GETTING TO THE HEART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG NON-TEACHING PERSONNEL IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF A STAFF DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Rowena Casis-Woidyla

California State University, San Bernardino

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Commons, Higher Education Administration Commons, Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons, and the Training and Development Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/1102

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Graduate Studies at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.
GETTING TO THE HEART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG NON-TEACHING PERSONNEL
IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTO
THE INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF A STAFF
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Rowena Casis Woidyla
June 2020
GETTING TO THE HEART OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AMONG NON-TEACHING PERSONNEL
IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY INTO
THE INFLUENTIAL ROLE OF A STAFF
DEVELOPMENT CENTER

________________________

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

________________________

by
Rowena Casis Woidyla
June 2020
Approved by:

Dr. Edna Martinez, Committee Chair, Education

Dr. Marc K. Fudge, Committee Member

Dr. Eric Ramones, Committee Member
ABSTRACT

Despite the importance and incorporation of staff development in higher education, there is limited research on the availability and use of learning opportunities for non-teaching personnel (NTP) in the form of professional development. Work performed by NTP in higher education is critical to university operations.

Without professional development (PD) and engagement opportunities, NTP lack visibility, disengage and ultimately may separate from institutions of higher education. Deliberate organizational efforts to provide access to new learning opportunities and promote personal growth among NTP is the development and institutionalization of centers for professional development, also called staff development centers and staff training and professional development centers, among other names.

Through an Appreciative Inquiry lens, this research aimed to understand the role of Westridge University’s (WU) staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among its NTP. The five major interrelated themes constructed from the data included: 1) Cultivating Talent; 2) Fostering Insight and Introspection; 3) Dismantling Perceptions of Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation; 4) Promoting Community; 5) Strengthening Staff Engagement. These findings are further discussed, along with recommendations for policy, practice, future research, and an introduction to the Higher Education Staff Engagement Taxonomy.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26 RSV). I thank God for all the blessings he has bestowed on me, the courage to pursue this doctorate, and the resilience to complete it. God is good!

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Edna Martinez. I have not met too many faculty members who were authentic and genuine as you! Thank you for not letting me quit when I was no longer interested in my initial topic; you taught me resilience! Your outreach after not hearing from me for months showed me you cared! Thank you for sharing your qualitative expertise (and books) with me. You have a gift of balancing being nice while also providing critical feedback. I have learned so much from you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart, salamat!

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to both Dr. Marc Fudge and Dr. Eric Ramones. Dr. Fudge, thank you for initially serving as my advisor. When I changed my research design from mixed methods to qualitative, I appreciated you staying on, providing support along the way. Dr. Ramones, thank you for your thoughtful questions and feedback. I am grateful to you for injecting your higher education HR lens in my study!

I am incredibly thankful to Dr. David Baker. Your advice, anecdotes, stories, and humor helped me to refocus and progress my writing. To the unforgettable Cohort 9, our gift of gab drive professors crazy, our competitive nature was fun to watch, and our potlucks plentiful. Thanks for your support!
Heartfelt thanks to my family! Mom and Dad, ako na ako ngayon dahil sai yong pagpapagal at sakripisyo. Mahal na mahal kita pareho. Kuya, ikaw ang pinakamahusay na kapatid na maaaring hilingin. Giving me my first Franklin planner was a gift that kept on giving! I owe my foundational time management skills to you (and the late Dr. Stephen Covey), which was tested time and again during this journey. Ate, salamat sa pagiging kapatid at kaibigan ko. Thank you for supporting my goals, never making fun of my dreams, and not getting mad when I wore your clothes without asking. I have fond memories of our outdoor excursions on the Snake River and the Grand Tetons. You've given me so much, especially your unselfish acts like taking time off to take care of my child when I couldn't take time off (being new to my job), and when you drive long distances to help me prepare for events. I appreciate you more than you'll ever know! Salamat sa lahat sa iyong pagmamahal at suporta!

To Wendell, you deserve an "Oscar" for your role as Mr. Mom! Thank you for your love, patience, and support during this arduous journey. YOU are my rock! To Elle, my cheerleader! Thank you for the notes of encouragement you left on my computer, for your inspirational drawings letting me know "I got this" and as you got a little older, for offering to listen to my chapter drafts (despite how uninteresting it was to you). Thank you for advancing my slides during my virtual dissertation defense; I found comfort seeing your beautiful smile! And yes, you can call me, Dr. Mommy, anytime. Like that song goes, "Thank God for little girls..." I thank God every day for you, my little girl. Mahal Kita!
DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all employees, especially non-teaching personnel, in higher education. Regardless of what role you play in higher education, I urge you to take advantage of all the professional development opportunities available to you. What’s great about working in higher education is there is usually a library on campus, an event happening during lunch, educational opportunities after hours, and symposiums weekends. Be a sponge and learn.

Your professional development ideally should be a collaboration with your supervisor and yourself; however, not all of us live in an ideal world. Don't wait to be asked, don't expect to be tapped on the shoulder! Proactively seek it, actively invest in yourself, you'll be happier and more successful because of it!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................. iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES .......................................................................................................... viii
LIST OF FIGURES ......................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement ....................................................................................................... 1
Purpose Statement ......................................................................................................... 4
Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 4
Significance of the Study .............................................................................................. 5
Theoretical Underpinnings ............................................................................................ 8
Assumptions .................................................................................................................. 8
Delimitations ................................................................................................................ 9
Limitations .................................................................................................................... 11
Definitions of Key Terms ........................................................................................... 11
Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 14
Professional Development ............................................................................................ 15
Field of Higher Education and Professional Development ......................................... 43
Employee Engagement ............................................................................................... 53
Conceptual Framework ............................................................................................... 65
Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................... 71
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Statement</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Setting</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Sample and Participant Selection</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality of the Researcher</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Talent</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Insights and Introspection</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismantling Perceptions of Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Community</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Findings</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Participant Profile........................................................................................................................................... 84
Table 2. Data Collection Matrix........................................................................................................................................ 87
Table 3. Rationale and Protocol for Document Analysis............................................................................................. 89
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Appreciative Inquiry 4D Model.............................................................................. 68

Figure 2. Higher Education Staff Engagement Taxonomy.............................................. 171
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This study sought to understand the role of a staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at Westridge University (WU). Through an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) lens and a social constructivist worldview, this study pursued a deeper understanding of the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel with programs and services offered through an SDC and its influence on employee engagement. In this chapter, I discuss the problem statement, research questions, and significance of the study, including theoretical underpinnings, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and definitions of key terms.

Problem Statement

Despite commentary on the importance of and incorporation of professional development in higher education, there is limited research on the availability and use of learning opportunities in the form of professional development for non-teaching personnel (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007; Rebore, 2015). Non-teaching personnel is the staff who work in academic and non-academic departments as administrative assistants, technical support, public safety, maintenance, and student advising (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017). Also, these individuals are responsible for the care of students and school
property, such as school nurses, custodians, and grounds workers (Lutz, 1948). Although non-teaching personnel may be disregarded and feel invisible (Magolda & Delman, 2016), scholars have argued non-teaching staff is an essential stakeholder group in education (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017; Lutz, 1948). Alias et al. (2017) described support staff as integral members of the university because of their interactions with students in providing necessary information and sound advice. Lutz noted (1948), "whatever the duty performed, no non-teaching employee should be forgotten as a possible public relations factor" (p. 102). The non-teaching staff played an important role in public perception (Lutz, 1948). Specifically, Lutz (1948) shared how students and parents perceived a school from its physical attributes (e.g., the appearance of classrooms, cafeteria, schoolyard, and cleanliness of bathrooms) to the level of interaction and services provided by office personnel, including counselors, clerks, and administration. Arrington (2015) echoed the essential work performed by non-teaching personnel is critical to university operations. Non-teaching staff provides necessary administrative and technical support to faculty, enabling faculty to focus on teaching, research, and other responsibilities (Arrington, 2015). Although Lutz's (1948) work focused on K-12 and dates back approximately 70 years ago, Arrington's (2015) work in higher education complements Lutz's work, making it relevant today. The importance of non-teaching employees extends beyond public relations issues and K-12 contexts. Professional development is
necessary for this stakeholder group to ensure the work is being performed at an acceptable standard and help departments run smoothly (Alias et al., 2017).

Deprived of professional development and engagement opportunities, non-teaching personnel may feel invisible and disengage or depart from the organization altogether (Fusch, 2018; Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rosser, 2004). Indeed these behaviors carry negative implications for the organization (Fusch, 2018). Instead of approaching professional development haphazardly, it could be intentional, focused, and provide meaningful outcomes (Fusch, 2018; Jacobs & Washington, 2003). An example of deliberate organizational efforts to provide access to new learning opportunities and promote personal growth among non-teaching personnel is the development and institutionalization of centers for professional development (West Virginia Board of Education, 2013; University of Denver, n.d.); also called staff development centers (Jackson State University, n.d.) and staff training and professional development centers (Taft College, n.d.) among other names. Nonetheless, there is limited research on staff development centers in general. In particular, how staff development centers, through professional development, influences employee engagement. Accordingly, this study is poised to help identify, develop, and strengthen effective practices to promote optimal professional development and engagement for non-teaching personnel in higher education. Ultimately, professional development and employee engagement are vital to advancing the goals of WU and higher education at large.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of an SDC in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at WU. For this study, I defined non-teaching staff as individuals whose primary role is to provide administrative/clerical support, technical support, and student services support, maintenance, and facilities support to university operations. Non-teaching staff's work excludes instruction and research, which are two of the significant tenets of faculty work (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the experiences of Westridge University's non-teaching personnel with the staff development center?
2. How has the staff development center shaped the professional development experiences of Westridge University's non-teaching personnel, if at all?
3. How has Westridge University's staff development center influenced employee engagement, if at all?

This work aligns with Knowles's (1975) and Manning's (2007) conceptualization of professional development: professional development is more than just training workshops. Therefore, for purposes of this study, professional development was understood as an individual's self-directed
process leading to the development of learning capabilities (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007). Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles" (p. 694). Furthermore, Kahn (1990) indicated, engaged employees "employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally" (p. 694). I elaborate on each of these definitions in Chapter Two.

Significance of the Study

Non-teaching personnel is integral to student success (Franks, 2017). Referred to as "cultural navigators" (Strayhorn, 2015, p. 56), some non-teaching personnel help students navigate successfully through life and academics. Goot (2017) reinforced the importance of how non-teaching personnel influence student success. In addition to serving as cultural navigators and helping students, non-teaching personnel maintains campus operations so students can focus on learning, and teachers can focus on teaching (Goot, 2017; Strayhorn, 2015). Thus, their engagement, professional development, and personal growth are instrumental to the functioning of higher education.

Initially, the goal of professional development was to improve employee performance deficiencies (Rebore, 2015). However, professional development has become a significant factor in connecting employees to their workplace (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016; Gallup, 2017) and promoting group cohesiveness and a sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Employee well-being, high levels of employee engagement, and professional
development are connected (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Gallup, 2017), and correlates with organizational social capital (Leana & Van Buren III, 1999). Furthermore, Millennials, the largest generation in the U.S. labor force, have emphasized the importance of working for an organization that helps accelerate their career and professional development (Gallup, 2017). Organizations that appear in the “Top Places to Work For” rankings made significant financial investments in professional development for their employees (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016; Gallup, 2017).

Nonetheless, not reflected in the existing literature is a focus on professional development, and engagement among non-teaching university personnel (Rebore, 2015). Linked to workplace engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Gallup, 2017), it is troublesome that there is an inadequate amount of studies on the professional development of non-teaching university staff. Similarly, there is a lack of research that focuses on infrastructures enabling the development and engagement of non-teaching university personnel within higher education.

An engaged and trained college and university staff positively influence student success (Blake, 2007). Yet, at the same time, some non-teaching personnel felt invisible to university administrators and have limited opportunities for engagement (Johnsrud, 2004; Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rosser, 2004). The roles of non-teaching university staff are primarily administrative, clerical, operational, and technical. However, some of these non-teaching personnel
transition into higher-level positions because of professional development opportunities (Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rebore, 2015). Internal promotions and succession management increase employee motivation and engagement in the workplace (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The exigency of promoting from within the ranks of non-teaching university staff is also a factor in staffing plans and necessitates professional development opportunities (Johnsrud, 2004; Rosser, 2004). Therefore, it is vital to understand the role of an SDC in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel.

For non-teaching personnel who assume new roles through internal promotions, increased professional development is necessary (ATD, 2018; SHRM, 2018). Franks (2017) suggested non-teaching personnel pursue higher-level campus positions when they are personally aligned with the University’s mission and exhibit high levels of engagement. While the staff’s transition into progressively responsible positions might be random and sporadic, Franks (2017) argued universities could provide support in more meaningful, positive ways, such as an investment in centers for staff development.

In sum, this study will contribute to the limited literature on staff development centers and the professional development and employee engagement of non-teaching personnel. Moreover, this study will highlight implications for institutional policy and planning to help other colleges and universities prepare for the establishment of staff development centers.
Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is grounded in a constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2014) and guided by an Appreciative Inquiry lens (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Also known as social constructivism, the constructivist worldview aligns with case study research (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) asserted, "Knowledge is constructed rather than discovered" (p. 99) and the world as we know it is a "human construction" (pp. 99-100). According to Stake (1995), participants, also referred to as actors, construct their understandings from experience and from being told what the world is, not by discovering it whirling there untouched by experience" (p. 100). Appreciative Inquiry and social constructivist worldview are linked based on "notions of worlds as negotiated and co-constructed" (Reed, 2007, p. 55). In that, non-teaching university personnel can shape their world through the way they speak, what they've heard, and what they've experienced about the staff development center and think about the staff development center. As such, my goal as a social constructivist was to understand from the non-teaching personnel's perspective on the role of the staff development center in shaping their professional development experiences and employee engagement. Grasping the professional development exposure non-teaching personnel has with a staff development center, and how they interpret these experiences according to levels of employee engagement is central to this study.

Assumptions

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010), "Assumptions are so basic that,
without them, the research problem itself could not exist” (p. 62). This study included four underlying assumptions. The first assumption was that the professional development of non-teaching personnel is and will continue to be relevant to WU beyond the timeframe of this study. The second assumption was that WU would continue to support the professional development of non-teaching personnel by continuing to sustain the operations of the SDC beyond the study's timeframe. The third assumption was that non-teaching staff answered truthfully and honestly about their experiences with the SDC. The fourth assumption was that the SDC did influence the engagement of non-teaching personnel at WU. In the following section, I share the delimitations of this study.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of my study centered around my conceptual framework and participants. My conceptual framework was Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an asset-based approach that examines the best of an organization, not what’s wrong with it (Reed, 2007). Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to identifying an organization’s areas of improvement by focusing on an organization’s strengths (Knox, Carter, Sommers, & Michaels, 2015). Although some may view AI as looking through rose-colored glasses (Roberts & Workman, 2019; Van Tiem & Rosenzweig, 2006), AI does not disguise issues but instead highlights them as learning opportunities. I intentionally chose to use AI because I recognized strengths in utilizing an asset-based technique and examining the possibilities vs. impossibilities (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Hybrechts, Fry, & Cooperrider,
2018). Even though AI might seem to discourage participants from sharing negative experiences, the exact opposite occurred during my data collection. Participants candidly shared their thoughts, stories, and perspectives. And as a result, I constructed a theme that focused on dismantling perceptions of invisibility and lack of appreciation.

In alignment with the definition of professional development employed in this study, I did not include individuals whose professional development experiences were not self-directed (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007). My research focused on non-teaching personnel’s choice to engage in professional development versus being voluntold by their supervisor to visit the SDC. I sought out non-teaching staff who participated in specific programs and services offered through the SDC, such as leadership development, career tracks\(^1\), and career-related services. I did not include supervisors of non-teaching personnel. To understand the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel with Westridge University’s SDC, I collected data on the participant’s gender, employee type, and years of service. These demographics, specifically years of service, allowed me to understand their interest and motivation of utilizing a new center dedicated to their professional development. Emerging views of gender pose implications for access to and types of professional development, especially for women (Dowling, 2006; Gilbert & Rossman, 1992). I did not consider demographics such as the participant’s age, race, and education level. I provide

\(^1\) Names of programs and events have been changed to protect the identity of the institution.
a recommendation for future research to include additional demographics to advance this work as it relates to the professional development experiences of people of color. Finally, this study did not evaluate the SDC, SDC staff, student assistants, or supervisors of non-teaching personnel.

Limitations

A limitation of my study is the non-representative sample. The majority of my participants were women and did not entirely represent WU's non-teaching personnel. Of the 24 participants I interviewed, only three participants were male. Also, because I did not consider other demographics, this limited my study in helping to illuminate the experiences of, for example, non-teaching personnel of color or varying levels of education.

Definitions of Key Terms

The key terms used in this study are defined below to provide an explanation of the concepts utilized throughout this study and clarify meanings.

*Appreciative Inquiry:* A "cooperative, co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system life when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 8).

*Employee Engagement:* "The harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles" and when an employee is engaged, they "employ and
express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Institutional Archetype: Exemplifies a model department within an organization.

Introspection: A process in how we learn about our past and present mental state (Schwitzgebel, 2019).

Non-teaching personnel (also referred to as non-teaching staff): Employees whose primary duties include administrative and clerical, student services, technical support, facilities, and operations; their primary work excludes instruction, research, and teaching students.

Organizational Social Capital: An employment practice defined as a "resource reflecting the character of social relations within the organization" (Leana & Van Buren III, 1999, p. 538).

Professional Development (also referred to as Employee Development): A self-directed process leading to the development of learning capabilities (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007).

Professionalism: A commitment to learning with four distinct but interrelated dimensions, including competence, leadership skills, lifelong learning, and professionality (Lowe & Gayle, 2010).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I shared the purpose of this study and its significance. I included research questions guiding this study and its theoretical underpinnings,
along with assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. I concluded this chapter with definitions of key terms. In the following section, I present a review of the literature.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

A large and growing body of literature investigated the concepts of employee engagement and professional development with their respective impact in the workplace. Research has shown engaged employees perform better (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Fusch, 2017; Gallup, 2017; Reijseger, Peeters, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2017), have fewer health issues (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011), experience fewer absences (Darr & Johns, 2008), and stay with their employer (Wright & Bonnett, 2007). The higher level of employee satisfaction, workplace commitment, employee-employer relationship, lead to enhanced productivity, reduced turnover, and organizational success (Tooksoon, 2011). Within the private sector, engaged employees positively affect profitability (Gallup, 2017). For public colleges and universities, committed and professionally developed employees influence student success (Blake, 2007), as well as help meet organizational and institutional goals (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017).

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature on professional development and employee engagement at large and in higher education in particular. This chapter contains four main sections: professional development, professional development within a higher education context, employee engagement, and Appreciative Inquiry. I reviewed literature pertinent to professional development in education, and the role staff development plays in employee engagement. I
began with identifying the various definitions of professional development, followed by a brief and broad summary of the field of higher education, and explain employee engagement and related theories. I concluded with an explanation of Appreciative Inquiry, which is the framework that guided this study.

Professional Development

Professional development is a familiar term lacking simplicity in definition or concept. Numerous labels describe professional development, including talent development (Association for Talent Development [ATD], n.d.). Other terms commonly used to describe professional development in the public and private sectors and the academic arena include in-service, staff development, training and development, employee development, and career development (Quinn, 2003; Rebore, 2015; Swanson & Holton, 2005; Wright & Davis, 2003). Just as there are various labels, there is no single accepted definition of professional development. However, what these terms have in common is that professional development requires some activity or action (ATD, n.d.).

Defining and Differentiating Professional Development

Professional development reflects learning opportunities (Rebore, 2015). These learning opportunities are typically workshops and training sessions. Wright and Davis (2003) characterized the term employee development as training opportunities for general skills development and future career growth through the lens of an employee. However, Swanson and Holton (2005)
characterized employee development as an employee performing above what is written in their position description and going beyond their regular job duties, resulting in enhancing an employee's existing knowledge and expertise. Meanwhile, Quinn (2003) characterized employee development, as the organization's responsibility or commitment to addressing workplace development needs of its employees.

Although these characterizations sound similar, their foci vary. Rebore's (2015) interpretation of professional development focused on the method, namely training events. Wright and Davis (2003), along with Swanson and Holton (2005), focused on the purpose of professional development, and Quinn (2003) focused on strategic organizational development through professional development. Rebore (2015) distinguished between learning and training. In learning, the process continuous, whereas training is static, having a beginning and an end. In support of this distinction, training workshops vary in duration from minutes to hours, and some, for several days. Training is an opportunity to learn one's job responsibilities. Enhancing one's learning capabilities is a strategy employees use to improve their employment status, compensation, and work conditions (Hoyle, 1975).

