What about extrinsic motivators?*
8. *How much do BU instructors value a sense of camaraderie with management and peers? Do you think a personal bond with others (or lack thereof) has the power to affect their motivation on the job? How concerning is this?*
9. *What do you see as the main motivation for faculty to post questions and comments in faculty forum discussions? What motivates faculty to connect with others?*
10. *Do faculty forums increase faculty visibility to management? How important is that visibility? How much importance do faculty members appear to place on it?*
11. *Bearing in mind that instructors' performance can be a student retention tool, how important is it for faculty members to feel a sense of belonging to a cohesive and supportive team?*
12. *Without taking the financial implications into account, do you believe that periodic face-to-face meetings with adjunct instructors could increase their sense of affiliation with the institution? Why?*
13. *What technologies could make up for the absence of face-to-face contact between faculty and management? Is BU doing enough?*
14. *If your instructors were to choose between BU and other virtual institutions they work for, how confident are you that they would choose BU? Why?*

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please e-mail this document back to Vera Dolan at vdolan@sympatico.ca. The researcher will contact you after she has reviewed your answers in order to arrange a convenient time for a follow-up telephone call.

Appendix F – Final Questionnaire – Academic Management Members

The questions and answers in this document will serve as the foundation for Vera Dolan's thesis entitled: *The physical, psychological and social isolation of online adjunct faculty and its impact on their teaching performance, trust in management and loyalty to their academic institutions*. Please complete all the questions below and feel free to write as much as necessary. In case you need any clarification, please do not hesitate to call the researcher at 905-841-0924 or send an e-mail to vdolan@sympatico.ca.

Your responses will be held in strictest confidence and your identity will not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher in the project. This questionnaire should not take more than 30 minutes to be completed.

Your voluntary participation in this study is extremely appreciated!

1. *Is the creation and nurturing of a solid psychological and sociological bond with adjunct faculty members important for a virtual institution such as BU? Why?*
2. *What is BU doing in order to cultivate loyalty from its adjunct instructors? Keeping the current situation in mind, how committed to the wellbeing of the institution do you perceive BU adjunct instructors to be? How much part of a team do you think they feel?*
3. *Ideally, what kind of support and means of interaction do you believe BU should provide to their faculty? Is BU doing enough to create a strong bond with those instructors?*
4. *What, do you believe, are adjunct faculty members' expectations when it comes to socialization with management and their peers? How is BU meeting those needs?*
5. *What kind of personality must a virtual instructor have or what traits must he or she present that differ from traditional faculty? Could one acquire those*

traits? How?

- 6. What enhancements could be made by BU in order to strengthen adjuncts' sense of affiliation with the institution and trust in its management?*
- 7. What does management see as intrinsic motivators for these instructors? How about extrinsic? Is BU compensating its adjuncts appropriately?*
- 8. Some online adjunct instructors feel motivated on the job despite the fact they don't feel fairly compensated. They say the environment helps them stay because they feel they are part of a team and they are valued in other ways. Do you think this is what happens at BU? What are these "other ways" that make up for perceived low pay?*
- 9. How much do you think BU instructors value a sense of camaraderie with management and peers? Do you think a personal bond with others or lack thereof has the power to affect their motivation on the job? How concerned are you with that?*
- 10. As part of management, do you feel strongly connected to adjunct faculty? How many have you established some form of personal contact with? Overall, what do you know about them besides their name and what courses they teach? How do you think this personal connection affect their motivation on the job?*
- 11. What do you see as the main motivation for faculty to post questions and comments in faculty forum discussions? What motivates faculty to connect with peers and management?*
- 12. What is your response to faculty who say they do not feel any motivation to participate in discussion forums such as the CTL space? In your view, what could be reasons for them not feeling like exchanging ideas with others?*
- 13. Do faculty forums increase faculty visibility to management? How important is that to management? How important do you think that being visible is*

important to faculty?

- 14. With faculty's performance as a student retention tool in mind, how important is it for faculty members to feel a sense of belonging to a cohesive and supportive team?*
- 15. Without taking financial aspects into account, do you believe periodical face-to-face meetings with adjunct instructors could increase their sense of affiliation with the institution? Why?*
- 16. What value could be gained from periodically face-to-face meetings with all instructors?*
- 17. How about face-to-face faculty orientation? What could be the gains from reintroducing this practice at BU?*
- 18. Ideally, what technologies could make up for the absence of a face-to-face contact between faculty and management? Is BU doing enough?*
- 19. If those instructors were to choose between BU and other virtual institutions they work for, how confident are you that they would choose BU? Why?*

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please e-mail this document back to Vera Dolan at vdolan@sympatico.ca. The researcher will contact you after she has reviewed your answers in order to arrange a convenient time for a follow-up telephone call.