Training, in general, has a long history. For example, Charles R. Allen developed the first training method (Show, Tell, Do, and Check) in 1917, adapted from Johann Friedrich Herbart's five-step instructional process (Sleight, 1993). Allen applied the approach of Show, Tell, Do, and Check to explain complicated
steps to individuals serving as shipyard workers and incorporated a feedback component (Sleight, 1993). In 1941, the United States (U.S.) government developed a formal approach to on-the-job training (Sleight, 1993), and Human Resources (HR) professionals applied on-the-job training approaches to non-teaching positions. In 1954, Dr. Donald Kirkpatrick introduced the Four Levels of Learning Evaluation as a way to evaluate training programs (Griffin, 2014). Kirkpatrick used the Four Levels of Learning to assess the value of the training before, during, and after. The Four Levels of Learning begins with its base, Reaction (Level 1), moving upwardly to Learning (Level 2), then Behavioral Change (Level 3), and finally, Organizational Performance (Level 4) (Griffin, 2014). In 1956, two years later, trainers used the Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to improve their rubric to match training content to the instructional method. An example of this is the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program.

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program (DDEPDP) provided financial assistance to government agencies and institutions of higher education to support "intensive, high-quality professional development" (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001, p. 919). Furthermore, the DDEPDP was to "ensure that all teachers provided challenging learning experiences for their students in elementary and secondary schools" (Garet et al. 2001, p. 919). Moreover, in 1989, AT&T launched the first Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS) as a training tool (Sleight, 1993). An EPSS is said to
enhance employee productivity because pertinent job information is easily accessible from the computer, while the employee is on-the-job (Sleight, 1993). Although there is no mention of EPSS in Reborne's work, EPSS complements his claim for on-the-job training. Reborne (2015) claimed employees learn what is to be done on the job while performing the job through a series of specific steps. Whether it be operational or technical proficiency, as is the case with computer technicians, cooks, custodial staff, and maintenance personnel, employees are required to know the best approach to performing their job. Reborne (2015) contrasted training with education by describing education as a process by which individuals (e.g., administrators, non-teaching staff, teachers) acquire knowledge to help them informed decisions. Reborne (2015) emphasized the acquisition of logical and sensible processes is more effective than simply memorizing information. Reborne (2015) argued that it is rare for an employee to be in a position for a long time and maintain their skillsets; employees need the training to stay up-to-date with changing dynamics of their job. Reborne (2015) further contended, "staff development is not only a desirable activity but also one in which each school system must commit human and fiscal resources" (p. 183) if it wants to keep knowledge, skills, and abilities of staff current. DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) claimed differences between training and education:

Successful employees prepared for positions of greater responsibility have analytical, human, conceptual, and specialized skills. They think and understand. Training per se cannot overcome an individual's inability to
understand cause-and-effect relationships, to synthesize from experience, to visualized relationships, or to think logically. As a result, we suggest that employee development be predominantly an education process rather than a training process. (p. 211)

In the statement above, DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) stressed the importance of employee development as part of an employee’s growth process, and therefore, placed more value on the education approach compared to the training approach. Although DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) discussed employees in the private sector, there were similarities in Rebore’s (2015) description of development among teachers and administrators. These similarities included job performance and commitment.

DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) claimed that when training is expounded as a learning experience, it brings about permanent change in employee job performance. A commitment to learning is a pledge to professionalism with four related dimensions, which are competence, leadership skills, lifelong learning, and professionality (Hoyle, 1975; Lowe & Gayle, 2010). Education, on the other hand, is future-oriented, intended to build knowledge, skills, and abilities toward preparing an employee for increasingly progressive responsibilities. With the education approach, employees have a higher chance of building skillsets such as technical proficiency, continuously and over time, advancing to leadership positions commonly seen in non-teaching staff. In discussing the distinction between these approaches, DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) shared an example of
clerical and administrative support personnel who needed word-processing skills to complete general office tasks – this skill is trainable. DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) cautioned that not all job duties are trainable. For the administrative assistant, coordinating events and scheduling appointments required decision-making skills developed through education and experience. Aside from the example above, much of the literature on professional development for non-teaching staff is limited. However, understanding the impact of professional development is equally important.

Types of Professional Development and Measuring Effectiveness

Training is an opportunity to learn one's job responsibilities (Rebore, 2015). The most common form of training is a workshop, "a structured approach to professional development that occurs outside the teacher's classroom," often facilitated by a subject matter expert (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001, p. 920). Yet, workshops are also the most criticized because they occur outside of the classroom, making it challenging to sustain workshops over time (Garet et al., 2001). Garet et al. (2001) described a workshop as "a structured approach to professional development" (p. 920) involving "a leader or leaders with special expertise" (p. 920) with participants attending "sessions at scheduled times often after school, on the weekend, or during the summer" (p. 920). During these workshops, insufficient time is given for "increasing teacher's knowledge and fostering meaningful changes" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 920) in the classroom.
As a result, new types of professional development approaches, including mentoring, peer observation, coaching, local study groups, and networks were introduced to reform traditional development styles as part of classroom instruction (Garet et al., 2001). Arguably, these professional development activities were "more responsive to teachers' needs and goals" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 921). Action research, study lessons, critical friends, and peer coaching are typical examples of teaching in K-12 as well (Zepeda, 2012). Program for Effective Teaching (PET), Readiness, Planning, Training, Implementation, Maintenance (RPTIM), Concern-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), and Staff Development for School Improvement (SDSI) are examples of program models (Rebore, 2017). The results of these program models produce "effective instruction through clinical supervision" (Rebore, 2015, p. 187), where staff development becomes the portal for enhancing teacher skillsets and rectifies deficiencies (Rebore, 2015). In the early 2000s, research related to professional development models for teaching in higher education surfaced (Guskey, 2000; Rebore, 2015). Job enrichment programs, workshops, and conferences constitute examples of PD in higher education (Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rebore, 2015).

As a result, new types of professional development approaches, including mentoring, peer observation, coaching, local study groups, and networks were introduced to reform traditional development styles as part of classroom instruction (Garet et al., 2001). Arguably, these professional development
activities were "more responsive to teachers' needs and goals" (Garet et al., 2001, p. 921). Action research, study lessons, critical friends, and peer coaching are typical examples of teaching in K-12 as well (Zepeda, 2012). A robust professional development program for non-teaching personnel can only contribute to the strength of educational institutions (Harper, 2018). Recognized as a vital component to staff success, PD improves performance deficiencies (Rebore, 2015). However, when design elements of what makes professional learning effective (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Guskey, 2000) are lacking, professional development becomes ineffective. PD programs derive from various theories, including adult learning theories. Malcolm S. Knowles (1978) introduced andragogy as the study of how adults learn. Andragogy (Knowles, 1978) is the theory of adult learning principles based on five factors influencing adult learners, 1) self-concept, 2) experience, 3) motivation, 4) readiness, and 5) orientation. In learning environments, four necessary components must be present to ensure success: stimulus, response, reinforcement, and motivation (Rebore, 2015). Upon designing training programs, HR professionals and instructional designers incorporate the four essential components of adult learning principles to maximize learning success. The overarching goal of professional development is to increase employee effectiveness (Shafer, 2010). The work of both Guskey (2000) and Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) focused on how to increase teacher effectiveness through professional
development, some of which are relevant to non-teaching personnel (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017).

Guskey (2000) recognized the complicated and challenging task of gathering tangible outcomes from professional development opportunities provided to teachers. Guskey (2000) focused on how to measure the effectiveness of professional development. According to Guskey (2000), there were five elements to effective professional development: outcome, evidence, sources of evidence, evidence gathering, and plan for comparisons. The first element was the outcome (Guskey, 2000). Although typically regarded as the result of professional development, Guskey (2000) shifted outcome to the beginning stages of professional development, planning with a focus on what professional development (PD) is to accomplish. Guskey’s (2000) second element is evidence, where PD designers need to account for different stakeholder viewpoints. For example, administrators may place a higher value on assessments and ranking, whereas teachers may regard homework completion and classroom behavior as more top sources of evidence (Guskey, 2000). The third element in effective PD for teachers is sources of evidence (Guskey, 2000). Testimonials are one source of evidence, coupled with assessment or other sources of evidence that could lead to a higher level of effectiveness (Guskey, 2000). The fourth element is evidence gathering; collecting the evidence and how best to assemble the data to be transparent (Guskey, 2000). The fifth element, “Plan for Comparison” (p. 43) for effective PD, is minimally applied; however,
when it is incorporated, the findings can be compelling (Guskey, 2000). With *Plan for Comparisons*, Guskey (2000) strongly encouraged the use of comparison groups to minimize the elimination of "the effects of extraneous factors that might influence results" (p. 43).

Similar to Guskey (2000) and as mentioned earlier, Kirkpatrick introduced a model to measure the effectiveness of PD by way of evaluation. Kirkpatrick's (1998) Four Levels of Learning provides a sequential framework from which to evaluate training, similar to Guskey (2000). The past three decades have seen the rapid development of teacher professional development with Guskey's work from 2000 and, more recently, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner's (2017) literature review of 35 studies.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) focused on elements of effective PD and conducted a literature review to understand what makes PD for teachers effective and what leads to "student learning gains" (p. 23). Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) found 35 studies between the years of 1999–2017 that affirmatively linked student outcomes to teaching practices and teacher PD. From the 35 reviews, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) identified design elements of PD approaches. These design elements include PD that is "content-focused," (p. 23), applies "active learning strategies" (p.23), "engage[s] teachers in collaboration," (p. 23), uses "models or modeling," (p.23), and utilizes "coaching and expert support, feedback and reflection, and sustained duration" (p. 23). At colleges and universities, assessments through faculty peer
reviews have been used to measure the learning gain of students (Andrade, 2018). Although the 35 studies focused on PD for teachers, the components for effective PD may also apply to learning opportunities for non-teaching staff.

Despite ample professional development literature for teachers (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Guskey, 2000), empirical research on staff professional development and employee engagement in higher education is limited, thereby, creating the impetus for this research. Professional development is not a new concept; training and the delivery of professional development have been around for over 100 years and, as discussed next, continues to evolve.

Delivering Professional Development

Schools assign department personnel to administer and be responsible for the training function (Rebore, 2015). Similarly, in higher education, the HR department is mostly designing and delivering training programs for staff and administrators (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], n.d.). Factors in providing professional development include training needs assessment, instructional design, and structuring training delivery.

Training Needs Assessment. A critical aspect of delivering professional development is to conduct a training needs assessment or TNA (Surface, 2012). Although training needs analysis and job analysis are additional terms to describe this process, TNA is the designated umbrella term (Rossett, 1987; Surface, 2012). TNA is a "systematic process that applies work analysis
techniques and procedures to identify training requirements that have been linked to deficiencies in individual, team, or organization performance to develop learning objectives to address the identified deficiencies" (Surface, 2012, p. 437).

Needs assessments may result in distinct approaches and different types of professional development. A training-needs assessment is "highly encouraged and critical to the success of professional development plans" (SHRM, n.d., para. 3) before training is developed. Arguably, TNAs "guide the design, delivery, and evaluation of training" with "evidence-based objectives" to help close gaps in competencies related to employee performance (Surface, 2012, p. 437). A training-needs assessment identified an individual’s “current level of competency, skill or knowledge in one or more areas, and compares that competency level to the required competency standard established for the position or role within the organization” (SHRM, n.d., para. 1).

The three types of assessments conducted are “organizational, task, and person” (SHRM, n.d., slide 9). In organizational assessment, the focus is to “align the organization’s strategic plan with the professional development plan,” ensuring the availability of resources and leadership support (SHRM, n.d., slide 9). Examples of organizational TNA is ineffective policies, processes, and processes (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2008). With task assessment, the focus is to determine whether the professional development plan supported the “employee’s on-the-job experience as it related to knowledge, skills, and abilities” (SHRM, n.d., slide 9). An example of a TNA focused on tasks is unclear or inconsistent
performance standards (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2008). The last type of assessment is person-focused. In the individual assessment, the focus was to determine whether the employee had the “basic skills, motivation, prerequisite skills or confidence” (SHRM, n.d., slide 9). An example of a TNA focused on the person is career prospects or career development (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2008).

There are several ways to conduct a training needs assessment. One approach utilized by HR practitioners to facilitate a training needs assessment is a four-step approach advanced by SHRM (n.d.). In step one of SHRM’s Training Needs Assessment, an organization translates current and future requirements for its employees to deliver on goals and objectives. At times, organizations hire external agencies or consultants to lead or assist with identifying needs. Other times, HR departments identify needs because of their familiarity with the organization (SHRM, n.d.). Perform a gap analysis is step two. A gap analysis evaluates the current state of a workgroup and compares it to the desired level of that workgroup; the difference between the current state and desired state is the gap (SHRM, n.d.). Resources to assist with performing a gap analysis include HR records, employee interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys, questionnaires, and self-assessments (SHRM, n.d.). The gap analysis or assessment produces a list of training needs used to determine the viability of training to meet current and future goals and priorities. Assess training options is step three. The last step of the training-needs assessment is to report on the training-needs and propose training plans. The report is an executive summary
containing the purpose of the training-needs evaluation, process used, and people involved. The training recommendation needs to include short-term actions and long-term steps. It also needs to include financial investments in the order of critical priorities and timeline, as well as legal exposure due to state/federal compliance training, if essential training is not completed (SHRM, n.d.).

Despite the encouragement of its use by HR practitioners (SHRM, n.d.), there is limited research on TNAs (Rossett, 1987; Surface, 2012) (SHRM, n.d.) and the use of TNAs among HR personnel and training practitioners is bleak (Surface, 2012). Practitioners wrestle with whether or not a TNA is needed and how elaborate it needs to be. Surface (2012) is a proponent for TNAs but also recognizes that it is not required when professional development is unrelated to training. Events and sources with “training and program evaluation findings; input from supervisors, customers, workgroups; results from individual development planning; and new training requirements” are primed for TNAs (Surface, 2012, p. 441).

**Instructional Design.** Upon completing the TNA, instructional designers and training practitioners apply the ADDIE, an instructional design framework (Grafinger, 1988; Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). ADDIE is an acronym describing a five-step process of developing iterative learning and training activities (Grafinger, 1988; Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The five stages are Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation’
(Grafinger, 1988; Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The first step is Analysis. In this stage, the focus is on defining what will be learned. Examples of tasks in this stage are problem identification, task analysis, and learner profile (Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The second step is Design, in this stage, the focus is on specifying how the content will be learned; examples of tasks in this stage are writing learning objectives, plan instruction and tests, and identify resources (Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The third step is Development, and in this stage, the focus is on authoring and producing materials; examples of tasks include storyboards, scripts, exercises, and developing workbooks and learner guides (Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The fourth step is Implementation with a focus on enacting the project in a real-world context; examples of tasks and outputs include facilitator training, training pilot, and feedback (Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996). The last step in ADDIE is Evaluation. In this step, the focus is on determining the adequacy of the facilitation; examples of tasks and outputs include revisiting timing, revision of activities, and interpreting test results (Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996).

**Structuring Training Delivery.** Stolovitch and Keeps (2014) introduced a universal model for structuring training. This five-step model can be applied to any type of training, content, and number of learners (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). The five steps include 1) Rationale, 2) Objectives, 3) Activities, 4) Evaluation, and 5) Feedback (Stolovitch & Keeps 2014). In step 1, Rationale, the facilitator
provides compelling reasons to gain and maintain the attention of participants (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). In step 2, Objectives, the facilitator gives participants learning outcomes that are achievable and produce meaningful results (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). In step 3, Activities must be purposeful and motivate participants to get involved and demonstrate their attainment of the content (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). In step 4, Evaluation, the facilitator continually encourages participants to progress toward objective fulfillment (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). In Step 5, the facilitator provides Feedback, either confirming or corrective, and in a way that focuses on the performance and not the person (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014).

Before delivering the training, ADDIE is used to design the training. The Five-Step Model for Structuring Training (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014) differs from ADDIE (Grafinger, 1988; Molenda, Pershing, & Reigeluth, 1996) in that the five-step is applied while delivering the training. There are different approaches to designing and providing professional development, as noted previously. HR and training practitioners look to professional development organizations for assistance, as discussed next (SHRM, n.d.).

Professional Development Organizations

Professional associations strive to achieve a sense of community among its members, provide criteria for entry, and establish standards, ethical code of conduct, core competencies (Farndale & Brewster, 2005). There is value in joining professional associations within one’s field (DeCandido, 1996).
Professional associations provide opportunities to network with colleagues in the same occupation or field, obtain relevant research, and gain access to professional development opportunities (Fisher, 1997). HR professionals serve as generalists and may not have the expertise in designing and delivering professional development programs. Therefore, HR professionals rely on professional associations that specialize in professional development (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2014). Currently, there are many professional associations for learning and development practitioners, depending on industry and discipline. For professional development practitioners in education, there three prominent organizations, the Association for Talent Development (ATD), College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR), and SHRM. Founded in 1942, ATD was previously named the American Society for Training and Development. With numerous training programs surfacing, ATD’s goal was to raise industrial training standards. The association still exists and recently changed its name to ATD, the Association for Talent Development (Biech, 2014). Today, ATD members represent 120 countries with similar pursuits in gaining support for research, books, webcasts, events, and educational programming geared toward talent development professionals (Biech, 2014.). SHRM, another organization created to meet the needs of the HR professional (SHRM, n.d.). SHRM provides publications, certificates, and education courses for HR professionals, including training and professional development (SHRM, n.d.). For HR professionals in higher education, CUPA-HR provides “leadership
on higher education workplace issues” (CUPA-HR, n.d., para. 1). CUPA-HR also “monitor trends, explore emerging workforce issues, conduct research, and promote strategic discussions among colleges and universities” (CUPA-HR, n.d., para. 1). ATD, SHRM, and CUPA-HR are three professional associations available to HR professionals and training practitioners.

Professional Development in the Private Sector

Leading organizations in the private sector such as Chick-fil-A, Nordstrom, Ritz-Carlton, Southwest Airlines, Synovus, and WD-40 companies recognize the key to leading and developing an organization is through training and professional development (Blanchard, 2014). Leaders of these organizations understand that their “most important customer is their people” (Blanchard, 2014, p. 753). Organizational leaders from these companies show how much they care by training, developing, and empowering their employees. This display of care allows their employees to focus on the organization’s second most important customer, the people who consume their products and utilize their services (Blanchard, 2014, p. 753). Because of this investment in training and professional development, these organizations have observed fully engaged employees who are excited about their work (Blanchard, 2014).

According to Gallup (2017), four out of ten or 40% of US employees expressed having learning opportunities provided by their employers within 12 months. This investment in professional development is a step in the right direction and aligns with what employees want. Correlations to employee well-
being and higher levels of engagement included the availability of professional
development programs and reimbursement of fees to attend professional
conferences (Gallup, 2017). Employees emphasized the importance of career
and professional development, which varied among generations. In case studies
conducted by the Gallup Organization from 1996 to 2012, the primary reason
individuals resign from their jobs is a lack of career and professional progression
(Gallup, 2017). Although Gallup’s original study occurred in 1996, the findings
have not significantly changed, and the research is still relevant today (Gallup,
2017). Gallup (2017) contended employees have a set of implied expectations
they need to fulfill as part of their development, and they assume the employer
will provide the opportunities. According to Gallup (2017), “45% of Millennials,
31% of Gen Xers, and 18% of Baby Boomers” (p. 31) rated having a job that
helps them accelerate their career or professional development is very important
to them. Gallup’s data (2017) is not surprising given Millennials are the “youngest
generation in the workplace” (p. 31), and Baby Boomers are closer to retirement
(Gallup, 2017).

For organizations in the private sector, employee engagement and
professional development are factors included in top-ranking ten places to work
lists (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016). Facebook, Google, Twitter,
and the Boston Consulting Group are organizations that often appear on these
lists (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016). These companies invested in
employee development (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016).
Facebook, a social networking organization, requires all its engineering employees to attend Facebook Boot Camp. During Facebook Boot Camp, engineers learn about organizational culture, goals, and expectations, as well as specific product quality and coding guidelines (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016). At Google, a web search engine company, “personal learning and growth” is embedded in their work environment (Barros et al., 2016, p. 95). Google employees are encouraged to use work time to focus on projects, either of a personal or work-related nature (Barros et al., 2016). In doing so, this “creates an environment where employees push themselves to grow and develop to progress in the company” (Barros et al., 2016). At Twitter, online news and social networking service provided training sessions for management, facilitated by then CEO Dick Costolo. Costolo applied storytelling, role-play, and idea generation in his sessions, allowing training participants to “learn and grow directly from a trickle-down effect” (Barros et al., 2016, p. 96). At the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), a management consulting firm, employees have access to instructor-led workshops, online training, mentors, apprenticeship programs, and career paths for their professional development (Barros et al., 2016). Facebook, Google, Twitter, and the Boston Consulting Group invest in the development of their employees. These organizations attribute their profitability and engaged workforce to the investment in professional development (Barros et al., 2016).
Professional Development in the Field of Education

Professional development influences personal engagement in the workplace and ranks high among other important drivers of organizational performance and effectiveness (Gallup, 2017; Hodges, 2018; Kahn, 1990; Pardo & Armitstead, 2014). Personal engagement is an individual’s connection to their work (Kahn, 1990). This connection is similar to the notion of professional identity (Davey, 2013; Murphy, 2004). Davey (2013) described “professional identity” among teacher educators as “multi-faceted and fragmented,” “socially and culturally negotiated,” yet “personally and individually perceived” (p. 32). Davey yearned to gain a deeper understanding of how teacher educators, as a whole, conceptualized their own identity and how to interpret their approaches within a national, institutional, and cultural context. Furthermore, Davey (2013) recognized professional identity could invite a discussion of “occupational goals” and “career histories” (p. 84). Additional drivers of engagement include the work itself, personal and professional development, employee recognition, and involving employees in decision-making (Bosacker & Bibb, 2017; Schneider & Blankenship, 2017), which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Professional development in the field of education has been discussed and debated for centuries resulting in legislation (United States Congress, 1972; 1976). In the Education Amendments of 1972, the United States Congress supported the establishment of programs targeted at developing, improving, and enhancing teacher skillsets, specifically in-classroom techniques (Rebore, 2015).

Despite the large volume of literature on employee development, many of the extant articles, theses, and dissertations focus on teachers and teaching staff (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney, & Taylor, 2009; Rebore, 2015; Wright & Davis, 2003). These documents do not distinctly focus on non-teaching personnel such as administrative professionals, student services professionals, and custodians. Professional development sections in textbooks concentrate on staff development in the private sector and teachers at the K-12 levels; few books discuss professional development for non-teaching staff in higher education (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007; Truss, Mankin, & Kelliher, 2012; Rebore, 2015). Aside from professional roles in Student Affairs (Blake, 2007; Sandeen & Barr, 2008; Warner 2003), professional development literature in higher education tends to focus on the professoriate (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney, & Taylor, 2009; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Rebore, 2015).
Faculty Development

While some have recognized faculty professional development in higher education, it received very little attention in the literature in the sixties and seventies (De Ordio Jr., 1970). Back in the 1960s and 1970s, most of the studies found on faculty professional development were dissertation studies (Bates, 2010). De Ordio Jr.’s (1970) early dissertation study explored faculty development at one university by way of a pilot program. De Ordio Jr. (1970) discovered that newly minted faculty were not equipped to teach in the classroom and lacked “explicit preparation in learning theory or instructional method” (p. 163). He further contended that the administration plays “a central role in faculty development” and has a direct impact on the life of the faculty member (De Ordio Jr., 1970, p. 81). However, due to a misalignment in priorities, the administration did not recognize the value of faculty development (De Ordio Jr., 1970).

Nowadays, there is an increased focus on faculty professional development (Haras, 2018), through the creation and establishments of centers for teaching and learning (Lieberman, 2005; Lieberman, 2018; Stearns, 2014) and faculty centers of excellence on university campuses (Lieberman, 2018; Gaunt Stearns, 2014). These efforts are often part of college and university strategic plans (Lieberman, 2018).

De Ordio Jr. (1970) met with four university officials. These university officials were the College of Agriculture Dean, College of Education Dean, Faculty Committee Chair, and the Office of Educational Resources Administrator.
These meetings led to a pilot program referred to as a “teaching-learning symposium” with three components/modules (De Ordio Jr., 1970, p. 72). The first module was a two-hour course titled, “Principles of College Teaching,” offered by the College of Education (De Ordio Jr., 1970, p. 71). The second module was an instructional methods session with videotaping and playback for instructors to evaluate their performance (De Ordio Jr., 1970). The third module was a seminar series on teaching effectiveness that allowed faculty to demonstrate techniques and engage in dialogue with other faculty members (De Ordio Jr., 1970). The seminar series comprised of six sessions with topics on 1) Examinations and Grading, 2) Students and Educational Leadership, 3) Counseling and Working with Individual Students, 4) Lecturing, Organization, and Presentation, 5) Lecturing: Maintaining Interest and Encouraging Participation, and 6) Use of Visual Aids and Handout Material (De Ordio Jr., 1970, p. 74). Participants received a communication from the appropriate college dean, encouraging their participation in the pilot program. Participants in the pilot program received evaluative questionnaires, soliciting their feedback on the session. Due to meager response rates, De Ordio Jr. (1970) did not analyze data with any degree of statistical significance. De Ordio Jr. (1970) provided recommendations to the administration, faculty, students, and graduate schools’. These recommendations were 1) Develop faculty, 2) Provide “teaching apprenticeship” (p.164) and in-service training, and 3) Video record and playback classroom instruction. Although these recommendations date back 50 years, some are still in practice

Subsequent research drew attention to additional components of faculty development (Bates, 2010; Bergquist & Phillips, 1975; Farquharson, 1986). These faculty development components include three dimensions, “organizational development, instructional development, and personal development” (Bergquist & Phillips, 1975, p. 6).

Faculty development continues to be a priority among some educational institutions. Drawing on Bergquist and Phillips’s (1975) research, Bates’s (2010) dissertation study examined faculty development at high performing colleges and universities. Bates (2010) applied a “qualitative phenomenological approach in conjunction with quantitative data” in her exploratory study (p. 70) focused on the relationship between variables of faculty development, teaching effectiveness, and overall influence on student success. Bates (2010) used a semi-structured approach to phone interviews with 13 faculty development program directors at 20 educational institutions before launching an online survey. Twelve out of 20 institutions or 60% participated in the online survey, and 65% (13 of 20) institutions participated in the phone interview. The top three factors identified in faculty development programs that contributed to student success were: 1) “engaged and supportive faculty,” 2) “strong administrative support,” and 3) financial resources (Bates, 2010, p. 155). The remaining three factors were tied: the tradition of support and climate of collaboration (83%), programs offered at
appropriate/convenient times (83%), and skilled and dedicated staff (83%). Bates (2010) provided a framework to review commonalities and differences among colleges and universities in the literature on faculty development. Bates (2010) concluded that when there is a symbiotic relationship between faculty developers, faculty, and administration, it creates a welcoming environment and support efforts toward impactful academic practices at high performing colleges and universities. Similar symbiotic relationships are essential for staff development as well (Shagrir, 2017).

Staff Development

Despite the incorporation of professional development in education, there is limited research about professional development for non-teaching staff in higher education (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2007; Rebore, 2015). Lutz (1948) described non-teaching personnel as individuals responsible for the care of students and schools outside of the classroom, such as school nurses, custodians, and grounds workers. Lutz (1948) championed for non-teaching staff and declared their importance in the field of education. Lutz (1948) noted, “whatever the duty performed, no non-teaching employee should be forgotten as a possible public relations factor” (p. 102). The non-teaching staff played an important role in how students and parents perceived a school from attributes associated with the appearance of classrooms, cafeteria, bathrooms, schoolyard, and the level of interaction and service provided by school personnel, including counselors and administration (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017; Lutz, 1948).
Although Lutz’s work dated back 70 years ago, it remains relevant today (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017).

Of course, the importance of non-teaching employees extends beyond public relations issues. For example, Magolda and Delman (2016) conducted an ethnographic study focused on campus custodians. In their research, Magolda and Delman (2016) highlighted the journeys of employees in custodial positions and their experiences with and contributions to other members of the campus community, including staff, students, faculty, and administrators. In addition to their role in maintaining campus facilities, studies have shown that custodians play a role in mentoring students (Magolda & Delman, 2016) and promoting student persistence, often doing so with little recognition, support, or celebration (Reed, 2015).

In addition to the contributions of non-teaching staff, Magolda and Delman (2016) illustrated the Job Enrichment Program (JEP), which is professional development for non-teaching staff. Custodians were encouraged to complete a JEP (Magolda & Delman, 2016, p. 257) to gain additional job knowledge and skills. Campus custodians, who completed the JEP, received an increase in pay (Magolda & Delman, 2016). However, other than JEP, custodians could only participate in training related to their current job (Magolda & Delman, 2016). The JEP approach, which focuses on procedural training, limits campus custodians from professionally growing. Professional growth means growing beyond their current job, such as becoming a lead or manager of custodial services.
Supporting the field of higher education through staff and professional development can be challenging. Three higher education institutions have a center dedicated to staff’s professional development. By securing a Title III-B grant, Jackson State University (JSU) in Mississippi funded a staff development center. The staff development center at JSU fosters learning through “an array of training, workshops and seminars to raise staff awareness about workplace issues and enable both professional and personnel development to increase knowledge and the execution of job-related skills” (Jackson State University, n.d. para. 1). Examples of learning opportunities included customer service, emotional intelligence, everyday ethics, managing conflict, professionalism, and staff leadership institute (Jackson State University, n.d.).

Taft College, located in California, has a professional development center to support both faculty and staff “in their efforts to promote student success” (Taft College, n.d.). The professional development center at Taft College offers a space for “collaboration, innovation, and ongoing professional. Taft College posted results from its 2016-2017 professional development survey. Published survey results included a summary of participant types and three questions. The questions posed were 1) what was the best time of year to participate in professional development, 2) desire to attend professional development events on Saturdays, and 3) rate professional development topics of interest (Taft College, 2017). Of the topics listed, the top five were 1) Student Engagement Strategies, 2) a tie between Emergency Preparedness and Interpreting
Assessment Data and Student Learning Outcomes, and 3) Best practices in Student Learning Outcomes (Taft College, 2017). There were 59 responses; 34 participants (57.7%) were faculty, 15 participants (25.4%) were classified employees, and 10 (16.9%) participants were administrators.

Similar to Taft College, the State University of New York at Fredonia also has a centralized location for the professional development of its faculty and staff. In 2006, Fredonia identified action items to improve its campus performance (Fredonia, n.d.). An outcome of a Fredonia plan was to create a physical space for the center that would support teacher candidates, faculty, and staff (Fredonia, n.d.). The professional development center at Fredonia offers mentoring, diversity dialogues, faculty recognition reception, faculty writing retreats, professional development days, teaching and learning conference, and new faculty and staff orientations (Fredonia, n.d.). As explained previously by DeCenzo and Robbins (2007) regarding the education vs. training process, there is a lack of support for personal career development. However, Jackson State University, Taft College, and the State University of New York at Fredonia is making strides to do so. Next, discussed briefly is the field of higher education.

Field of Higher Education and Professional Development

The field of higher education is complex, composed of colleges and universities of varying institutional types (research universities, comprehensive universities, and community colleges) and institutional control (public, private
nonprofit, or private for-profit) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Moreover, students enroll in higher education with varied intentions, especially at community colleges (Cohen, Brawer, Kisker, 2014; Levin, 2007). For students to successfully navigate the complexity of higher education and meet the overall goals of higher education, an engaged and trained workforce of teaching and non-teaching personnel across various institutional operations is not only desirable but also necessary (CUPA-HR, n.d.). In this section, I briefly discuss higher education to highlight the importance higher education employees have on student success and to the success of the academic institution. I begin by discussing higher education’s purpose, its structure, and how it operates in the US and California in particular, which has the largest and most diverse higher education system in the nation (Public Policy Institute of California [PPIC], 2016).

As noted above, US higher education adopted a tripartite approach, broadly categorizing institutions as research universities, comprehensive universities, or community colleges (Carnegie Classification, 2018; Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). There are also special focus institutions. According to the Carnegie Classification, special focus institutions include two-year and four-year degree-granting colleges and universities with degrees in fields such as law, medical, and faith-based schools. According to the US Department of Education (2018), for the 2014-15 year, there were 4,627 degree-granting higher education institutions in the United States. Of these, 1,616 were two-year colleges, and 3,011 were four-year universities. These educational institutions have a mission
and vision statements outlining charge and impetus for the future, and influenced by various stakeholders (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Educational institutions and the services they provide are “often complicated and require highly professionalized staff” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 32), supporting the need for professional development and employee engagement.

Academic institutions serve a cadre of stakeholders, including students, parents, alumni, donors, faculty, and staff (Hendrickson et al., 2013) with students as the primary stakeholder. Some of these stakeholders may become university employees who help carry out the university mission across various divisions and functional units (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Higher education is organized among different divisions and related functional groups, such as but not limited to academic affairs, student affairs, administrative affairs/business and finance, institutional research, advancement/development, communications and marketing, enrollment management, and auxiliary services (Kretovics, 2011). Names tend to vary by institution, but closely resemble one another in function. For example, Academic Affairs is the academic unit responsible for colleges, faculty affairs, and research. A non-academic unit focused on student services is commonly referred to as Student Affairs. An administrative or financial unit is Administration & Finance. A technical systems function unit is Information Technology Services. And, a unit focused on fundraising and alumni affairs might be referred to as University Advancement.
According to Keeling, Underhile, and Wall (2007), “the organization of institutions of higher education has been seen as operating with ambiguous purposes in vertically oriented structures that are only loosely connected” (para. 1). Nevertheless, over the past decade, notable progress has included bridging of academic and student affairs (Martinez & Gonzales, 2015). Bridging this divide requires continued education, professional development, and employee engagement (American Association for Higher Education, American College Personnel Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 1998).

Higher Education in California

California’s higher education system is the largest and most diverse in the nation (PPIC, 2016). California has 115 community colleges (CCC), 23 California State University (CSU) campuses, 10 University of California (UC) campuses, and 1 UC-affiliated law school. Also, private educational institutions include about 180 nonprofit colleges and universities, and more than 700 for-profit institutions (PPIC, 2016).

The CCC’s initial purpose was to act as feeder schools for students to complete general education course work before transferring to a four-year institution (Hendrickson et al., 2013). With 2.1 million students, CCC is the largest provider of higher education in California. As part of its mission, the CCC is “committed to empowering the community colleges through leadership, advocacy, and support” (CCC Chancellor’s Office, n.d., para. 2). With 64,550 full-
time employees, the CCC focuses on providing professional development, including in-person workshops and webinars, in support of student success (CCC Chancellor’s Office, n.d.). The CSU system offers undergraduate and graduate education, including post-baccalaureate education and doctoral programs. As part of its mission, the CSU provides “opportunities for individuals to develop intellectually, personally, and professionally” (California State University, n.d., para. 1). The Chancellor’s Office serves as the headquarters for the CSU. Housed within the Chancellor’s Office is the Systemwide Human Resources administrative unit with a dedicated department focused on professional development for CSU staff. At each of the 23 campuses, there are individuals whose primary role is to focus on the professional development of campus staff.

Finally, the UC serves as the state’s primary research institution and provides bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The University of California Office of the President serves as the headquarters for the UC. The Systemwide Talent Management function within the HR unit oversees training and development “to best optimize the performance of each employee at the UC” (University of California, n.d., para. 1).

Collectively, the higher education system in California employs approximately 330,000. These colleges and universities need trained faculty and staff to meet the state of California’s charge to educate its citizens (Hendrickson et al., 2013; Houck, 2018) and address the impending shortfall of 1.1 million bachelor degree holders (Public Policy Institute of California, 2016).
Higher Education Personnel

Individuals within higher education typically include administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members (e.g., alumni, donors, volunteers). The university pays administrators, faculty, and staff in an employee/employer relationship. Formal structures found in higher education include policies, procedures, organizational charts, and collective bargaining agreements (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Informal structures such as culture and social networks help promote a sense of community. (Hendrickson et al., 2013). In the following subsections, I elaborate on professional development received by licensed practitioners, non-teaching staff, and faculty.

Licensed Practitioners. Professional development an employee receives is dependent upon the role or position they hold in an organization (Lutz, 1948; Rebore, 2015). For professions with licensure requirements, Pardo and Armitstead (2014) stressed that training is critical for license renewal and continuing education. During professional development, practitioners have opportunities to demonstrate one’s knowledge, skills, and abilities. For example, higher education institutions have student health centers on their campuses, staffed with licensed healthcare professionals, including physicians and pharmacists (American College Health Association, 2010). According to Pardo and Armitstead (2014), pharmacists submit continuing education units (CEU) to renew their pharmacy license and practice pharmacy. However, Pardo and Armitstead (2014) suggested new practitioners move away from the traditional
continuing education submittal process to a "continuous professional development plan" (p. 788). The continuous professional development (CPD) plan is a "multifaceted process" with activities involving "reflection, planning, learning, and evaluation" for lifelong professional development (Pardo & Armitstead, 2014, p. 788). When pharmacists move into other areas of patient care, they are urged "to jumpstart their personal growth" (Pardo & Armitstead, 2014, p. 788). Pharmacists dedicate their careers to “providing exemplary patient care,” and “optimizing patient outcomes” (Pardo & Armitstead, 2014, p. 788). Therefore, having a robust CPD plan is essential (Pardo & Armitstead, 2014).

Unlike pharmacists, administrative assistants and custodial staff do not need a college degree, education credentials, or practitioner license to perform their jobs. However, for employees with no specific licensure requirements, professional development is necessary to maintain personal engagement (Bosacker & Bibb, 2017; Schneider & Blankenship, 2017), similar to the job enrichment program discussed by Magolda and Delman (2016) previously.

**Non-Teaching Staff.** In addition to licensed practitioners such as pharmacists in higher education, other professional non-teaching roles exist. These non-teaching roles include the student affairs professionals serving as academic advisors, career counselors, program coordinators, or resident assistants, among several other professional positions. Although student affairs professionals might be involved in teaching, for example, a freshman seminar course, teaching in the classroom is not their primary role (Blake, 2007). Most
teaching occurs outside the classroom. Blake (2007) described the notion of teaching outside of the classroom as follows:

Responsive staff will recognize they do more teaching in their offices, in the residence halls, and in student unions than they ever realized. Even a discussion with a student about a professor or a course can be turned into a teaching experience if it is consciously seen as raising the student’s academic performance and the amount of time spent on learning. (p. 69)

In tracing back the history of the student affairs profession, the student affairs role emerged “out of the reluctance of faculty to become involved in the hands-on aspect of college student life” (Blake, 2007, p. 72). Therefore, student affairs professionals assume the role of in loco parentis in higher education (Long, 2012; Nuss, 2003).

Professional development for staff, such as student affairs professionals, include some level of formal training and instruction. Student Affairs professionals receive formal training and education within their college or university and participation in national professional associations, which also tend to establish competencies. For example, in 2015, two leading professional associations, ACPA, the College Student Educators International (‘ACPA’) and the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (‘NASPA’), collaborated to produce a guide of professional competency areas for student affairs educators (NASPA, 2015). Similar to ACE (1949), this guide included social justice and inclusion. The remaining nine competency areas are: 1) Personal and Ethical Foundations, 2)
Philosophy and History, 3) Assessment, Evaluation, and Research, 4) Law, Policy, and Governance, 5) Organizational and Human Resource, 6) Leadership, 7) Student Learning and Development, 8) Technology, and 9) Advising and Supporting (NASPA, 2015). Similarly, in 2017, the Global Community for Academic Advising (‘NACADA’) developed a core competencies model to support academic advising and professional development of advisors. The Academic Advising Core Competencies framework contains three categories – conceptual, informational, and relational (NACADA, n.d.). Equally important, skillsets for student affairs professionals to have are “interpersonal and contextual skills” (Long, 2012, p. 9). Student affairs professionals apply these skillsets to help college students make appropriate choices and decisions in and out of the classroom (Long, 2012). Blake (2007) emphasized the crucial role of student affairs professionals in the student learning process. The ongoing need to have student affairs professionals engaged with students to help develop the “whole person” (Nuss, 2003, p. 65), requires staff professional development (Brubacher 1982; Grites & Gordon, 2007; Nuss, 2003).

**Faculty.** Faculty play an essential role in education; they are responsible for advancing “knowledge and education of its citizens” (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013, p. 311). Hendrickson et al. (2013) further contend the faculty’s responsibility is to translate a university’s “mission into academic programs and activities” (p. 311). Hendrickson et al. (2013) asserted, “Faculty is the core of the academic enterprise” (p. 70) and the public, “demands students have more
contact in the classroom with tenured faculty instead of graduate assistants and instructors” (p. 314).

As noted previously, the amount of research focused on faculty professional development outweighs the existence of research focused on the professional development of non-teaching staff (Bergiel, Nguyen, Clenney, & Taylor, 2009; Rebore, 2015). The nature of faculty work includes teaching, research, service, and arguably, a “fourth role of creating a bridge between their institutions and their external environments” (Hendrickson et al., 2013, p. 313). In the past several decades, professional development and growth of faculty have become a pressing issue (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Professional development for faculty varies, with needs on an individual and holistic level, depending on the life and career stage of the faculty (Hendrickson et al., 2013).

The needs of a new faculty member are different compared to the needs of a faculty member who is in the mid-stage of their career (Hendrickson et al., 2013). Professional development may include the following: in-service training, professional association conferences/meetings, resource centers, seminars and workshops, sabbatical, enrollment in graduate courses, and audit courses to help them achieve research grants and publications (Bates, 2010; De Ordio, Jr., 1970; Hendrickson et al., 2013). However, faculty reward structures favor engagement in research (Fairweather, 2005; Hendrickson et al., 2013). As a form of professional development, Fairweather (2005) conducted research. Having discussed the elements of effective professional development and how to
measure it, in the next section, I explore employee engagement to understand its relationship to professional development opportunities.