Appendix G – Summary of Categories, Subcategories, Properties and Sub-Properties

<u>CATEGORY: PROBLEMS IN GENERAL</u>
Overall concerns raised by instructors.
Subcategory: Compensation Monetary rewards or incentives given to faculty for their services. <i>Property: Low</i> As a problem, compensation refers to the opinion of some instructors that they are not paid fairly for their services.
Subcategory: Work Tools All course materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses. <i>Property: Out of Date Materials</i> Concern over obsolete or unrealistic data in the course materials provided to students.
Subcategory: Consequences Results from any practices or lack of practices by the institution. <i>Property: Disconnect</i> A sense of isolation between an instructor and the school's leadership body. Instructors' concern, for example, that they do not know the names or specific roles of administrators. <i>Property: No/Poor Sense of Affiliation</i> A sense of disconnection from the institution and a lack of pride in belonging to the organization.
Subcategory: Treatment The manner with which BU values adjunct faculty's services, credentials and opinions, as well a visible concern for their sense of satisfaction on the job. <i>Property: Disregard</i> A perceived failure by management to request instructors' input on matters of academic concern. The impression that seniority, academic background and credentials are not valued fairly by the institution. The feeling that faculty's individual talents, skills and history of success in academia are taken for granted. <i>Property: Non-Customized Relationship</i> The perception that an instructor is a non-entity within the faculty body and is not well known to management. <i>Property: Lack of PD Opportunities</i> Frustration over the fact that adjuncts are not given opportunities to go through skills development sessions/activities.

Property: Lack of Support on Student Issues

Dissatisfaction over a perceived lack of assistance when trying to resolve an issue with a student. The perception that BU places students' interests before those of faculty.

Subcategory: Practices

All administrative routines adopted by the institution.

Property: Quantity of Students

Sub-Property: Too Many

Concern over the number of students allocated to each class. BU's stated ideal class size is no greater than 20.

Property: Lack of Academic Freedom

A sense of having no control over course materials. BU courses are created and designed by Subject Matter Experts, whereas some instructors express a desire to build/design their own classes.

Property: Response

Sub-Property: Slow/Ineffective

Frustration over slowness or lack of action in responding to an instructor's expressed concern over an issue.

Property: Recognition

Sub-Property: Poor

Frustration regarding poor acknowledgment of outstanding performance as well as limited opportunities for advancement within the academic ranks.

Property: Quality of Students

Sub-Property: Low

The impression that students who are accepted into BU's academic programs are ill prepared for the task.

Property: Lack of PD Opportunities

Frustration over the absence of initiatives to promote skills development among faculty.

Property: No Guarantee of Work

Feelings of job insecurity; an aggravation over not knowing beforehand how many courses one will be teaching in a given year.

Property: No Paid Benefits

Regret over the fact that adjunct faculty have no access to full employee benefits such as health insurance, a pension plan, etc.

Property: Lack of Incentives for CTL Discussions

Low interest in joining discussion threads of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), an online space created for faculty to exchange ideas.

<p><i>Property: PA System</i> Concern over BU's current performance assessment practices and an overall longing for more helpful feedback.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS</u></p>
<p>Problems related to how and when faculty members are informed of school matters and/or exchange ideas with management and peers.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Perspective Faculty member's point of view about a particular issue.</p> <p><i>Property: Technology</i> Any aspect of technical choices made by BU.</p> <p><i>Sub-Property: CTL Design</i> Negative opinion regarding the location of the CTL portal on the BU website and how difficult it is to find threads of interest.</p> <p><i>Sub-Property: Clumsy Synchronous Technology</i> The impression that the current synchronous technology used by BU brings more frustration than benefits as the result of audio-visual shortcomings. Frustration over the fact that faculty can only participate in webcast discussions by typing their comments in a chat box.</p> <p><i>Property: Personal</i> One's own tastes and preferences.</p> <p><i>Sub-Property: Dislike of Blogging</i> Lack of interest in posting individual opinions and thoughts for others to read online.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Consequences Results from any practices or lack of practices by the institution.</p> <p><i>Property: Isolation</i> The feeling of alienation from others – of being on one's own, unable to count on help from management or peers.</p> <p><i>Property: No Sense of Camaraderie or Community</i> Feelings of disconnection from the faculty group, with no sense of mutual interest and support. Poor sense of mutual interest and support. Lack of fellowship among faculty members.</p> <p><i>Property: Discomfort in Contacting Unknown Management</i> Feelings of unease over contacting senior management, as they are unknown to most faculty members.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Practices All administrative routines adopted by the institution.</p>