Employee Engagement

This section provides an overview of employee engagement, including its definition, concepts, seminal work, empirical studies, measures of engagement, and significance to higher education. The descriptions discussed will include viewpoints from the lens of both academic scholars and practitioners. This section discusses the empirical studies of Kahn's seminal work in 1990, Hartar and Creglow's work from 1997, May, Gilson, and Harter's work from 2004, Saks' work from 2006, and Towers Perrin from 2001. Also discussed are conceptual works from Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001), Macey and Schneider (2008), and Czarnowsky's work from 2008. The empirical and conceptual studies mentioned above show the progress made in understanding employee engagement and its role in the workplace.

Defining Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a multidimensional construct that encompasses many employee behaviors. The term employee engagement has become familiar in the private and public sectors, including higher education and further embraced by human resource practitioners (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Also, engagement has led to standard practices such as professional development (Pardo & Armitstead, 2014). Kahn's (1990) seminal research on personal
engagement and personal disengagement credits him for the term engagement used in the workplace (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). An individual’s application of their “preferred self” (p. 700) in behavior and approach to work assignments encourage connections to work tasks and co-workers.

Conversely, Kahn (1990) described personal disengagement as “the uncoupling of selves from work roles” (p.694). In other words, feelings of withdrawal and defensiveness. Disengagement as the “simultaneous withdrawal and defense of a person’s preferred self in behaviors” promotes a lack of connection to physical, cognitive, emotional absence and passive incomplete role performances” (p. 701). In further developing the term engagement, Kahn (1990) found that “meaningfulness, safety, and availability” (Kahn, 1990, p. 692) are three psychological conditions that connect employee motivation to training and development, affecting the effectiveness of employee performance (Collins & Smith, 2006; Jacobs & Washington, 2003).

Related to increasing work motivation and employee engagement are “attentiveness, connection, integration, and focus” (Kahn, 1992, p. 1). These four traits encompass dimensions of psychological presence (Kahn, 1992). These concepts derived from a study of two organizations, a six-week summer camp in the West Indies, and an architecture firm based in the northeastern United States
(Kahn, 1990; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The summer camp had 16 camp counselors, and the architecture firm employed 16 financial employees (Kahn, 1990; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Kahn (1990) launched an engagement model study. The two settings were intentionally chosen by Kahn (1990) to generate broad understandings of personal engagement and disengagement. In the summer camp, Kahn (1990) acted as both an observer and participant.

Approximately 100 adolescents, ranging in ages from 12-17 years old, attended the summer camp. Kahn (1990) interviewed 16 counselors (nine men and seven women) ranging in ages from 20-35 years. Kahn also utilized a variety of other qualitative methods, including document analysis and self-reflection. The summer camp represented a temporary setting, where camp counselors were responsible for care-taking and disciplinary roles, as well as the education of youth participants.

Kahn’s (1990) second organizational location took place in an architecture firm where he held the role of an outside researcher. The architecture firm represented a permanent setting dedicated to fixed and rigid structures based on projects. The architecture firm was a highly respected firm based in the northeastern United States. The firm employed 45 employees in various roles, including architects, draftspersons, interior designers, administrators, and interns. At the time of the study, the firm secured 30 projects and was in continuous contract negotiations for additional projects. Participants included 16 employees (10 men and six women) between the ages of 24-41 years with diverse
experiences, positions, and demographics. The years of service these employees have with the firm ranged from less than one year to 23 years, with the average tenure at 5.8 years. Data collection through in-depth interviews lasted between 40-90 minutes. In both organizational settings, Kahn (1990) reflected on his observations and noted questions posed by individuals who subconsciously asked themselves, “How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance? How safe is it to do so? How available am I to do so?” (Kahn, 1990, p. 703). These questions examined meaningfulness, safety, and availability to determine employee engagement (Kahn, 1990).

Employee engagement continued to emerge in the workplace and gained the attention of the Gallup Organization in the 1990s (Gallup, n.d.). Gallup is a research organization that began as a public opinion polling service (Gallup, n.d.). For more than 35 years, focus changed to investigating work engagement in the private sector and parallel with higher education. For decades, Gallup researched to determine metrics for measuring employee engagement. In 1996, Gallup launched a set of 12 questions, now referred to as the Q12. The Q12 are predictors of employee and work unit performance (Gallup, n.d.). The Q12 is a set of 12 questions posed to employees with results “consistently and powerfully link[ed] to business outcomes, including profitability, employee retention, productivity, safety records, and customer engagement” (Gallup, n.d., para. 1).

In the last 20 years, there has been an increase in employee engagement studies, such as Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Harter, Schmidt, and
Hayes, 2002; May, Gilson, and Harter, 2004; Saks, 2006; Vance, 2006; Czarnowky, 2008, and Macey and Schneider, 2008; and Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002). Further consideration of these studies follows.

The research Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) produced was conceptual and was the next major work contributing to early employee engagement development theories after Kahn’s seminal work in 1990. Maslach et al. (2001) conceptualized employee engagement as the “positive antithesis of burnout” (p. 397) and defined employee engagement as a “persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure” (p. 417). Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter’s (2001) work provided interventions to reduce burnout. A “primary mode of intervention” (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 418) in combatting burnout was to attend a burnout workshop where participants would learn “coping skills” (p. 418) and “deep relaxation” techniques (p. 418). The Maslach Burnout Inventory has become a “standard tool” (p. 499) for measuring the “three dimensions of burnout - exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (Maslach & Leiter, 2008, p. 499).

Similar to Maslach et al. (2001), Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002), explained employee engagement as the opposite of burnout. Additional iterative definitions of employee engagement surfaced. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related mental state characterized by vigor, commitment, and absorption. Also, Maslach and
Leiter (2008) defined engagement as an energetic state of involvement with fulfilling activities that enhance one’s sense of professional worth.

Adding to the understanding and perceptions of employee engagement, Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) conducted an empirical study. It produced the first publication connecting business outcomes to employee engagement and employee satisfaction. Harter et al. (2002) represented three organizations, the Gallup Organization (Harter), the University of Iowa (Schmidt), and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (Hayes), bringing three different lenses to their meta-analysis research. Harter et al.’s (2002) study included 7,939 business units in 36 companies and 198,514 respondents. Two hypotheses guided Harter et al.’s (2002) research:

$H_1$: Business-unit-level employee satisfaction and engagement will have a positive average correlation with the business-unit outcomes of customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, employee retention, and employee safety.

$H_2$: The correlations between employee satisfaction and engagement and business-unit outcomes will generalize across organizations for all business-unit outcomes. That is, these correlations will not vary substantially across organizations, and in particular, there will be few if any organizations with zero or negative correlations. (p. 269)

The dependent variable measures were “customer satisfaction-loyalty, profitability, productivity, turnover, and safety” (Harter et al., 2002, p. 271). The Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) was the method applied. The GWA is a 12-
question survey that measures “employee perceptions of work characteristics” (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). Two of the twelve questions directly relate to one’s perception of development and access to learning opportunities. Harter et al. (2002) defined employee engagement as “the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (p. 269). Harter et al. (2002) found the most reliable outcome was with employee turnover (−.36 and −.30), customer satisfaction-loyalty (.32 and .33 respectively), and safety (−.20 and −.32). The correlations of overall satisfaction and employee engagement were identical (.22). The results of Harter et al.’s (2002) study support both of the hypotheses. There was a positive correlation between employee satisfaction and employee engagement when aligned to business unit level outcomes.

Following the research of Harter et al. (2002), May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) were the first to publish a study testing Kahn’s (1990) employee engagement concept. As previously discussed, Kahn (1990) explored three psychological conditions, which were meaningfulness, safety, and availability. May et al. (2004) applied Kahn’s approach of employee’s cognitive expression of himself or herself in demonstrating engagement. In their field study with an insurance firm located in the Midwestern United States, May et al. (2004) surveyed 213 employees and managers using a 5-point Likert format. The survey response rate was 79%, of which 86.7% were female. Further, the survey demographics showed respondents had an average of 2.5 years of college education, and 35 was the mean age of respondents. May et al. (2002) provided
descriptive results: engagement ($M = 3.40, SD = .54$); meaningfulness $M = 3.61$, $SD = .72$); and safety ($M = 3.28, SD = .86$). The results of the study showed respondents experienced moderate levels of “psychological engagement, meaningfulness, safety, and availability” (May et al., 2004, p. 23).

Despite the work conducted by Kahn (1990), Harter et al. (2002), and May et al. (2004), there is minimal academic research on employee engagement (Saks, 2006). Saks (2006) recognized this disparity, “much of what has been written about employee engagement comes from the practitioner literature and consulting firms” (p. 600). In 2006, Saks was first to “test a model of antecedents and consequences of job and organization engagements based on social exchange theory” (p. 600) and connected engagement drivers to engagement consequences. Similar to Kahn’s (1990) focus on individual engagement, Saks (2006) explored the possibility of “one’s degree of engagement depends on the role in question” (p. 601). Saks (2006) defined engagement as “a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance” (p. 602). Saks (2006) surveyed 102 employees from a wide range of occupations in Canada using a five-point Likert-type scale. Survey items posed questions that asked participants about their “psychological presence in their job and organization” (Saks, 2006, p. 608). The response rate was 85 percent. The average age of respondents was 34 years old, compared to the population’s median age of 36.9. Sixty percent of the respondents were female compared to the local area
population of 52 percent female. (Saks, 2006). The findings of Saks’ (2006) study reveal significant differences between organization engagement and work engagement. Furthermore, several precursors predict organization and job engagement, including “job characteristics, perceived organizational support, supervisor support, rewards and recognition, and intention to quit” (Saks, 2006, p. 610). In Sak’s (2006) study, participants scored significantly higher in job engagement compared to organization engagement, suggesting support for Kahn’s seminal work in engagement with the application of their “preferred self” (p. 700) to work roles instead of organization goals.

Vance (2006) approached employee engagement through a conceptual lens and helped SHRM, an organization comprised of HR practitioners, publish its first major report on employee engagement and commitment. The purpose of the report was to provide a comprehensive guide for HR practitioners. Vance (2006) provided an overview of employee engagement, guidelines for measuring engagement, developing design, and implementing active engagement initiatives. Vance’s (2006) collaboration with SHRM helped HR practitioners understand, measure, and increase engagement. Vance (2006) conveyed the importance of training and development as an added component for enhancing engagement and commitment by employees.

According to Vance (2006), training begins with orientation for new employees. During orientation, an HR representative explains to new employees how their job contributes to the organization’s vision and mission. The HR
department is the unit responsible for employee orientation (Rebore, 2015).
Vance (2006) paid particular attention to the relationship between training and
development and employee engagement. For example, to increase engagement,
Vance (2006) recommended organizations show employees how their job fits in
with the organization’s mission, vision, and goals and encourage collaboration by
introducing new employees to other new employees as well as subject matter
experts on campus. Also, an investment in learning can lead to enhanced job
performance, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy among employees (Vance, 2006).
By increasing employee engagement, the non-teaching personnel’s commitment
is also improved (Vance, 2006).

To summarize Vance’s (2006) work, increasing one’s knowledge, skills,
experience, and experience signal reciprocity toward employer commitment. At
some universities, department representatives speak at employee orientations to
share services and resources available to employees (Chronicle of Higher
Education, n.d.; Inside Higher Ed, n.d.). Some of these services include
rideshare/commuter services, recreation/wellness centers, dining options, and
staff development center for professional and personal growth.

Czarnowsky’s research complements Vance’s (2006) work. Czarnowsky
(2008) defined engagement as “employees who are mentally and emotionally
invested in their work and in contributing to their employer’s success” (p. 6).
Czarnowsky (2008) focused on factors influencing worker engagement.
Czarnowsky (2008) found one-third of employees as highly engaged, and one in
four were minimally engaged or disengaged. Further, of the 47% of organizations with new supervisory training programs in place, only 15% of employees agreed their supervisors had the necessary skills to engage them (Czarnowsky, 2008).

Another perspective on engagement comes from Macey and Schneider (2008). Macey and Schneider (2008) were the first to delineate trait, state, and behavioral engagement as separate, but related constructs within organizations (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Through Macey and Schneider’s (2008) conceptual research on trait engagement, attest commitment is an “inclination or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point” (p. 5). Psychological state engagement is “an antecedent to behavioral engagement encompassing the constructs of satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and empowerment” (Macey et al., 2008, p. 5-6). Behavioral engagement is “discretionary effort” (Macey et al., 2008, p. 6); the level of effort employees exert in the workplace. It further captures the commitment and pride within an organization.

Scholars such as Kahn (1990, 1992), Saks (2006, 2014), Vance (2006), Czarnowsky (2008), Macey and Schneider (2008) have documented the importance of engagement and professional development - although not focused on non-teaching staff in higher education in particular. Moving from academic to organization-sponsored studies further shows the importance of understanding how professional development impacts engagement. Sponsored by the Dale Carnegie organization and ASTD, a learning and engagement study surveyed
776 HR and learning professionals globally to determine the relationship between employee engagement and workplace learning (Alcock, 2011). Findings revealed only a third of the average respondent’s workforce is highly engaged, and nearly a quarter (23%) is disengaged or minimally engaged. Two-thirds of the respondents stated the quality of professional development was important (Alcock, 2011). Similar to Guskey (2000), Alcock (2011) related to what makes professional development effective. Seventy-six percent of the respondents attributed career growth was a key driver in increasing engagement (Alcock, 2011). Alcock (2011) concluded many organizations could improve the engagement of their workforce. Above all, they must work to promote a culture of engagement, and one of the best ways of accomplishing this is by leveraging learning opportunities more effectively and strategically. Employee engagement is shared here; these definitions display the evolution of this phenomenon with individual and organizational engagement. Saks and Gruman (2014) suggested that Kahn’s (1990) definition is more encompassing than that of Schaufeli et al. (2002). Kahn’s description highlighted the connection between engagement and work role performance. It included “the notion of personal agency and the agentic self” (Abbott, 2017, p. 13), suggesting self-awareness and the ability to make choices based on disposition. Therefore, for purposes of this study, I applied Kahn’s definition of individual employee engagement.

**Organizational Social Capital**

Organizational Social Capital is an “asset embedded in relationships—of
individuals, communities, networks, or societies” (Leana & Van Buren III, 1999, p. 538). Leana and Van Buren III (1999) described Organizational Social Capital as a “resource reflecting the character of social relations within the organization, realized through members’ levels of collective goal orientation and shared trust” (p. 540). In other words, organizational social capital is about associability, the ability to work together, and trust is a by-product of successful collaboration (Leana & Van Buren III, 1999). Organizational Social Capital aligns with Appreciative Inquiry in that working groups who successfully collaborate on projects exhibit a higher level of trust. For example, non-teaching personnel who participate in a cohort-based professional development program may display a higher level of collaboration through their associability with the program. In the following section, I introduce the conceptual framework that guided this research study.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of an SDC in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at WU. According to Ravitch and Riggan (2017), “the purpose of a conceptual framework is to learn from the experience and expertise of others as you cultivate your own knowledge and perspective” (p. 17). Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an approach to identifying an organization’s areas of improvement by focusing on an organization’s strengths (Knox, Carter, Sommers, & Michaels, 2015). In understanding an organization’s strengths, AI is
a more generative form of inquiry, compared to problem-solving (Bushe & Paranjpey, 2015). Furthermore, AI theorists have shown predictable differences in the effects of problem-solving and appreciative approaches on employee engagement in the ideation phase of a process change (Bushe & Paranjpey, 2015). Because of this, I turned to the theory of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 2005).

**Appreciative Inquiry**

*Developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (2005; Charag & Fazili, 2018), AI examines what’s working in an organization, not what problem needs to be solved, to continue to build towards a prosperous future (Charag & Fazili, 2018).* It employs an asset-based perspective. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) defined AI as “the cooperative, co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system life when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms” (p. 8). By undertaking systematic discovery, AI can assist in understanding what’s working in a center for staff development and continue to build on a positive platform for professional development and employee engagement.

Similar to employee engagement, AI has numerous definitions. AI is an approach to organizational change, focusing, and building on the strengths and potential of an organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1990). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005) added, “AI involves the art and practice of asking unconditionally
positive questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential” (p. 8). With non-teaching staff in higher education, the practice of asking positive questions may minimize a guarded demeanor, reduce defensiveness and can assist in determining the course of action for professional development and staff’s level of engagement. Positive lines of questioning allow employees to think about their long-term goals and career aspirations. There are four stages or key phases to AI, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), as shown in Figure 1.

Discovery entails understanding “the best of what has been and what is” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16). In other words, during Discovery, stakeholders are asked to articulate best practices and strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In the Dream stage, stakeholders are invited to create a “results-oriented vision” to discover potential (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16). During the Design stage, the key is to creating potential plans for the ultimate organization that stakeholders are drawn to. The last stage is Destiny, where the focus is on “sustaining momentum for ongoing positive change and high performance” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 16).
In 2005, Wright and Baker, applied AI to study the healthcare staff at Mountbatten Ward, Wright, and Baker. The purpose of their study was to secure data on the short-term effects and willingness to accept AI as part of staff development in health care. Quantitative measures used were attendance (number of absences) and reason for absence. Although Wright and Baker’s (2005) study was not directly related to the professional development of non-teaching personnel in higher education, results from their research lead to a deeper understanding of employee motivation, growth, and mentoring, complementing factors of professional development (Barros et al., 2016). Wright and Baker (2005) engaged staff with self-reflection and group discussions, including one-hour interviews – these were examples of qualitative measures. Participants shared stories and experiences of when they were successful in
delivering health care services. Wright and Baker (2005) had 32 participants and used a coding method for data analysis. In their findings, Wright and Baker (2005) shared the process was full of emotions where staff described their interactions at work and with one another. Although there were no significant improvements in retention or recruitment, the high level of absences dropped. Two years after the initial study, they conducted a follow-up and discovered sustainable positive results. In Wright and Baker’s (2005) review, AI was a successful method in aligning employee motivation to quality of work with practical application to performance evaluations, personal growth, and mentoring.

AI is a tool used to assess organizations, and it is also “a philosophy that describes why change happens and a process that underscores how change happens” (Fifolt & Lander, 2013, p. 20). As universities focus on staff success, applying AI to strategic plans can have a powerful impact. An example of Fifolt and Lander’s (2013) statement above regarding organizational assessment is Keers’ (2007) study. As part of a best practice in HR, Keers (2007) used AI to measure employee engagement. Keers (2007) worked with a mobile communications firm in the United Kingdom to understand how to “make a good place an even better place to work, fine-tuning an already successful company and taking it one step further to increase its competitiveness” (p. 10).

Keers (2007) interviewed 200 employees over 4-5 months. These interviews provided themes and prompted another set of discussions involving
1000 employees focused on change initiatives. The outcome of Keers’s study (2007) resulted in having the mobile communications firm invest in professional development programs such as “Appreciative Discovery Centers” (p. 11) and opportunities to engage its employees by holding forums to learn about the company’s operations. In addition to AI, Organizational Social Capital is a construct identified in this study as a means of promoting community, leading to employee engagement.

Appreciative Inquiry is not without criticisms. As AI gained acceptance as an appropriate method for studying learning and development, this approach has also received its share of detractors (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Huybrechts, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2018). AI critics expressed concerns that positive stories shared during the discovery phase may invalidate negative organizational experiences shared by actors that may result in repressing potentially important and meaningful conversations (Bushe, 2007; Pratt, 2002). Another criticism is the narrow interpretation of being appreciative, without understanding the participants’ reality (Barge & Oliver, 2003). Despite these detractors, AI has been utilized mainly in higher education for assessing educational programs and development needs (Bushe, 2010). Although AI has been criticized and will continue to be criticized, this will only lead to strengthening its applicability (MacCoy, 2014). Some may view AI as looking through rose-colored glasses (Roberts & Workman, 2019; Van Tiem & Rosenzweig, 2006), AI does not disguise issues but instead highlights them as learning opportunities. I
intentionally chose to use AI because I recognized strengths in utilizing an asset-based technique and examining the possibilities vs. impossibilities (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Hybrechts, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2018).

In sum, AI allows for the possibility to move away from problem-solving, with the “basic assumption that an organization is a problem to be solved” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 13). AI can move organizations toward “appreciating and valuing” professional development for non-teaching staff in higher education and envisioning the high levels of engagement and organizational social capital among staff employees (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 13). Finally, AI provides organizations the opportunity to “fine-tune” (Keers, 2007, p. 10) existing professional development for staff. This opportunity is crucial given the critical role staff plays in ensuring student success and the operation of colleges and universities (Alias, Hamdani, Othman, 2017; Blake, 2007).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a thorough review of the literature on professional development and employee engagement in higher education. I began this chapter with four sections: professional development, higher education context, employee engagement, and conceptual framework. In the professional development section, I defined professional development, shared a brief history of training techniques and different ways to deliver professional development. Also, I described types of training and development,
highlighted professional development organizations, and discussed professional development in the private sector and higher education. In the higher education section, I provided a brief overview of the higher education system in California and the different levels of higher education personnel. In the employee engagement section, I shared the varying definitions of employee engagement, discussed seminal and empirical research on employee engagement, and described measures of engagement. I concluded Chapter Two with Appreciative Inquiry, the conceptual framework guiding this study. In Chapter Three, I discuss the research design and methods of this study.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I reiterate the intention of my study and reintroduce my research questions. I then describe my research design and methodology, followed by my data collection methods, setting for my research, and rationale for my sample population and participant selection. I examine my personal and professional subjectivities in a “Researcher as Instrument” statement that helped guide this study. Next, I explain my approach to data analysis and share how I achieved trustworthiness in this study. I conclude this chapter with my limitation and delimitations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of a staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at Westridge University. For this study, I defined non-teaching staff as individuals whose primary role is to provide administrative/clerical support, technical support, student services support, maintenance, and facilities support to university operations. Their primary work responsibilities exclude instruction and research, which are two of the significant tenets of faculty work (Hendrickson et al., 2013).
Significance

Non-teaching personnel is integral to student success (Franks, 2017). Strayhorn (2015) referred to non-teaching staff as “cultural navigators” (p. 56) who help students navigate successfully through life and academics. Goot (2017) reinforced the importance of how non-teaching personnel influence student success. Non-teaching personnel maintains campus operations so students can focus on learning, and teachers focus on teaching (Goot, 2017). Thus, their engagement, professional development, and personal growth are instrumental to the functioning of higher education.

Initially, the goal of professional development was to improve employee performance deficiencies (Rebore, 2015). However, professional development has become a significant factor in connecting employees to their workplace (Barros, Costello, Beaman, & Westover, 2016; Gallup, 2017). Professional development correlates with employee well-being and high levels of employee engagement (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Gallup, 2017). Furthermore, Millennials, the largest generation in the U.S. labor force, have emphasized the importance of working for an organization that helps accelerate their career and professional development (Gallup, 2017). Organizations that appear in the “Top Places to Work For” rankings made significant financial investments in professional development for their employees (Barros et al., 2016; Gallup, 2017).

As noted earlier, there is a lack of research on professional development
and staff engagement among non-teaching university personnel (Rebore, 2015). The inadequate amount of research is troublesome because the availability of professional development is linked to workplace engagement (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Gallup, 2017). Similarly, there is a lack of research that focuses on infrastructures that enable the development and engagement of non-teaching university personnel within higher education.

Trained university staff who exhibit employee engagement, influence student success (Blake, 2007), yet at the same time, are invisible to university administrators (Johnsrud, 2004; Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rosser, 2004). Although the primary role of non-teaching university staff is administrative, clerical, operational, and technical (Magolda & Delman, 2016; Rebore, 2015), some of these non-teaching personnel transition into higher-level positions because of learning opportunities and professional development (Magolda & Delman, 2016). The exigency of promoting from within the ranks of non-teaching university staff is also a factor in staffing plans (Johnsrud, 2004; Rosser, 2004). Internal promotions and succession management increase employee motivation and engagement in the workplace (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

For non-teaching personnel who assume new roles through internal promotions, increased professional development is necessary (ATD, 2018; SHRM, 2018). Franks (2017) suggested non-teaching personnel pursue higher-level campus positions when they are personally aligned with the university’s mission and exhibit high levels of engagement. While the staff’s transition into
progressively responsible positions might be random and sporadic, Franks (2017) argued universities could show their support in more meaningful, positive ways, such as an investment in SDCs.

In sum, this study will contribute to the limited literature on staff development centers and the professional development and employee engagement of non-teaching personnel. Besides, this study will highlight implications for institutional policy and planning to help other colleges and universities prepare for the establishment of staff development centers.

Research Questions

To reiterate, the purpose of this study was to understand the role of a staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at Westridge University. I elaborate on the setting later in this chapter.

Premised on three goals, I sought to understand: 1) non-teaching university personnel experiences with a center focused on their development, 2) how the staff development center shaped non-teaching staff’s professional development and personal growth, and 3) how the utilization of the staff development center contributed to engaged non-teaching personnel in a public university. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. What are the experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel with the staff development center?
2. How has the staff development center shaped the professional
development experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel, if at all?

3. How has Westridge University’s staff development center influenced employee engagement, if at all?

For purposes of this study, I defined professional development as more than just training workshops; it is an individual’s self-directed process that leads to the development of learning capabilities (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007). Employee engagement is “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles,” and when an employee is engaged, they “employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Ultimately, the purpose of this study, which served as a “major signpost for readers,” helped shape my research questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 151). Researchers often wrestle with research questions because “good qualitative questions are dynamic and multi-directional” and may lead to expansion of the inquiry (Agee, 2009, p. 446). Therefore, at the beginning of the study, I refined and refocused my research questions through “progressive focusing” (Stake, 1995, p. 9). In the following section, I discuss my research design.

Research Design

Since the focus of my study was the Westridge University’s staff development center and how it influenced non-teaching personnel professional development and engagement, I employed a case study research design. According to Moore, Lapan, and Quataroli (2012),
Case study research is an investigative approach used to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth new and deeper understandings of these phenomena. Specifically, this methodology focuses on the concept of the case, the particular example or instance from a class or group of events, issues, or programs, and how people interact with components of these phenomena. (pp. 243-244)

There are several types of case studies. My study is an example of an intrinsic case study because I had an “intrinsic interest” (Stake, 1995, p. 3) in the staff development center at WU in particular. According to Stake (1995), an intrinsic case study is “when the case itself is of primary, not secondary, interest” (p. 171).

**Worldview**

Also known as social constructivism, I operated within the constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2014), which aligns with case study research. Supported by Stake’s (1995) approach to case study research, social constructivism is “knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” and the world as we know it is a “human construction” (Stake, 1995, pp. 99-100). For example, people or research participants (e.g., non-teaching personnel), which Stake (1995) refers to as *actors*, “construct their understandings from experience and from being told what the world is, not by discovering it whirling there untouched by experience” (p. 100). AI and the social constructivist worldview are linked based on “notions of worlds as negotiated and co-constructed” (Reed, 2007, p. 55). In that, non-
teaching university personnel can shape their world through the way they speak about it and think about it. As such, my goal as a social constructivist (Creswell, 2014) is to “seek understanding” of the staff development center in which non-teaching personnel “live and work” (p. 8) and to depend on the non-teaching personnel’s perspective. Central to this study was understanding the professional development experiences non-teaching personnel have with utilizing a staff development center. Understanding how they interpret these experiences helped classify types of employee engagement at WU.

Research Setting

This study took place at Westridge University (WU). WU is a public, regional university founded in the 1960s. Although college and university campuses have individuals charged with staff training and development, what’s unique about the center for staff development at WU is that it operates in its own physical space. In addition to having campus real estate, the center has an operating budget and a staff that specializes in learning opportunities for professional development and personal growth of non-teaching personnel.

Several years ago, WU established a new vision, mission, and core values, along with a five-year strategic plan. The University’s new vision focused on the transformation of lives. The University’s new mission statement also included a

---

2 Exact year is not provided to protect the identity of the institution.
3 Exact vision and mission of the university have been paraphrased to protect the identity of the University.
commitment to cultivating their staff’s professional, ethical, and intellectual
development. WU’s strategic plan goals incorporated a component of staff
success, catapulting a new center for staff development. More specifically, this
newly established SDC focused on promoting professional development
opportunities for non-teaching university staff. Unlike the HR department on most
campuses, the SDC offered not only professional development by way of
workshops and conferences but also engaged staff members in career
discussions, career tracks, and individual learning plans. In the following section,
I describe the setting in greater detail and highlight its uniqueness.

The Center for Staff Development

Centrally located on the WU campus, the SDC officially opened its doors a
few years ago. The SDC is a suite with two offices, one conference room, and a
reception area. The SDC is accessible to all non-teaching personnel and
provides dedicated space for training and one-on-one appointments to discuss
career tracks and individual learning plans. The SDC team includes one director
and two staff members. The SDC also collaborates with a university-represented
committee and subcommittee to assist with programs and services. In the next
section, I discuss the selection of participants.

Research Sample and Participant Selection

Participants needed to meet the following criteria to participate in this study:

4 Exact year is not provided to protect the identity of the institution.
1) Actively employed non-teaching personnel at WU at the time of the study; and

2) Involved in and completed a career track offered through WU’s SDC; and/or

3) Initiated one or two appointments for career discussion or career counseling with WU’s SDC at the time of the study

I selected these inclusion criteria to identify non-teaching personnel who exhibited “personally engaging behaviors” (Kahn, 1992, p.11), where the SDC may provide condition(s) that allowed non-teaching personnel to bring their authentic self to work and invest in their abilities. The rationale for choosing these criteria was to gain a deeper understanding of non-teaching personnel’s professional development experiences with an SDC and the SDC’s influence on employee engagement, if at all. Voluntold, as opposed to a volunteer centers around motivation and choices (Limeri, Asif, & Dolan, 2019; Georg, 2018). I intentionally chose to use AI because I recognized strengths in utilizing an asset-based technique and examining the possibilities vs. impossibilities (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Hybrechts, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2018). Even though AI might seem to discourage participants from sharing negative experiences, the exact opposite occurred during my data collection. Participants candidly shared their thoughts, stories, and perspectives. And as a result, I constructed a theme that focused on dismantling perceptions of invisibility and lack of appreciation. An employee who is voluntold to do something lacks having a choice of whether or
not to participate in an activity and may hinder their ability to engage (Limeri, Asif, & Dolan, 2019; Georg, 2018). Therefore, I selected participants who chose to utilize the SDC and not NTP who were voluntold to visit the SDC. Because professional development centers have not traditionally offered career-related services, this staff population helped to inform my study (Jackson State University, n.d.; Rebore, 2017; Taft College, n.d.; the State University of New York at Fredonia).

**Career Tracks**

Career tracks were voluntary professional development programs focused on specific non-teaching positions available at WU (e.g., administrative professionals student affairs professionals, and finance professionals). The career tracks involved completing the program requirements and attendance at the respective end-of-program recognition luncheons.

**Career Discussion/Career Counseling**

One-on-one appointments must have been 1) voluntarily initiated by non-teaching personnel, and 2) at least two sessions since the creation of the staff development center. What occurs during these appointments varies. Non-teaching staff may ask for career advice, ideas on how to build an individual learning plan, review and give feedback on their resume, or assist in job interview preparation.

**Non-Teaching Personnel**

As shown in Table 1, there were a total of 24 participants who participated
in my study. The participant profile table includes their names (pseudonyms assigned), gender, role type in the university, and years of service at Westridge University. Of those who participated, 21 were female, and three were male. The participant’s exact years of service with WU are not included to protect the identity of the participant further. However, their tenure is listed as either less than ten years or more than ten years of service. Twelve participants worked at WU for less than ten years of service, and 12 participants had more than ten years of service.
Table 1. Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audra</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daphne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genevieve</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giada</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabelle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karyn</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelley</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesleigh</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opal</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reese</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhonda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sienna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>Less than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violet</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Non-Teaching Personnel</td>
<td>More than 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employee Status

As previously described, non-teaching staff are individuals whose primary role is to provide administrative/clerical support, technical support, student services support, maintenance and facilities support to university operations. Non-teaching personnel included academic support staff from Unit 4 - Academic Professionals of California (e.g., Credential Analysts, Evaluators, Extended
Education Specialists, Student Personnel Technicians, Student Services Professionals); Unit 3 - California Faculty Association (Librarian, Counselors, and Coaching employees), Units 2, 5, 7, 9 - California State University Employee's Union (e.g., health care support, operations support services, clerical / administrative support services, and technical support services); Unit 6 - Teamsters Local 2010 (skilled crafts, e.g., electricians, locksmiths, painters, and plumbers); Unit 8 – Statewide University Police Association (e.g., police officers, corporals, and sergeants) and administrators (M80 – those in the management personnel plan) and non-represented staff (C99 - confidential employees).

University personnel excluded from this study were those classified as faculty (e.g., full-time, part-time, probationary, tenure-track, tenure, adjunct, lecturer, and temporary), student workers (e.g., student assistants, teaching/graduate assistants) and volunteers.

These inclusion criteria aligned with Appreciative Inquiry and presumed the best way to understand what works well for individuals [non-teaching personnel] was to study them when they are at their best, including their wants, what they value, and what is essential to their success (Whitney, 2010).

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through publicly available information (e.g., SDC website, newsletters, program brochures) and by way of a recruitment flyer and recruitment email. For participants who reached out to me via a recruitment flyer/email, I reviewed the inclusion criteria with them and informed them of their
eligibility to participate in the study. For names obtained through my document analysis, I utilized the publicly accessible online university directory to retrieve their contact information (phone, email, office location). I then reached out to them by phone or email, and upon meeting the inclusion criteria, I invited them to participate in the study. In the following section, I discuss my approach to data collection.

Data Collection

Glesne (2011) recommended drawing on multiple sources of data for conducting qualitative research. I collected data by way of semi-structured interviews, direct observations in the SDC and SDC-related events, and document analysis (Stake, 1995) in an effort to gain context and insight (Glesne, 2011).

My approach to data collection aligned with how to generate and gather information in case studies (Stake, 1995) and AI research (Keers, 2007; Reed, 2007). Open-ended semi-structured interviews resembled what Reed (2007) termed as “AI conversations” (p. 125). AI conversations incorporate elements of Cooperrider and Whitney’s (2005) 4D model (Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny). See Appendix A for a complete interview protocol. Table 2 below illustrates the alignment between my guiding research questions and selected data collection methods.
### Table 2. Data Collection Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Research Question</th>
<th>Semi-structured Interviews</th>
<th>Document Analysis</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the experiences of WU's non-teaching personnel with the SDC?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the SDC influence employee engagement, if at all?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do WU’s SDC experiences shape the professional development of non-teaching personnel, if at all?</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Interviews

As noted previously, I interviewed 24 non-teaching personnel. To gain an understanding of the professional development experiences of staff with a center for staff development as a potential influence on employee engagement, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format of my interview questions allowed me the flexibility to add to or rephrase my questions accordingly (Saldaña, 2015). As I conducted the interviews, I posed follow-up questions based on responses and recurring patterns from previous participants. I also encouraged participants to provide any additional information that could potentially assist me in further understanding their professional development experiences. My interview protocol in Appendix A provided consistency among my participants resulting in reliable and comparable data (Stake, 1995). I conducted Interviews in a format preferable to participants. Participants agreed to
an in-person interview, despite options to connect by telephone or via Zoom. Interview time and location were scheduled based on the convenience of the participants. Upon securing permission from the participants through an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in their entirety. Interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. Transcripts were shared with participants to review their narrative for accuracy.

Document Analysis

In addition to interviews, I analyzed professional development reports to review training metrics, training topics, training hours, and a summary of workshop evaluations. Additional documents I examined were professional development flyers, WU’s university and related websites, university strategic plan, cohort member self-reflections, SDC meeting agendas, and SDC newsletters. Below is Table 3 detailing my rationale and protocol for document analysis.
Table 3. Rationale and Protocol for Document Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Objective/Rationale</th>
<th>Guiding Analytical Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDC Mission Statement</td>
<td>Purpose, goals, and objectives</td>
<td>What is the mission of the SDC? Do programs and services align with their mission and purpose?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WU Vision and Mission Statements</td>
<td>Values, goals, and objectives</td>
<td>How does SDC support WU's mission and vision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflections from Career Tracks (</td>
<td>Insight into NTP’s experience with the SDC</td>
<td>What did participants learn about themselves? In what way(s) did the program influence PD or employee engagement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Professionals, Student Affairs Professionals, and Finance Professionals)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC Newsletters</td>
<td>Event highlights and evidence of engagement</td>
<td>What is the SDC communicating to stakeholders? What programs are highlighted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC and WU’s Websites</td>
<td>Evidence of PD, evidence of engagement, accessibility</td>
<td>What information is available on the website? What are the logistics for visiting the center, meeting with SDC staff, or reserving the SDC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting agendas</td>
<td>Insight into the planning of PD opportunities</td>
<td>Who is involved in planning PD?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University strategic plan</td>
<td>Evidence of priority and support for non-teaching personnel</td>
<td>In what way(s) does the university make visible its support and commitment to non-teaching personnel?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations

I formally conducted observations during a committee meeting, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. I strategically chose this committee meeting to observe because it involved non-teaching personnel who volunteered to assist the SDC in planning an upcoming event. Before making my observations, I envisioned myself as an observer, as described by Glesne’s (2016) participant-observation continuum. I obtained permission before observing and took notes during the meeting. The meeting began in the SDC and then moved to another location at WU. The purpose of the meeting was to review and discuss the logistics of an upcoming program, including workshop topics and speakers. Afterward, the meeting participants left the SDC and moved to another location on campus. They invited me to come along. The purpose of relocating the meeting was to take a group photo of the committee members for future publication in front of a campus landmark. During the meeting in the SDC, I observed the meeting was structured and followed a meeting agenda. However, as we walked towards the location of the photoshoot, committee members seemed to let their guard down and openly shared why they volunteered to serve on this committee and how much they looked forward to the event they are helping to plan.

During my observations in the SDC, I found myself staying true to my role as an observer and what Glesne (2005) described as having “little to no interaction with those being studied...” (p. 50). However, when the meeting
moved outdoors, I found myself going between roles along the continuum from observer to observer as participant, participant as observer, and full participant (Glesne, 2005, p. 50). During my observations, I took field notes, which helped me compose a narrative of the meeting participants and their level of engagement.

In addition to observing events and special events, Glesne (2016) recommended watching daily occurrences. My regular everyday occurrence observations at the SDC related to its “setting, appearance, acts, processes and visual material” (p. 91) maintained in the SDC. I informally observed interactions among SDC staff members in the physical space of the SDC and non-teaching personnel attending a professional development opportunity sponsored by the SDC outside of the SDC. These informal observations expanded my role as a participant-observer and enhanced my awareness of the interactions occurring within the physical space of the SDC and exposed me to programming hosted by the SDC. Reflecting on my informal observations, I took headnotes. Headnotes are “focused memories of specific events” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 160). Collectively, these observations, field notes, and headnotes gave me a glimpse of non-teaching personnel's experiences with a center for staff development and the actions of SDC staff. (Glesne, 2011).

Data Analysis

I had interviews transcribed in their entirety. I relied on a secure
transcription service to transcribe the in-depth semi-structured interviews. I then manually coded the data through initial coding (Saldaña, 2016), breaking down data into “discrete parts” and examined them for “similarities and differences” (p. 295). I sorted the codes into categories and themed the data (Saldaña, 2016). As I read the transcripts, I applied pre-coding and preliminary jottings when I ran across a memorable quote, “worthy of attention” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 20). Upon completion of pre-coding, I employed additional coding methods. I uploaded my data into NVivo software (e.g., transcripts). I initially ran a word cloud to determine if the keywords appearing the most in the transcripts were the same ones I identified. I created nodes and added child nodes creating a hierarchy. I created cases for each participant, which helped me organize each participant’s information. I utilized the “code mapping” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 218) functionality in NVivo to visually see how my themes connected and how my coding was progressing and brought meaning to my data.

I used In Vivo coding in this study. Strauss (1987) shared the etymology of in vivo as “in that which is alive” and comes from “the terms used by [participants] themselves (p. 33). Saldaña further explained that “as a code [In Vivo coding] refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (p. 105). I used In Vivo coding to understand if there was an existence of a “microculture” among non-teaching personnel (Saldaña, 2016, p. 294) and “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 106). I also applied Values Coding to this study. Values coding was recommended for
studies whose goal explored participant experience from an appreciative lens to determine motivation (Reed, 2017). With Values Coding, data was reflective of my “participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 298) regarding the SDC. A value represents “the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing, or idea” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 298). Saldaña (2016) described attitude as a way a person thinks and feels about an idea, thing, another person, and themselves. And, according to Saldaña (2016), “a belief is part of a system that includes values and attitudes, plus personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretative perceptions of the social world” (p. 298). These coding methods allowed me to better understand the experiences of non-teaching personnel’s utilization of the SDC and its influence (if any) on employee engagement at WU. As noted in Chapter Two, Al’s 4D model included discovery, dream, destiny, and design. I used deductive coding of predetermined themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006) from interview transcripts and participant-generated evidence. In the following section, I share strategies for achieving trustworthiness within my study.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (Morse, 2015) introduced strategies for achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research. These strategies included, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and thick description; inter-rater reliability, negative case analysis; peer review or debriefing; clarifying researcher bias;
member checking; external audits; and triangulation (Morse, 2015). Creswell (2014) recommended that qualitative researchers used more than one strategy to “enhance the researcher’s ability to assess the accuracy of findings” (p. 201).