<p><i>Property: Lack of Clarity</i> Frustration over not being aware of BU's mission, vision, goals, policies, strategic plans, structural matters, etc.</p> <p><i>Property: Poor Frequency of Communication</i> Concern over the lack of opportunities to exchange ideas with others or to communicate with management. A sense of being left wondering, without answers, regarding matters related to the school.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Strategy Ways with which faculty members cope with the isolation from peers and management.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: MOTIVATORS</u></p> <p>Factors that stimulate instructors' positive performance in the online educational environment.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Perspective Faculty member's point of view about a particular issue.</p> <p><i>Property: Sense of Camaraderie</i> A sense of mutual trust and collegial regard among instructors.</p> <p><i>Property: Learning While Teaching</i> The pleasure of acquiring more knowledge and experience, either from students or from exploring the technology used for teaching.</p> <p><i>Property: Service to Students</i> Instructors' sense of accomplishment when they find evidence of having made a positive difference in their students' lives.</p> <p><i>Property: Online Education & Lifestyle Combination</i> The flexibility of teaching in an asynchronous environment, without space or time restrictions.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Compensation Monetary rewards or incentives given to faculty for their services. In this case, instructor values getting paid after each course.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Practices All administrative routines adopted by the institution.</p> <p><i>Property: Recognition</i> Acknowledgement of faculty's seniority, credentials, experience, achievements, etc.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Work Tools All course materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.</p> <p><i>Property: High-Quality Technology</i> Reliable and intuitive technical resources for teaching.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: COMMUNICATION – POSITIVE ASPECTS</u></p>

Positive features of the channels routinely used by BU to exchange information.
<p>Subcategory: Work Tools All course materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.</p> <p><i>Property: Suitable Technology for Orientation and Training</i> The opinion that BU's current technology/platform can be used effectively for orientation and training of faculty, without the need for an initial F2F session.</p> <p><i>Property: CTL/Webcast</i> Positive views of BU's online communication channels: the CTL space (for asynchronous exchanges) and Adobe Acrobat Connect software (for synchronous discussions).</p> <p><i>Property: Feedback Channels</i> Media enabling BU faculty members to communicate their opinions and provide feedback on issues of interest.</p> <p><i>Property: Course Platform</i> The web-based course management and delivery system used by BU.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: PRAISE</u></p> <p>Commendation for services provided by BU.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Treatment The manner with which BU values adjunct faculty's services, credentials and opinions, as well a visible concern for their sense of satisfaction on the job.</p> <p><i>Property: BU Overall Environment</i> All aspects of working for BU, from technology, to quality of staff and students, to curriculum and administrative support.</p> <p><i>Property: BU Staff and Administrative Support</i> Character of the individuals who provide clerical and administrative assistance to all faculty members and quality of help.</p> <p><i>Property: Management's Approach</i> The administrative style of BU leadership members.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Structure Specific arrangement of services and practices by BU.</p> <p><i>Property: Curriculum</i> The prescribed content studied in a course, as well as the quality of BU's academic programs.</p> <p><i>Property: Course Development Team</i> The group of professionals working on the creation, development and design of courses taught at BU.</p>

<p>Subcategory: Work Tools All course materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.</p> <p><i>Property: Technology in General</i> The quality of technology employed by BU in delivering courses and facilitating communication among all users.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Practices All administrative routines adopted by the institution.</p> <p><i>Property: Frequency of Communication</i> <i>Sub-Property: Good</i> Satisfaction with the quality and frequency of information exchanges among members of the BU faculty.</p> <p><i>Property: Quality of Students</i> <i>Sub-Property: High</i> Expression of satisfaction with the quality of students admitted to BU.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Perspective Faculty member's point of view about a particular issue.</p> <p><i>Property: Sentimental Ties to BU</i> An emotional attachment to the institution in so far as it has become part of the faculty member's life.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: GENERAL SUGGESTIONS</u></p> <p>Tips aimed at making BU a better workplace.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Treatment The manner with which BU values adjunct faculty's services, credentials and opinions, as well a visible concern for their sense of satisfaction on the job.</p> <p><i>Property: Attendance at Graduation</i> Allowing faculty members to attend commencement ceremonies at BU's expense.</p> <p><i>Property: E-mail Address for Adjuncts</i> BU e-mail address for all adjuncts. Currently each member has his or her own "non-affiliated" address.</p> <p><i>Property: Merchandise</i> Expressed desire for branded BU merchandise such as hats, sweatshirts, pens, etc.</p> <p><i>Property: Networking Solutions</i> Online space created for faculty to interact socially with the purpose of finding mutual interests and strengthening a sense of camaraderie.</p> <p><i>Property: Profile of Adjuncts</i> A different adjunct instructor would be profiled monthly on the website.</p>

Subcategory: Prerequisite

An established condition for something to happen.

Property: Good Performance → Participation in F2F Events

Condition on which adjuncts would be invited to participate in F2F gatherings with management.

Property: Two-year Commitment Post PD

Allowing adjuncts to participate in professional development programs provided they commit to remaining with the institution for at least two years post-training.

Subcategory: Practices

All administrative routines adopted by the institution.

Property: Professional Development / Social

Opportunities to increase knowledge or skills through study, travel, research, seminars, workshops or courses, among other activities, such as social events aimed at creating a stronger sense of community.

Sub-Property: Departmental Meetings

More frequent opportunities for the exchange of ideas among members of a particular department.

Sub-Property: F2F Annual Meetings

Yearly in-person gatherings of BU faculty members.

Sub-Property: F2F Meetings on Rotational Basis

Same as above, except for the suggestion of having instructors attend these meetings on a rotating basis due to financial constraints.

Sub-Property: F2F Orientation/Training

An opportunity for new hires to meet the BU leadership and learn about the institution before they begin teaching.

Sub-Property: Free BU Courses for Faculty

The desire expressed by faculty to take BU courses for personal growth without tuition fees.

Sub-Property: Teleconferences

Telephone meeting among multiple participants.

Sub-Property: More Frequent Interaction Opportunities

More chances for faculty and management to exchange ideas, independent of the means – i.e., F2F or via the Internet.

Sub-Property: Online Follow-up Discussions Post F2F Meetings

Opportunities for faculty to meet online and further discuss matters covered in earlier

<p>F2F meetings.</p> <p><i>Sub-Property: Quarterly Conference Calls</i> Mandatory telephone meetings every three months with the Chair or Dean and all faculty of each academic department.</p> <p><i>Sub-Property: Quarterly Regional F2F Meetings</i> Every three months, in-person gatherings of faculty who live within a reasonable driving distance of a pre-determined meeting venue.</p> <p><i>Property: Surveys</i> A questionnaire that invites instructors to provide their feedback after each course. In addition, mandatory completion of student surveys, whereby students would not receive their final grades unless they have completed the end-of-course survey.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Structure Specific arrangement of services and practices by BU.</p> <p><i>Property: Faculty Competencies Bank</i> A formal system in which every faculty member's competencies are recorded for potential future needs – e.g., the development of a new course for which the school must find qualified instructors.</p> <p><i>Property: Online Suggestion Box</i> A space where faculty could make suggestions for improvements or present innovative ideas.</p> <p><i>Property: Semi-Annual PA by Management</i> Formal evaluation of instructors' performances every six months by the Department Chair or Dean.</p>
<p>Subcategory: Work Tools All course materials, resources and technology used in the delivery of courses.</p> <p><i>Property: Improvement in Synchronous Technology</i> The suggestion that real-time meeting solutions should be enhanced so that faculty can be heard and seen, instead of just typing their comments in a chat box. Currently only presenters have that option.</p> <p><i>Property: Videos in Webcasts</i> The suggestion that having presenters appear via video would make meetings more interesting and beneficial.</p>
<p><u>CATEGORY: F2F SUGGESTIONS</u></p> <p>Expressed suggestions for making the best use of F2F events.</p>
<p>Subcategory: General Interest Opinions regarding the benefits of F2F meetings, independent of the specific activities they might include.</p>

Subcategory: Topics/Activities

Proposed ideas regarding matters to be discussed or events to participate in case of meeting F2F.

Property: Attendance by Outstanding Students at F2F Faculty Meetings

Allow top-quality BU students to attend F2F faculty meetings and provide their perspective on a range of topics.

Property: Course Development Activities

Opportunities to work in collaboration with other faculty members in the creation and/or enhancement of courses.

Property: Professional Development/ Social

Opportunities to increase knowledge or skills through study, travel, research, seminars, workshops or courses, among other activities, such as social events aimed at creating a stronger sense of community.

Sub-Property: Exchange of Ideas in General

Sessions (workshops, seminars, etc.) in which faculty members discuss their teaching experiences and strategies adopted to circumvent problems, thereby giving others the opportunity to learn from their experience.

Sub-Property: Faculty Presentations

Opportunities for faculty members to present their portfolios as well as any recent research or projects they have been working on.

Sub-Property: Guest Speakers

Speaking invitations to prominent experts in the field of education, as well as other individuals who can enrich faculty's knowledge.