To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I employed several strategies, including rich thick description, triangulation, development of a coding system, and critical friend. I used thick description to convey my findings, to transport readers from being an outsider to being an insider, to move readers to experience professional development offered in the staff development center at WU. I used triangulation to expand my understanding and enhanced trustworthiness for my multiple-method research (Morse, 2015). I collected and analyzed data from interviews, documents, and observations made to develop my themes and subthemes (Creswell, 2014). Thus, I achieved triangulation through the different data sources shared previously (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2016). According to Thurmond (2001), achieving triangulation “strengthen the design to increase the ability to interpret findings” (p. 253). I developed themes as a result of “converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Triangulation aligned with AI’s approach to data collection from multiple sources (Kavanaugh, T., Stevent, B., Seers, K., Sidani, & Watt-Watson, 2010).

Since I used semi-structured interviews, I developed a coding system manually (Morse, 2015) then recoded transcripts electronically using NVivo software. Establishing a coding system enhanced the certainty and
trustworthiness of my findings because the meaning of the analysis is the same (Morse, 2015). My dissertation chair served as my critical friend. A critical friend is one who asks thought-provoking questions, examines data from a different lens, and intentionally critiques work (Costa & Kallick, 1993). My critical friend aided me in keeping my subjectivities in check, resulting in increasing the level of trustworthiness.

Therefore, while monitoring my subjectivities, I leveraged my familiarity with professional development and staff development centers in higher education to strengthen my work (Peshkin, 1988). For example, I was able to carefully craft follow-up questions during the semi-structured interviews, which expanded on the participant’s narrative. This approach allowed me to capture the participant’s experiences and not what I knew or thought I knew as an HR practitioner committed to professional development. As an HR/Training practitioner, my tendency might be to favor non-teaching staff who had positive experiences at the center. However, different roles I’ve held helped me to monitor my subjectivities by reflecting on my personal goals for the study, which was to understand non-teaching personnel’s professional development experiences with the SDC, regardless if it was good, bad, or indifferent. Maxwell (2005) supported the notion of monitoring subjectivities by regularly engaging in the examination of one’s own goals, practical purposes, implications, setting, or population for the study. For example, as an HR professional, I asked myself, is what the participant expressing regarding career development plans understandable? As
a trainer and facilitator, were the workshops designed with measurable learning outcomes? As a supervisor of non-teaching personnel, what is the availability of professional development? In reviewing documents, how does the availability of professional development opportunities known by NTP supervisors? Analyzing the participant’s point-of-view with these self-reflective questions added credibility to the data. Maxwell (2005) stated, “Attempting to purge yourself of personal goals and concerns is neither possible nor necessary” because it can add additional “valuable sources of insight, theory, and data” (p. 16). Therefore, in the next section, I expand on my values, beliefs, background, and experiences in which I monitor throughout.

Positionality of the Researcher

As the researcher, I explored my subjectivities in which I described how my professional and personal experiences have shaped and guided this study. As noted by Creswell (2014), “The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and biases at the outset of the study” (p. 207).

My interest in professional development and employee engagement began when I secured an internship in human resources for a long-term healthcare company, reporting to the HR Director. My office was in the main headquarters, and the company-owned and operated skilled nursing care facilities, rehabilitation centers, and a pharmacy in Southern California. My manager was a talented trainer who engaged the audience comprised of administrative, clerical,
custodial, nursing staff, physical therapists, dieticians, activity directors, pharmacists, and directors of staff development. At the end of the sessions, I distributed, collected, and compiled training evaluations, and shared results with my manager. I was also responsible for tracking the number of training hours, also known as in-service hours, important to employees who needed continuing education units to renew their licenses. After this experience, I graduated from college. I continued to progress my career in Human Resources, moving from healthcare to manufacturing, then to higher education. In my current role as Director, I am regarded as an HR specialist, focused on professional development for non-teaching university personnel. My view on the role the SDC plays in the professional lives of non-teaching staff is quite favorable. The SDC represents a safe space for staff members to go to and discuss their struggles in their current positions, positions they aspire to, and training recommendations for skillsets they feel they are lacking.

Although I am not the first in my family to graduate from college, I experienced difficulty navigating the educational system in California. My parents were unavailable due to their work schedules and lengthy commute. What helped me overcome the confusion was non-teaching personnel like admissions and financial aid representatives, library staff, advisors, and my college’s clerical/administrative staff.

I am interested in the experiences of non-teaching university staff who have partially or entirely, utilized the services of a staff development center. I want to
know what these staff members are experiencing so that the university can better support them. I want to know how staff engages in professional development, how and why they choose to utilize a staff development center, and how staff perceives the role a staff development center has on their level of employee engagement. I am interested in reviewing programs like career tracks to learn the narratives that shape the staff’s discernment and the potential outcome of these perceptions. Furthermore, “practitioners are the people working in the areas that the study explores” (Reed, 2007, p. 161). In the following section, I discuss the limitations of this study.

Limitations

A limitation of my study is the non-representative sample. The majority of my participants were women and did not entirely represent WU's non-teaching personnel. Of the 24 participants I interviewed, only three participants were male. Also, because I did not consider other demographics, this limited my study in helping to illuminate the experiences of, for example, non-teaching personnel of color or varying levels of education.

Delimitations

The delimitations of my study centered around my conceptual framework and participants. My conceptual framework was Appreciative Inquiry (AI), an asset-based approach that examines the best of an organization, not what’s
wrong with it (Reed, 2007). Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to identifying an organization’s areas of improvement by focusing on an organization’s strengths (Knox, Carter, Sommers, & Michaels, 2015). Although some may view AI as looking through rose-colored glasses (Roberts & Workman, 2019; Van Tiem & Rosenzweig, 2006), AI does not disguise issues but instead highlights them as learning opportunities.

I intentionally chose to use AI because I recognized strengths in utilizing an asset-based technique and examining the possibilities vs. impossibilities (Grieten, Lambrechts, Bouwen, Hybrechts, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2018). Even though AI might seem to discourage participants from sharing negative experiences, the exact opposite occurred during my data collection. Participants candidly shared their thoughts, stories, and perspectives. And as a result, I constructed a theme that focused on dismantling perceptions of invisibility and lack of appreciation.

In alignment with the definition of professional development employed in this study, I did not include individuals whose professional development experiences were not self-directed (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007). My study focused on non-teaching personnel's choice to engage in professional development versus being voluntold by their supervisor to visit the SDC. I sought out non-teaching staff who participated in specific programs and services offered through the SDC, such as leadership development, career tracks⁵, and career-

⁵ Names of programs and events have been changed to protect the identity of the institution.
related services. I did not include supervisors of non-teaching personnel.

To understand the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel at Westridge University’s SDC, I collected data on the participant’s gender, employee type, and years of service. These demographics, specifically years of service, allowed me to understand their interest and motivation of utilizing a new center dedicated to their professional development. I did not consider demographics such as the participant’s age, race, and education level. I provide a recommendation for future research to include additional demographics to advance this work as it relates to people of color. This study did not evaluate the SDC, SDC staff, student assistants, or supervisors of non-teaching personnel.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the purpose of my study and the research questions guiding my study. I then explained my research design and methodology, followed by my data collection methods, setting for my research, and rationale for my sample population and participant selection in this study. I examined my personal and professional subjectivities in a “Researcher as Instrument” statement that helped guide this study. I also shared the limitations and delimitations of this study. In the next section, I will focus on my findings and results.
CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study. To recollect, the purpose of this intrinsic case study was to understand the role of a staff development center in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at Westridge University. As previously defined, non-teaching personnel are employees whose primary duties include administrative and clerical responsibilities, student services, technical support, facilities, and operations. The non-teaching staff does not engage in teaching/instruction and research as part of their regular work duties. I aimed to examine the following research questions: a) What are the experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel with the staff development center? b) How has the staff development center shaped the professional development experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel, if at all? c) How has Westridge University’s staff development center influenced employee engagement, if at all?

Based on my analysis of the data, I constructed five themes. The five themes I identified were 1) Cultivating Talent, 2) Fostering Insights and Introspection, 3) Dismantling Perceptions of Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation, 4) Promoting Community, and 5) Strengthening Staff Engagement. These
themes amplified how non-teaching personnel characterized their experiences with Westridge University’s staff development center, what the center represented in their work roles, how the center shaped their professional development, and how the center influenced staff engagement. Within each theme, related subthemes emanated, for which I organized and discussed below.

Cultivating Talent

Findings revealed the staff development center at Westridge University (WU) cultivated talent. The word ‘talent’ is standard reference HR practitioners used to describe only the very best of employees (Roper, 2015). Despite this conventional connotation, talent in this study referred to the collective group of employees in the general workforce. Talent development referred to growing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees and helping them realize their potential to help contribute to their employer’s mission, goals, and objectives (Bingham, 2014).

As part of my document analysis, I examined a report produced by the staff development center (SDC) that listed training data for the first full year the SDC was operational. The report showed the center offered over 120 training sessions that equated to a little over 300 training hours and attended by approximately 1200 employees. Workshops encompassed a variety of topics, including customer service, diversity training, email, and phone etiquette, as well as training on university-related benefits, policies, procedures, and systems. Karyn
agreed with the variety of topics covered at the SDC as she described the center:

The staff development center is a place, a thought, an idea, where staff, the [WU] staff, can go to learn more about the policies and procedures that have been implemented that are necessary to do the job, and that offer training and support to carry out those policies and those procedures.

Karyn viewed the center as a destination for university-related training where she would go for information related to university policies and procedures, including an interpretation of those policies and procedures and how it would impact her personally. In a way, she was reaching out to the staff development center for a fresh perspective, an interpretation of policies and procedures that she may not get from the traditional departments such as Human Resources. These workshops provided WU’s non-teaching personnel ample opportunities to grow their knowledge, skills, and abilities to assist the university in meeting its mission and goals.

Five subthemes emerged under the central theme, Cultivating Talent. The five interrelated subthemes are 1) Professionalism, 2) Clarity of Professional Identity, 3) Leadership Capacity and Potential, 4) Technical Proficiency, and 5) Staff Success through Personal Testimony. I continued with the discussion and elaborated on the findings of these subthemes below.

Professionalism

Lowe and Gayle (2010) described professionalism as a commitment to learning. Professionalism has four distinct but interrelated dimensions, including
competence, leadership skills, lifelong knowledge, and professionality (Lowe & Gayle, 2010). A traditional understanding or framing of what it means to be a professional is often centered on whiteness (Gray, 2019), although that is not what I am introducing here. Within the context of this study, the definition of professionalism is a strategy utilized by members of an occupational group to better their status, salary, and work conditions (Hoyle, 1975). An updated definition described professionalism as a combination of behavior and attitude toward one’s occupation (Helsby, 1995). A few examples the staff development center offered in support of one’s professionalism is putting together a resume (or assisting with updating an existing resume) and interview preparation (e.g., mock interviews).

Collectively, non-teaching personnel shared their motivation for utilizing the staff development center. Research participants attributed reasons for increased learning opportunities and newly developed programs never before offered to non-teaching personnel at Westridge University. By engaging in professional development, non-teaching personnel saw the staff development center as an opportunity to help improve their salary, status, and work conditions. These learning opportunities and programs included career tracks, leadership development, and workforce readiness training. The career tracks allowed Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel a chance to learn more about careers at the university to understand if that is the career they want to pursue. The career tracks program was also an opportunity to give current staff in
existing roles an understanding of how to progress within their job classifications and included a track for administrative support personnel, student services, and finance professionals. As noted in Chapter Three of the 24 participants, 20 of them participated in the career tracks. Of the 20 participants who participated in the career track, nine had less than ten years of service with Westridge University, and 11 had more than ten years of experience. Their longevity at WU allowed participants to speak to services available or unavailable to non-teaching personnel before the establishment at the SDC.

Mentoring advances professionalism (Kram, 1995). Resume consultations and mock interviews were ingredients in cultivating professionalism, which resulted in positive job status changes and/or salary increases for participants. Opal shared she received mentorship through the staff development center. Mentorship is an important factor in contributing to personal growth (Kram, 1985), further enhancing personal learning (Kram, 1996). For non-teaching personnel, finding mentorship in the staff development center advanced their professionalism. Similar to Opal’s experience, Chase referred to an SDC Representative as a mentor. In the following narrative, Chase reflected on guidance from her mentor:

In my meetings with my mentor, it kind of came up as ‘you have to change the narrative. You're [Chase] from the [department name]. You need to be [Chase] from, you know-- you have to define what that is.’
The feedback from her mentor [SDC representative] gave Chase reason to pause and think about the kind of person she was and who she wanted to become. Although Chase received invitations to several interviews, job offers did not materialize. Chase's mentor offered a perspective she had not heard before, that Chase needed to reinvent herself. Chase admitted she did not realize how other people saw her and because she worked in one part of the University and often did not engage in activities outside of her department. Her limited interactions with other university personnel posed a disadvantage for Chase, especially with highly competitive job vacancies Chase aspired to have. Her SDC mentor advised her to seek out volunteer opportunities to increase her level of engagement with WU as well as meet other university employees along the way. Some of these employees may serve on future search committees and gain another point of reference in knowing Chase. In another interaction with her SDC mentor, Chase shared:

So part of the process during the [pathway] program, it sort of morphed into--I was in the middle of applying for jobs, and that was kind of when I would talk to my mentor [name], ‘this is the purpose of me taking this program, this is what I want to do.’

The mentorship Chase and others, including Emma, Opal, and Harrison, received included counseling, trust, and affirmation. Through these interactions with her SDC mentor, Chase's professional development goals were becoming more apparent. Chase continued with her reflection:
Well then, that morphed into [her SDC mentor asking] ‘what's your resume look like? What does your cover letter look like? Are you interviewing right now? Internal, external, let's see what you're doing at interviews, and let's see if we can find where those problem areas are.’ And so that started a whole chain reaction of things.

The chain reaction, where one action leads to another, is what Chase experienced, along with others such as Violet and Willa. There were a series of action steps they took based on the guidance she received from her SDC mentor. Chain reaction, sometimes called snowball or domino effect, refers to how one thing or one action leads to another. In Chase’s situation, a conversation about her overall goals led to sharing her interest in applying for other positions to revisiting how she presented herself on paper in terms of her resume and cover letter. At times, the feedback Chase received was overwhelming, but she was determined to meet her professional development goals. Chase revamped her resume, not only the content but also the formatting, knowing that the time she invested in updating and enhancing her resume (and cover letter) would advance her professionalism. Chase continued:

I never even knew that I really had to have a dedicated resume depending on the type of job-- a cover letter and the resume is pretty basic, but now, I have a living document. I have revamped it completely, and I have a living document of my-- basically my successes over the years, and it actually is
living. So as I do things, I actually add them, or I'm constantly editing it. Whereas before, it was just a document I had in case.

Chase and others realized the power of having an updated resume and cover letter. Willa came to that realization as well as she recalled:

And then I've met at the staff development center one-on-one to-- I think I met three times, to improve my resume, which I'm very proud of. So that was something that I sought out because it was something that I knew that the current resume that I was using was not... Maybe in its day, it was pretty good, but it had kind of become outdated. So I worked on that as well as the cover letter. Because the cover letter, I always struggled with. Am I saying too much? So that too, I was able to in the staff development center, and I felt I learned a lot, and it really polished my cover letter. So now I feel like, "Okay, I feel a lot better now."

Willa was interested in securing another position on campus and wanted feedback on her resume and cover letter. The SDC promoted one-on-one consultations on application materials, including resumes and cover letters, to help staff become a more competitive candidate. Initially thinking her resume was fine, Willa learned that her resume needed to be updated, which included removing her address, replacing objective with a professional profile or summary of qualifications. Once her resume was updated, Willa returned to get assistance on her cover letter. Because of the personal consultation she received from the
SDC, she was so proud of her new and updated application materials and began applying for jobs to progress her professionalism. Willa later updated the SDC staff with the good news of her securing a new position and attributed much of her preparation to the SDC. She viewed them as mentors.

The term ‘mentor’ and stemmed words ‘mentoring’ and ‘mentorship’ were used 11 times by three participants, Opal, Chase, and Harrison. With Harrison, he referred to professional development opportunities as a “mentor system” for professionals who want to stay current within their field. Harrison likened the support he received from the staff development center to a guide:

I feel like when I was working and going to school, that I had something [guide] to help me out along the way. I was in a career and worked in other places where you can’t really have [a] staff development center. It was just mostly work, work, work... and [if] you wanted to improve, you figured [it] out yourself.

Before joining Westridge University, Harrison’s previous employer did not have a center like the SDC to help its employees. Besides, Harrison shared there were limited opportunities to improve his salary and work conditions with his prior employers. The SDC at WU was an excellent resource for Harrison and served as a guide for his professional development needs. Harrison continued:

I feel, with the staff development center, that I have that kind of thing back in my life, where there is some guidance. Once again, some kind of
consultation, some knowledge so you can actually talk about these kinds of things. Because I said a lot of people that take stabs into the dark and I feel with the staff development center, it’s actually some form of information. So, just how I felt this [student center] covered [me] when I was a student, that I feel [the staff development center] covered [me] right here as a professional and that’s how I feel about this, the staff development center.

Harrison compared the support the staff development center provided him as similar to the support students received from student centers like a career development center. The SDC did not formally offer a mentorship program. What Opal, Chase, and Harrison experienced was an example of the supportive relationship between non-teaching personnel and the SDC staff, leading to the fulcrum of successful professionalism, a commitment to learning that leads to strategies for the betterment of one’s status, salary, and working conditions.

Individuals who received guidance from mentors demonstrated increased productivity, experience less role conflict, and are more accomplished than those who are not mentored (Specht, 2013). As shared by Audra, Sienna, and other participants in this chapter, they felt more effective and efficient as a result of participating in learning opportunities through the SDC. These learning opportunities led them to evaluate how they have done their work and introduced sound best practices, leading to their increased productivity in the workplace. Emma expressed how fortunate she has been to have support from higher-level
management. Because of this support, she did not experience conflict and secured a promotion, two levels above her classification. Emma utilized the center by participating in a career track program as well as sought career-related services (e.g., resume review). She recalled:

I have been very lucky to have some really supportive upper-level management, people who have really truly pushed me personally into looking and doing certain things that maybe I wouldn't have normally done. I think we have some really, really good management that want to see their employees succeed.

Because of the mentorship Emma received, she continued to engage in things she has not done before, such as participating in a nine-month professional development opportunity. The supportive network of upper management Emma had made it just a little bit easier for her to pursue professionalism.

As part of my document analysis, I discovered quarterly newsletters published by the SDC. In these newsletters, a list of participants, along with their photos from the career track recognition luncheons, were included. Collectively, there were over 30 participants listed who completed the program. I found two forms that needed to be completed by the employee and their manager to participate in the career track program. The employee’s form included an ‘expressed consent’ to join, acknowledging the program was voluntary and optional. Also included was information on program requirements, duration, how
to access courses with some on the employee’s own time, and a detailed statement that participation in the program did not guarantee a stipend, bonus, or promotion. The manager’s form included much of the same information. What stood out in the manager’s form was that the manager needed to acknowledge their willingness to allow the employee to complete courses during work hours (upon request) and not attaching any adverse consequences if the employee decided to withdraw from the program. Managers who recommended employees to participate in the program demonstrated one way they are supportive of the staff’s development. Managers who completed the necessary form for their subordinate to participate in the career track is another example of supportive managers Emma alluded to earlier. These signed acknowledgment forms are evidence of supportive managers at WU. They have helped cultivate professionalism by allowing their staff to participate in a nine-month professional development [career tracks] program.

Emma attributed her success to mentors along the way in her career at the university. Although Emma did not formally use the term “mentor” to describe her network of supporters, what she experienced was mentorship. Mentorship is a “professional, working alliance in which individuals work together over time to support the personal and professional growth, development, and success of the relational partners through the provision of career and psychosocial support” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Policy & Global Affairs; Board on Higher Education & Workforce; Committee on Effective
Mentoring in STEMM, 2019, para. 11). Mentorship aligns with other subthemes for which I will discuss in this chapter. Emma continued:

I don’t think we have enough of them [supportive upper management] everywhere, but I really truly do believe that those upper management that push their employees to go into doing... Even to look at things that don’t necessarily fall within their personal jobs, their home jobs, I think it gives them that bigger scope of what the university actually entails, which is in your personal life is growth.

Emma realized there were not enough individuals who served as mentors to non-teaching personnel. Emma smiled as she shared “...I personally feel I’ve been really lucky to have those people in my corner.” Emma is one of the lucky ones. Not all participants expressed the good fortune of having a group of supportive upper management in their court as well as the support of a staff development center. As described in these terms, mentorship supported the cultivation of professionalism, which aligned with Opal, Chase, Harrison, and Emma’s experiences with the staff development center.