Sub-Property: Meetings with Student Advisors

Sessions in which faculty and student advisors meet to compare experiences and learn from each other's points of view regarding student matters.

Property: Management Presentations

Sessions in which management representatives present general updates and discuss matters related to BU's mission, vision, goals, strategies, policies, etc.

Property: Social Gatherings/Networking Activities

Opportunities for faculty and management to mingle socially with the intention of creating a stronger sense of community and camaraderie.

Property: Innovation

Brainstorming sessions in which faculty offer suggestions for pedagogical innovations to be adopted by the university.

CATEGORY: IMPACT

Effect that F2F meetings can have on faculty members, particularly with respect to their motivation and loyalty to the institution

Subcategory: Consequences

Results from any practices or lack of practices by the institution.

Property: Chain Rationale

The strong belief in a domino effect: F2F meetings → better communication among faculty, and between faculty and management → better PD → better services to students → better reputation for BU.

Property: Enhanced Sense of Community and Affiliation

Stronger connection with management and peers. Also, a stronger sense of connection with the institution and a corresponding increase in pride from belonging to the organization.

Property: Loyalty

Level of motivation to continue working for BU.

Subcategory: Perspective

Faculty member's point of view about a particular issue.

Property: Opinion

Faculty member's point of view.

Sub-Property: Nice, But Not Critical

The opinion that F2F meetings for online faculty, while not essential for delivering quality services to students, can yield many benefits, including a heightened sense of affiliation, community, camaraderie and even motivation on the job.

Sub-Property: Great Learning Experience

The opinion that F2F meetings may enhance faculty's opportunity for professional growth and therefore their ability to provide better services to students.

Sub-Property: Not Important for Motivation

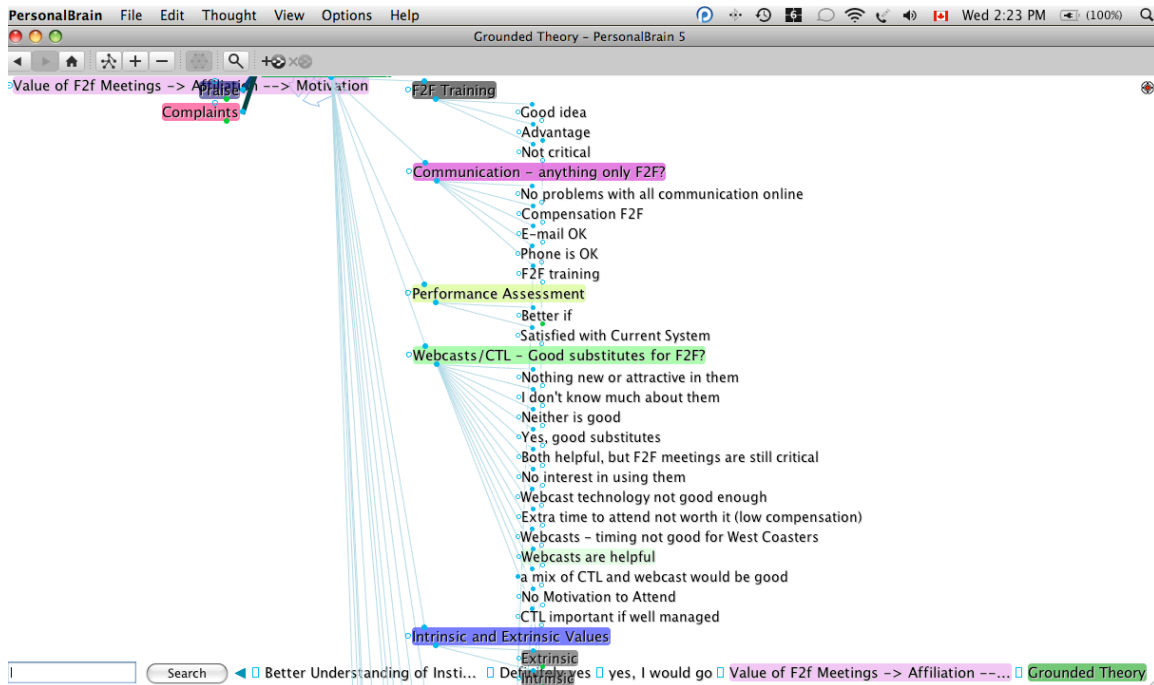
No increase or decrease of efforts to provide students with good services.

Property: Little Desire to Attend if Faculty Members Have to Pay

Regardless of interest in attending F2F meetings, motivation to do so decreases if faculty are told they must pay for their own expenses.

Appendix H – Sample of PersonalBrain© Concept Map Screens

Personal Brain – Original Version



Personal Brain – Final Version (Round 4)