Participants utilized the staff development center for learning opportunities. Examples of these learning opportunities to cultivate professionalism included a book club, career tracks, conferences, online training, webinars, workshops, and workshop facilitation. Jeremiah utilized the staff development center three times for learning opportunities in the form of seminars. One of the workshops was a
two-day leadership development program. Jeremiah reflected on how the staff
development center assisted in his professional development:

...that workshop [leadership development program] allowed me... I
have a student assistant that I oversee, and it helped me implement
some ideas and things like different approaches in terms of
communication, how I delegate certain tasks, and how I go about
my day with being a supervisor. So, that's something that I learned.
So, I'm being a different type of leader now through that workshop,
that it helped me.

As an emerging leader, Jeremiah recognized his communication and delegation
approach improved because of attending the leadership development workshop.
Jeremiah’s experience, his approach to his work, and his role as a supervisor
has changed, similar to how Helsby (1995) described professionalism.
Jeremiah’s self-awareness of “being a different type of leader” bolstered his
competence, leadership skills, lifelong knowledge, and professionality (Lowe &
Gayle, 2010). With Sienna, she shared, “I wasn’t looking to promote. A lot of
people took it [career track] to promote, to get more money, whatever. I just took
it to improve myself to be a better employee, so that’s why I went.” Sienna
demonstrated professionalism through its interrelated themes of competence and
lifelong learning. She was more interested in sharpening her skills for the sake of
being a more productive employee. The second subtheme emerging from the
central theme of ‘Cultivating Talent’ is ‘Clarity of Professional Identity’ discussed
Clarity of Professional Identity

As defined in Chapter Two, professional development is a self-directed process leading to the development of learning capabilities (Knowles, 1975; Manning, 2007). Opal utilized the center several times to improve her job status. Because of participating in a career track, Opal achieved clarity of professional identity. Having a clear understanding of one’s professional identity allows an individual to bring more of themselves to their work roles (Kahn, 1990). The second most leading driver of employee engagement is career development, a form of professional development (Nelson, 2018). Opal recalled utilizing the SDC “for a resume workshop [and] interview preparation for career development” and added:

I know the kind of job I want to have eventually. So, with that in mind and having that kind of goal, I was able to go to the SDC and receive that mentorship and suggestion to help me get there.

Having an updated resume tailored for the position one is seeking gets the attention of recruiters and hiring managers (SHRM, nd). Being able to present one’s best self during an interview is a crucial ingredient in securing a job offer.

Opal cultivated professionalism by gaining career clarity, and in a related sense, clarity of one’s professional identity. Career clarity is the degree of drive and commitment toward one’s career and work goals (Murphy, 2004). Clarity of professional identity is the “cognitive awareness of what one’s core professional
identity is, regardless of whether the individual knows how to translate this identity into action or not” (Dobrow & Higgins, 2005, p. 570). Opal gained clarity of her professional identity and eager to take the necessary next steps to get to where she wanted to be. Opal’s goal was to change jobs, to secure a position that would allow her to work more closely with students. Opal and her participant colleagues felt the need to reach out to the staff development center for guidance on the next steps. She expanded:

I see it as [SDC] helps you create a roadmap to where you want to go. So for me, being in a place where I need that mentorship from somewhere that I can’t get from my mom or dad or roommate, the staff development center really provides that confidentiality, and I guess that comfort of being welcomed into this space that allows you to grow.

The type of professional development support Opal and her participant colleagues needed, they found at the staff development center. Their interactions with the SDC staff helped them feel at ease, so much so that they were comfortable in disclosing their thoughts, feelings, personal aspirations, and career goals. Opal’s visits to the SDC became frequent, almost as if it was now a place to “hang out” with friends and familiar faces, a sense of belonging the SDC promotes. Opal added:

Okay, so for me personally, the staff development center has been a place that I feel anybody from [WU], any employee can go to-- to have some mentorship towards their professional development. I feel like the center
doesn't really discriminate from where you're from on campus. It really is open to anybody, and I feel for me, that's been that one, I guess, resources outside of my own department that would help me grow professionally, which I have utilized.

Opal felt comfortable asking for input from the SDC regarding job opportunities internally within WU as well as external opportunities. She didn’t know any other place on campus that would give her advice on job search strategies for external non-WU positions. Similar to her and her colleague participants’ feelings, the SDC did not turn them away because they were interested in increasing their professionalism beyond WU. Through my observations in the physical space of the SDC, the staff development center promoted an open and welcoming environment for any staff member seeking assistance, regardless of job classification and employment status. Violet knew what she wanted to do all along, to work more closely with students. However, she explained, “before the staff development center, there really wasn’t a lot of support....” for staff/non-teaching personnel. Violet was “really excited” when she saw the pathway and remarked:

It was the pathway that I started taking the classes, and then that’s when I saw that position open up, and I said if this isn’t meant to be, I have to do it. And so, I wouldn’t say that there was a lot of support before. I know I definitely utilized the staff development center in applying to my current role, and that was huge for me...and we’re going over some questions for
an interview to say I feel more confident.

Violet worked for over ten years at Westridge University. So for her, the staff development center represented a means to catapult her into action. By getting involved in the career tracks and actively engaging in the core requirements and electives of the program, she learned how to represent herself on paper via her resume and in-person through the job interview. Violet proceeded to share her takeaway from her visit with the center:

I think I had the meat of the [interview] questions, but just hearing it from somebody else [SDC] and having that feedback is really useful for me. So I took that [feedback], I went home, I kept rehearsing, and I felt very confident going into the interviews. So when I made it to the second interview, I was, okay, all right, here I go.”

Violet pursued professionalism when she reached out to the staff development center for her professional development needs. Violet desired a position that worked directly with students. She felt she was already doing the work but didn’t know how to explain her duties to a search committee during an interview, let alone, how to list it in her resume. Because of her tenacity, Violet met her goals. Violet secured an interview (goal #1), invited to a second interview (goal #2), then accepted job offer (goal #3) to a position she loves, her dream job that allowed her to work more closely with students. With Violet and other participant colleagues, the staff development center influenced her level of engagement, bringing her authentic self to work each time she interacted with students at WU.
Violet felt connected to her work because she saw a piece of herself in each student she worked with. Between Opal and Violet, my conversations with them lead me to see their shared professional identity as non-teaching personnel (Davey, 2013). The third subtheme emerging from the central theme of ‘Cultivating Talent’ is ‘Leadership Capacity and Potential’ for which I discuss below.

**Leadership Capacity and Potential**

In a review of documents including WU’s strategic plans, institutional research reports/surveys, and SDC’s publications, findings exhibited improving leadership and employee development. For example, a leadership workshop was offered about six months from the establishment of the SDC. By the end of year one, a total of five sessions were held and attended by over 50 staff employees. These same documents did not include specific actions taken to offer leadership development programs to non-teaching personnel until the establishment of the staff development center. Participants who worked at WU for ten or more years further supported the lack of leadership development programs offered to staff before the existence of the staff development center. Based on the triangulation of participant narratives and various organizational documents, including the university strategic plan and the university’s research department reports, faculty, student leaders, and administrators were the only groups at WU offered leadership training as part of their professional development.

During the time of this study, the staff development center offered a
leadership development program geared toward leads and supervisors, as well as non-teaching personnel who aspired to be leads and supervisors. In my document review of the communications and training materials for this leadership course, promotional materials listed the leadership training as a “new” two-day cohort-based program. The training design was for small group sizes, ideally 12 participants. Based on my document analysis, approximately 120 employees completed the training, including four out of 24 research participants. The leadership development program was an instructor-led workshop with 2-4 rotating facilitators, pre-work assignment, completion of a personality assessment, group exercises which included pair and share, role-play, and team-building activity. The post-work included an accountability buddy assignment and action plans. As a long service employee at WU, Audra attended numerous events on campus. Still, she felt she had not fully utilized the staff development center until she received a forwarded message from her colleague regarding this new leadership program. Audra recalled:

Well, the one I loved the most was the two-day supervision workshop... and I still have the book to this day, and I still refer to it... I feel like when I attended that, it really helped me blossom inside and know what aspects I have that I didn’t realize that I had or different ways of going about handling a little bit more of a difficult situation.

As part of the training materials, each participant received a book/learning guide. The guide included case studies, a model for providing positive and constructive
feedback, techniques for effective delegation and holding meetings, as well as self-guided assessments and reflections on time management, and building trust. Included in the appendix were blank Action Plan forms for participants to write down what action(s) they would take from their learnings from each section. Audra admitted not fully utilizing the center’s breadth of services initially until she joined the leadership development program cohort; she was elated about the existence of the center and encouraged colleagues to utilize the center. For Audra and her participant colleagues Chase, Opal, and Violet, their experiences with the staff development center influenced their behavior and attitude toward their occupation. Audra admitted to referring her management team to register for the next session of the leadership program, “I even told my bosses to go, even though they’re already supervisors. There’s always something you can learn.” Audra’s referral to management is an example of her testimony regarding the leadership development program. Audra’s reference to *always learning something* spoke to how she never stopped learning regardless of her tenure with WU. As noted in Chapter Two, the overarching goal of professional development is to increase employee effectiveness (Shafer, 2010). The staff development center provides programming to help improve staff effectiveness. For Audra, an example of her efficiency was how she interacted with colleagues at work, which included peers and student assistants.

Similar to Chase’s chain reaction experience mentioned earlier within the subtheme of professionalism, other research participants’ experiences led to
other actions. Kris, Mariah, and Tayler were three individuals who attended the leadership training and, similar to Audra, went back to their departments to highly encourage their peers and managers to register for the next leadership training session. For Kris, attending the leadership program caused behavioral changes in how she interacted with people. Kris shared:

I realized that I've become more trusting of the people around me. And I think I've been more attentive to who I'm working with and what the skillset is to be able to say, ‘Okay, well, I have this student assistant who I know is this way, so I can pass this to her, and I have this tutor mentor who is this way and I know I can pass this to her.’ Being more intentional about what it is, I would like to help someone who is working with me accomplish and asking those questions and not assume.

As mentioned earlier, the leadership program included a trustworthy exercise that resonated with Kris and other participant colleagues. The leadership training design allowed Kris to apply her learning immediately back to her job. The transfer of knowledge was evident as Kris began to recognize the talent in others. Aside from just attending the workshop, Kris actively participated by volunteering for role-plays during the two-day workshop and has become an advocate for the center, conveying programs and services offered through the staff development center with her colleagues. For Mariah, of the three ways she utilized the center, attending the leadership program had the most impact on her. Mariah recalled:
[The leadership program] really helped me open my eyes on different ways of getting things done or different ways of asking for things to be done. If you asked for something and maybe that approach is not the best one, so you think back, "Okay, maybe I'll try it a different way, or try it a different way." The positive. Always trying to think ahead and be the positive one. "Oh, yes, we can do that. Oh, yes." I think that probably is... I was just looking through my folder because I cleaned out my office today, and I still have the folder with all the information on there. I was going through, reading my program plan and all that kind of thing. That has probably been the best to shape how I lead my department.

Similar to Kris, the power of the leadership training was impactful with immediate application to Mariah's position. For Mariah, leadership training was an opportunity to learn more about different communication approaches for delivering positive feedback as well as constructive feedback in the workplace. The leadership training provided sample scripts and question prompts to assist in choosing the most appropriate technique when planning a discussion. Gains for Mariah included heightened awareness of others’ reactions to the communication and increased self-confidence in being able to deliver her message because she took the time to tailor her communication approach to the situation and the person. With Tayler, the leadership program provided heightened self-awareness of the do’s and don’t’s of supervision. Tayler shared:

I would say probably the one thing that I've gotten the most out of the staff
development center is probably the ability to relate or help coach my staff a little bit better... we shouldn't be just directing our employees. We need to be coaching them. And it's helped me with just establishing like one-on-one meetings with my staff on a weekly basis to make sure that I am checking in with them, ‘How are you doing this week? How is this project going for you? And just making sure that we're checking in with them so we can address any concerns that may be coming up, whether they're personal and they need more time off of work or whether they need to extend a deadline or anything like that.

Tayler’s takeaways from the leadership program is another example of how professional development leads to employee effectiveness. Tayler was able to complete a self-inventory of how she was doing in leading her team and saw several ways she could improve. Tayler began having weekly one-on-one meetings and increased the frequency of her check-ins to make sure she connected with her team members. These two practices were techniques shared in the training and raised Tayler’s leadership capacity.

Audra, Kris, Mariah, and Tayler invested in their leadership capacity to advance their professionalism. With Audra, it was the ability to learn something new and recommended her supervisors to attend. For Kris, it was becoming more trusting of others, which also resulted in a promotion. For Mariah and Tayler, the leadership training allowed a transfer of knowledge to become even more effective in their roles. The fourth subtheme emerging from the central
The demand for a technically trained and educated workforce will continue to grow beyond 2020 (Keily, 2019). Technical proficiency is the hard skills of procedural, mechanical, and hands-on nature, to train on capabilities and knowledge needed to perform a job (Doyle, 2019). Although Westridge University has consistently offered technical training, participants in the study attributed their increased technical proficiency to the staff development center’s career track requirements that included technical skills. All three pathways required participants to complete several classes, some of which were part of the Microsoft Office Suite or other university-related systems and software related to budget, travel, procurement, surveys, and website development/updates. Depending on the pathway, technical courses were available online, and some were in-person, facilitated by a member of that specific department. Since some of the systems required specific access, facilitators developed training material with screenshots for cohort members who did not have direct access to a particular system. Genevieve utilized the staff development center several times; she participated in a career track, resume review, and mock interview. Genevieve attended a financial systems course designed specifically for the career track program. After completing the course, she remarked that when she now processes financial transactions, she does so with additional care. Genevieve stated:
Now, whenever I go and do submit [form], I think of how are they
[workshop facilitators]? I think about how it is on their [workshop
facilitators] side. And I was like, I’m going to try to make this easier for
them [workshop facilitators] because they [workshop facilitators] explained
to me the process, and how difficult it is that they [workshop facilitators]
cannot do their job because of X, Y, Z reasons. So now that I know I can
try to make, okay, I know they’re [workshop facilitators] going to need this
information, I’m going to add it on here.

Genevieve demonstrated her newly acquired technical proficiency by ensuring
proper submission of forms to minimize delays in processing her requests. She
also went a step further by displaying technical empathy, seeing it from the
finance processor’s perspective. Isabelle recalled her utilization with the staff
development center:

I think the biggest takeaway from participating in the pathway was that it
gave me the opportunity to take advantage of hands-on training, to
actually be in the systems. Sometimes when you are taking training
courses, it’s just some who has a lot of knowledge in that area, almost
giving you a lecture on it; not everybody learns that way. To be able to
actually get into the systems, see how things work – point, click, I think
that was a really good aspect of the pathways program that I took.

Before the pathways, Isabelle, just like Genevieve, would not have any
opportunity to access particular systems due to her current job classification.
Through this pathway, Isabelle gained technical proficiency in how to navigate specific financial systems. A long-service employee with more than ten years of experience at WU, Sienna felt she learned everything she needed to learn. However, after discovering who was leading the staff development center, Sienna shared that [SDC employee] would not put out “garbage” programming. Therefore, when Sienna heard about the career track program, she thought, “Well, maybe I can learn something new, and it would be a chance to, I don’t know, improve my skills or whatever.” Sienna expressed her interest in learning and what Bingham (2014) referred to as talent development. Sienna yearned to grow her knowledge, skills, and abilities and contribute to WU’s mission, goals, and objectives. One of the key takeaways for Sienna was improving her technical proficiency with advanced functions of Microsoft Office. Sienna remarked that what used to take her a long time do in Microsoft Word (template) and Excel (spreadsheets) is much quicker now because of completing the technical training. What Sienna gained from the pathway was increased productivity in her current role by developing her technical proficiency. Leadership, in this case, mattered to Sienna. Management of the SDC was critical to Sienna. The reputation of who was running the staff development center was crucial in deciding whether or not the programming was well-thought-out and of high quality. Nine-months is a considerable time commitment, and Sienna agreed to invest in learning who would oversee the program, and after nine-months, she completed the program. Through their collective experiences, Genevieve,
Isabelle, and Sienna’s commitment to learning resulted in enhancing their technical competencies and cultivated their professionalism. The fifth subtheme emerging from the central theme of ‘Cultivating Talent’ is ‘Staff Success Through Personal Testimony’ for which I discuss below.

**Staff Success Through Personal Testimony**

Data supported the notion of staff success through research participant’s testimonies. Testimonials are one element of effective professional development (Gusky, 2012). Through interviews, self-reflection, and observations, participants agreed, although slightly, that the presence of a staff development center at Westridge University has moved the needle forward on staff success. For example, Kelley shared, “The only way that I feel like the university has really moved the needle with staff success since the implementation of that strategic plan is with the staff development center.” Participants provided various perspectives on what they felt staff success meant. For some, it was the best employee they could be. For others, it was an advancement, advancing their professionalism, either by securing a new position, receiving a promotion, or an increase in pay. For this study, staff success is meeting the personal and professional development goals employees set for themselves. For the 24 participants, about half align with this definition of staff success. These 12 non-teaching personnel felt a sense of accomplishment in cultivating professionalism by securing jobs they aspired to have; acquired new skills and knowledge because of learning opportunities and engagement in their work and their
workplace. The remaining 12 participants are missing at least one of those components and are close to achieving their definition of success.

Sharing one’s experience with others is personal testimony. Although personal testimony is often associated with religious conversions and the legal system (Sremac, 2016), that is not the context of interference. Personal testimony is a powerful way to help non-teaching personnel see some of the outcomes from staff who have utilized the staff development center. In promoting the SDC, participants were open to sharing their successes and missteps. Some of these successes included enhanced skillsets, higher self-confidence, being more self-aware, and securing job promotions. A couple of regrets included waiting too long to utilize the center and missed opportunities to participate in programs. In promoting staff success, participants shared the importance of success stories from individuals who used the center. Reese disclosed:

So I was doing that [career tracks] program while I was applying to become a [position title], and I think that being in the [career tracks] program was crucial into me getting the [position title]. I guess we won’t know for sure, but I think that doing that [career tracks] program kind of gave me those keywords and that confidence that I needed to go in there [job interview] and drop those words that kind of made the interviewer say like, ‘Oh, this person kind of knows what they’re talking about.’

Helping Reese understand how to translate her experience to the skills search committees and hiring managers are looking for was key to achieving staff
success. By doing so, Reese was able to describe how her transferable skills would reduce her learning curve and be a more productive employee. Additional non-teaching personnel attributes their career progression to utilizing the staff development center at Westridge University.

Sienna defined her staff success differently from Reese. For Sienna, career progression was not her goal. With 10+ years of service with WU, Sienna “was not looking to promote.” Instead, she utilized the center for self-improvement as she continued to say, “…improve myself, to be a better employee, so that’s why I went to it.” Sienna also expressed her intellectual curiosity when she shared, “I mean to take advantage of whatever’s out there, so I’m learning, I’m growing, I’m getting information.” Sienna’s commitment to learning is a dimension of professionalism.

Genevieve gratefully remarked, “I think I wouldn’t have been in a position where I am right now without using those [SDC] resources.” With Genevieve, she found value in the interview preparation she received from the staff development center. With her participation in the career track program, she was able to demonstrate to the search committee and hiring manager her commitment to enhancing her skills to stay current within her desired field. Stories such as this help to promote staff success at WU. Isabelle reinforced the influence of personal testimony. She commented:

...I’ve learned that it’s really something that has to come from a person themselves that desire to really seek the resources for professional
development. I don’t know, just kind of word-of-mouth, just the encouragement from other colleagues. I think personal testimony really plays a big role in getting other people to engage in activities. For some of us that have completed programs and have been able to utilize what we’ve learned, to really champion to our colleagues that this is available to us at no cost.

Isabelle’s comments align with employee engagement, where an employee needs to attend and participate in learning opportunities. Sometimes, employees resist attending training and need a bit of nudging from their peers, especially since the majority of programs offered through staff development are free.

Giada recalled her milestone of success, “And halfway through the program, I did become the [name of new position].” Willa shared, “the mock interview was very intentional for an interview that I did have coming up, and I did end up getting another position on campus.” Kelley, who sought refuge in the SDC, shared that after multiple job searches and interviews, she stayed resilient and finally secured the position she desired. Kelley’s testimony is an example of a compelling story for other non-teaching personnel who have not yet realized staff success. Opal provided a summation for personal testimonies:

From my peers, from my colleagues, a lot of them that have visited the staff development center have had positive experiences, positive outcomes, where they’re hired in other jobs, and they move on in their careers. And seeing that feedback, seeing that really encouraged me to
just go in myself.

The personal testimonies from her peers influenced Opal to visit and utilize the staff development center. Similar to her peers, Opal had a positive experience with the center through the career track program and career-related services. Her outreach to the staff development center helped her realize success by being invited to more job interviews and was a top finalist. Although Opal did not secure the job offer at the time of this study, her commitment to professional development and passion for professionalism will help her realize more successes 'anytime now.' Based on her observations, the power and influence of personal testimonies encouraged Opal to seek the services of the staff development center. All of these personal testimonies resulted in shaping the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel at Westridge University. The second theme that emerged from the data is 'Fostering Insights and Introspection, for which I discuss below.

Fostering Insights and Introspection

Insight is an intuitive understanding of one’s self (Eurich, 2018). Individuals high in insight feel more control over their lives, experience tremendous personal growth, are more self-aware, and seem more content (Coats, 2018; Eurich, 2018). Insight is the umbrella for emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, and communication (Coats, 2018). Narrowly defined, introspection is a process in how we learn about our mental state, both past and present
(Schwitzgebel, 2019). Through the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel with the staff development center, participants exhibited significant evidence of insight and introspection, interrelated with intellectual curiosity and self-reflection. For example, Betty participated in a career track program. She shared her recollection:

> At the beginning, you saw videos, you read, and then tests. It's like a quiz, and then you have to answer some questions, and... It kind of prepares you. I mean, I learned a lot from those videos, and I think it helps even in my daily life with my job, my current job; it helped me, that unconscious bias. I hadn't realized what that [unconscious bias] was. Wow, how we could be biased towards something and not even realize it!

Through her participation in the career track program, Betty learned new terminology, which resulted in her increased self-awareness as well as that of her participant colleagues. Their professional development experience with the staff development center helped increase their knowledge about bias, specifically in what it is and how it can influence their attitudes and actions at WU. Karyn participated in a career track program and career-related services through the staff development center. She remarked:

> For me, where that [career track program] didn't help me professionally [secure another position], the online courses were extremely helpful in doing self-analysis and self-reflection. I could use those skills, that information, that I gleaned from those in all aspects of my life, not just
professional, but personal interactions as well.

Karyn looked back to her experience with the center as a good investment of her time. She valued the self-reflection exercises in the career track program because it allowed her to assess her skills and the direction she would like to go. Karyn was not disappointed or deflated; she, as did other participants gained more self-awareness as a result of their experiences with the SDC. Two interrelated subthemes of ‘Fostering Insights and Introspection’ were 1) Intellectual Curiosity, and 2) Self-Reflection. Below, Intellectual Curiosity is discussed.

**Intellectual Curiosity**

As mentioned earlier, professionalism is a commitment to learning, and professional development is a self-directed process that leads to the development of learning capabilities. Professionalism and professional development complement a “hungry mind” (Von Stumm, Hell, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2011, p. 574). Narrowly defined, a hungry mind is an individual’s innate desire in pursuit of enjoyment and engagement in learning opportunities. For Isabelle, Jeremiah, Kelley, and Violet, professional development through the staff development center was a way to feed their hungry minds.

Learning opportunities offered through the SDC include professional development, personal growth, and employee engagement. Isabelle’s intellectual curiosity lit up as she explained, “So given the opportunity to develop new skills or seek training in areas that may have been of interest, but
not your typical day-to-day or what your job entitles, but you’ve always shown interest in it…” In addition to participating in a career track program, Isabelle was taking advantage of other professional development opportunities outside of the SDC. She saw the career track program as an opportunity to engage in training unrelated to her current line of work to determine if she wanted a career change. Unlike career clarity, Isabelle seized this opportunity to engage with other non-teaching personnel (outside of her current department), people doing the work in an area she finds interesting. Isabelle also enjoyed the online courses, where subject matter experts outside of WU shared their knowledge. Isabelle commented:

I take advantage of the [learning management system]... I think a lot of what's offered through [learning management system] are great foundational skills for a lot of different areas. I find it interesting to learn from other people besides just getting the professional development or advice from people here on campus, but to take training through [learning management system] for people who are really involved in that area, in that field. It's really interesting to see other perspectives.

Isabelle’s intellectual curiosity was peaked through the online learning modality because it allowed her to hear from subject matter experts in other fields. Isabelle fed her hungry mind through different professional development opportunities. For Jeremiah, his intellectual curiosity propelled him to take courses that did not initially interest him. Although this may seem counterintuitive and
counterproductive, his approach to professional development cultivates professionalism. Jeremiah stated, “I think right now, maybe just participating in workshops that I’m not initially interested in so that I can learn something new.” Jeremiah’s hungry mind, in a way, is pursuing learning for its enjoyment. Because of the increase in learning opportunities available to non-teaching personnel through the staff development center, both Isabelle and Jeremiah engaged in learning to fulfill their intellectual curiosity.

Kelley remarked, “I have utilized the staff development center for my professional growth. I have used it for workshops and seminars to help me be the continuous learner that I tell myself I am.” With Kelley, the staff development center signified a venue for her intellectual curiosity, a destination for professional development. Similar to Isabelle, Kris was pursuing other professional development opportunities outside of the SDC. However, for Kris, meeting her hunger for knowledge through the staff development center was almost accidental. Kris explained:

I stumbled across the [career] pathway. And so, I was receiving the emails, which was awesome because I’m always looking for ways to enhance my skills. So, once I saw that email, I saw that it was a nine-month program and of course, I’m like, okay, this time commitment might be a little bit much, but for it to impact my future once I’m done with graduate school and then deciding what my next steps are, then, it was a great opportunity.
The time commitment for Kris was difficult; a full-time job, graduate school, and a new program was a lot to handle. However, Kris’ innate intellectual curiosity met with success! Kris proudly shared graduating with her advanced degree and completed the career track program. As for the emails, Kris and other participants disclosed the staff development center sends out weekly communications. The email messages included announcements, upcoming events, conferences, workshops, and resources related to non-teaching personnel. Through my document analysis, the SDC sent out communications at least once a week and a newsletter once every three months. Participants also shared that the SDC website is an excellent resource to visit to satisfy their intellectual curiosity. In my review and analysis, the SDC website included a wealth of information, including links to articles, templates, interview questions, and videos. Kris is a lifelong learner, one of the interrelated dimensions of professionalism. Although unplanned, Kris is now adept at navigating the programs and services offered through the staff development center. She valued the opportunity to engage with other WU professionals. She’s thrilled to take advantage of professional development through the SDC because of the convenience of staying on campus and not having to pay a fee for services.

Violet had used the SDC so much that she had lost track. Armed with a jovial look, she commented, “Well, I’ve been actually, I’ve been there [SDC] more than I think I have!” Violet took advantage of many professional development offerings through the staff development center. For non-teaching personnel like
Isabelle, Jeremiah, Kelley, Kris, and Violet, the SDC represents a place to fulfill one’s intellectual curiosity. Since Kris was continually looking for ways to enhance her skills, to her, the “[SDC learning] opportunities seem to be limitless... and not having to outsource and spend money to go somewhere else... has been amazing.” The SDC was a satisfying destination for Isabelle, Jeremiah, Kelley, Kris, and Violet. Kris was interested in taking advantage of programs available to staff at little to no cost. She found the free training programs of similar or better quality to those that charged a fee. And specifically, for Isabelle and Kris, professional development through the SDC complemented their pursuit of advanced degrees. The second and final subtheme interrelated with ‘Fostering Insights and Introspection’ is ‘Self-Reflection’ for which I discuss below.

**Self-Reflection**

Collectively, participants who joined a career track were required to take online courses, then write self-reflections and submit to a designated individual assigned by the staff development center. Self-reflection is a practical approach to professional development (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Within these self-reflections, participants became more self-aware, increased their level of self-confidence, leading to finding their voice. For many of the participants, their professional development paths were self-directed. They exhibited levels of engagement, physically, cognitively, and emotionally. Participants shared a keen sense of perception, how they saw themselves as well as how others viewed
them. For example, Chase shared:

I not only completed the program and got a certificate, but I think I found my voice. I found who I am. I discovered that I have a whole layer of person, but I just hadn’t really been comfortable up until then to really look into and let go. And so now I’m, I got that next job once that was over. I went into an interview with confidence that I didn’t even know I had. I’m good at interviews, but I went into it knowing what I had to offer, and I discovered all of the things that I have to give. And I really do think that that was the difference in getting the interview versus getting the job for me. And so, I am a completely different person before the staff development center and after.

As evidenced by Chase’s testimonial, her self-reflection assignment opened up thoughts about perceptions and her mental state. As part of the career track capstone, Chase created a portfolio. As I reviewed the contents of the portfolio, I found program requirements, certificates of completion, samples of work, and self-reflection. The self-reflections also included written comments from SDC staff/committee members. I saw so much of Chase’s voice come through her self-reflections. She approached the self-reflection similar to a blog where she highlighted training content that resonated with her, especially as she applied it to her work environment. Chase had an ease to her approach that made it easy for me to read and understand. I learned more about where she saw herself, her self-doubt about her career direction, as well as how she was getting stronger
with her self-confidence. The self-reflections allowed Chase to speak her mind in a safe setting with the SDC providing further guidance. Through introspection, Chase was able to apply her self-awareness to the workplace and improved her status, salary, and work conditions. Emma shared that she had initial hesitations about utilizing the staff development center. However, after reaching out to the SDC and learning more about the program, she decided to participate. In addition to the career tracks, Emma utilized the center for career-related services. She shared:

Although you’re learning things about your job or maybe other career skills, it really, I think, is a time for you to reflect on your own personal skills and how those intertwine with your professional skills. So it’s a way of developing, I feel, both.

Emma learned that for a more up-to-date resume, her resume needed to be written from a recruiter’s perspective, seeing an instant alignment of skills with what the employer is looking for instead of just listing one’s employment history. Updating a resume is more than only formatting; it takes a strong understanding of who one is, what skills are transferable, and leaves an impression with a recruiter or hiring manager an individual’s longevity with the organization. The SDC, through the career tracks, encouraged and promoted self-reflection in the spirit of becoming more self-aware. At the end of the pathway, Emma learned so much more about herself, including pushing herself beyond her comfort zone to accomplish both personal and professional goals. Similar to Emma, Lesleigh
shared utilizing the staff development center was a “great asset, not only career wise but also personally.” Lesleigh explained:

I wasn’t sure what area of expertise I guess my abilities or skills could possibly be measured, but it kind of allowed me to have a little bit more of a confidence in myself to be exposed not only with the knowledge that we have here on campus but also just learning other people’s perspectives, which is a big, big key for me.

Lesleigh participated in a career track, where she was required to complete online courses with varying topics and write a synopsis of the course and how the course content could apply to her professional and personal life. Lesleigh elaborated:

Well, for me, I had to be open-minded and also being able to see what strengths I can improve or what areas I can develop. Maybe I wasn’t knowledgeable. Maybe I wasn’t getting the promotions because it was depending on my interview because I thought maybe I’m doing good.

Lesleigh’s self-reflection provided an inventory of where she was strong and areas she needed to enhance. The self-reflections provided self-accountability to why she was not getting promotions instead of pointing the finger elsewhere (e.g., university, hiring manager, Human Resources). What Lesleigh stated above coincided with the essence of her written self-reflection.

For my document analysis and with permission from Daphne, I reviewed her portfolio thoroughly and read her self-reflections. Daphne’s self-reflections
followed a structure of a) summary of course content, b) key takeaways, and c) application to professional and personal life. Daphne reflected on five topics that resonated with her, 1) goal setting, 2) personal resilience, 3) time management, 4) trust, and 5) listening skills. Through her self-reflections, Daphne realized the importance of writing down goals as a way to “committing [herself] to the process of achieving them.” Daphne also committed to paying more attention to her “own needs and feelings” and “learn from her mistakes and failures.” She resigned to fight the temptation to “overreact” to “stressful situations” and, instead, take the time to think through them. Daphne realized she needed to be more patient with herself. Through these self-reflections, Daphne realized she never stopped to assess herself and take a personal inventory of her thoughts and feelings. Now that she is more self-aware, Daphne and participants as a whole renewed their commitment to professional and personal development and cultivated their professionalism in partnership with SDC. The third theme that emerged from the data is ‘Dismantling Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation’ for which I discuss below.

Dismantling Perceptions of Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation

Invisibility takes on many forms, from being ignored, overlooked, undervalued, to experiencing bias because of one’s occupation (Gilsdorf, 2018). As a stakeholder group, non-teaching personnel felt invisible at the University. They felt this way because much of the attention and many of the investments
WU made were on student success and faculty development. Isabelle shared:

In a higher [education] institution, obviously, student success needs to be the top priority. Without students, we technically wouldn't have jobs to come to. I think the staff development center really champions for staff success and providing opportunities for staff members to succeed, whether it's within their current position or giving them the opportunities to take training courses on areas that they're interested in but maybe didn't have the resources or knowledge to know how to seek out that training. I think the staff development center is a great point of contact for people to really get that in-depth information.

Although participants recognized student success was a core objective for WU, they could not help but feel unappreciated for the work they do to support students and faculty. Non-teaching personnel welcomed the center with both excitement and ambiguity. There was excitement in the visible investment of the center, and enthusiasm about being involved in the recruitment process of who would oversee the staff development center. Lesleigh’s comment is an excellent example of the initial buzz surrounding the SDC. Lesleigh shared:

So when we were recruiting and everything, we were all hoping that the [SDC] team that was there, would be hands-on, positive, making sure that they provide those resources. And so far, I mean, they cannot go wrong. I mean, to me, I'm like, 'Oh man, I want to be a part of that team!'

Lesley’s optimism for the center also saw her aspiring to work in the SDC in the
future. Non-teaching personnel also felt ambiguity based on resources and sustainability. After a few years of the center's existence, seeing the impact the center has made, non-teaching staff are beginning to see the SDC dismantling invisibility and lack of appreciation.

Document analysis revealed the SDC spotlights staff on their website as well as publicly congratulates their professional development achievements by way of recognition luncheons and having certificates of completion signed by the WU President. In addressing the notion of being invisible, Rhonda did not feel invisible after reaching out to the SDC for assistance. She recalled, “I know for a fact that when you leave that [SDC] office, you will leave feeling pumped and positive; helped - that's important! For somebody to feel helped and seen and heard.” The SDC has helped to dismantle invisibility and lack of appreciation by being intentional on promoting the contributions of staff to WU. Three subthemes emerged under the theme, Dismantling Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation. The three interrelated subthemes are 1) Campus Real Estate, 2) Staff Advocates and Champions, and 3) Institutional Archetype. The SDC is breaking down silos by providing a physical destination for staff, advocating for/championing staff, and modeling the attributes of a well–run department operation. I continue with the discussion and elaborate on the findings of these subthemes below, beginning with Campus Real Estate.

**Campus Real Estate**

The staff development center is a newly renovated space, centrally located
on the campus of WU. Signage makes it easy to find in one of the iconic buildings at WU. Participants were drawn to the physical space of the center during the center’s grand opening a few years ago. Upon visiting the center for programs and services, participants shared how friendly the SDC staff were, and because of that, they felt welcomed. Emma referred to the SDC as “a gathering place.” The SDC’s physical space also represented a “safe space” to participants. Many of the research participants agreed the investment WU made in a physical space reduced the feelings of “lip service” and made non-teaching personnel feel valued and set up for success. The physical space allowed for professional development to occur more readily and increase the level of engagement among non-teaching staff. Kelley remarked,

I’m not really sure how it came about, but I’m pretty sure that we all felt like it was something that was needed. There was nowhere on campus before the staff development center that staff could go to have our space, to really go somewhere as a resource.

At WU, there are several departments and services available to staff (e.g., Personnel, Employee Assistance Program). However, when participants found themselves in a predicament, they were often hesitant in reaching out to those departments because of the perceived level of risk, including being labeled as a troublemaker, problem employee, and complainer. The staff development center served as an option with minimal risk because they are not directly involved in an employee’s performance evaluation and employee discipline. Opal and her
participant colleagues found the team members in the staff development center to be accommodating. Participants shared Opal’s sentiments as she described the SDC team, “very approachable, friendly, safe, confidential, reinforcing, and validating, a great learning space and friendship I would say.” Wayne also had a positive experience. He tried to think back to his experience and shared:

It was great. I've been there, I think twice because the training was held elsewhere, but my initial consultation about the training session was held there, and then I had one other follow-up that I went there for. So I've been there twice so far, and the experience has been very positive.

The training Wayne referred to was the career tracks, and although the details of his visits to the SDC were a bit fuzzy for him, his recollection about the experience was positive. Opal continued to share and likened her one-on-one appointment in the physical space of the center to therapy. She shared:

It's like professional therapy, almost where I can just, okay, this is my situation. I have this and this and this going on. I have this degree, but I can't do nothing with it or whatever it is. I think that's why people feel safe because you can go in, and it's really like a therapy session. Okay, we'll work on this. There's different theories that are introduced in my meetings with staff from the staff development center. It's really like you take it home, and you work on it, and it's something that is reoccurring. It's not just a visit, and then you go home, and okay, I'm going to drink my coffee now. It's like you really go back to reflect, you work on the suggestions
they gave you, and if you still need something that you want to work on, then you go back.

For Opal, having a physical space to go to and have meaningful confidential conversations was vital in her feeling safe visiting the center. She further described the SDC as a “non-judgmental zone...this is a no-judgment zone. It’s that safe space...” In providing a safe zone, Opal gained sound advice, learned about theories that would help her strategize to better her status, salary, and work conditions. Opal’s experience was not uncommon among those who visited the center. Lesleigh’s enthusiasm for the physical space and the team that would run the center was contagious. The physical space represented a tangible reminder that staff mattered, that staff training and professional development mattered to the university. Lesleigh continued:

Every time I hear some type of training or any ideas that they develop online, it’s so exciting to me because they’re always trying to find different ways to not only connect the staff... they’re always engaging to know feedback of how they’re doing, what can be improved, what do you want to see next year or just any particular topic, whether it is professional or personal, they just are the type of people who are like not a recruiter, but I would just say, just enthusiastic of trying to understand what the employees are wanting or what they want to accomplish. Lesleigh’s enthusiasm for the SDC was so infectious that she often influenced her team’s high energy and optimism for the programs and services provided to
non-teaching personnel.

For Harrison, the physical space is functional, but he wished for the SDC to have its own building with four floors to show staff “...we care THIS much for staff development.” Although Emma didn’t describe the SDC having its own building, she agreed the physical space for the center should be more prominent. She expressed that an investment in the center is one way the university conveyed sentiments to non-teaching personnel that “they [WU leadership] really truly are looking after me; they’re really, truly trying to take care of me, that’s huge” and supporting the notion of putting your money where your mouth is. In addition to the symbolism attached to the physical space, the center is also practical to use for conducting interviews. A feature of the center is a small conference outfitted with SMART technology to host in-person and remote meetings, including discussions. For several of the participants invited to a Zoom interview, many admitted to just taking the interview on their cell phones and were encouraged to hear that they could reserve the SDC conference room for their job interviews. The SDC provides technical support to help ease any anxiety caused by technology. Isabelle remarked, “...Instead of Googling or tracking it down through the website, it's a one one-place, one-stop-shop for stuff to seek professional development opportunities.”

Collectively, the participants alluded to the physical space of the center as inviting with the SDC staff, helping them feel comfortable in asking questions, and creating an environment free from judgments or discrimination. As
mentioned earlier, several participants called the center a “non-judgmental zone,” “support center,” and a central “hub” for staff employees. As mentioned earlier, participants experienced chain reactions. Additional examples of these chain reactions for participants who have utilized the physical space of the center are 1) return visitors for one-on-one appointments, 2) workshops held at the center, and 3) reserve the conference room for their department meetings. The second subtheme of ‘Dismantling Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation is ‘Staff Advocates and Champions’ for which I discuss below.

**Staff Advocates and Champions**

Having an advocate and champion for non-teaching personnel is critical in higher education (Lutz, 1948). Participants viewed the SDC and SDC staff as their champions and advocates. A champion for staff is one who advocates for staff needs. An advocate/champion is an individual that has earned the trust of others. Opal shared her observation and experience:

> So I think the staff development center could be a very useful department in employee engagement because of that reason, because of its strong relationships with the employees already. I feel employees would trust the staff development center in movements such as that.

Opal recognized the reputation of the SDC among non-teaching personnel, including herself, is one built on trust. Through this trust, non-teaching staff would be more apt to allow the SDC to advocate for their professional development needs. These professional development needs ranged in topics but often related
to training, policies, procedures, or just having someone available to speak to. At WU, several centers exist in support of a particular stakeholder group. The staff development center has become that place for staff. For Isabelle, she saw the SDC as a “good advocate for the staff and our needs.” Recognized as a staff champion, the staff development center advocates for staff needs as it relates to professional development. Isabelle recalled:

Prior to the staff development center, I don’t feel like there was anything to champion professional development for staff members. I think it was, oh yeah, there’s a link on the human resources page. There was really no center, central place... With the opening of the staff development center, I really think that from a personal standpoint, there's more opportunity.

Although there are several services offered by other departments to support staff, Isabelle and other participants felt none of those departments explicitly advocated for professional development until the staff development center. From Isabelle’s perspective, which was shared by her participant colleagues, the SDC served in that capacity to facilitate talent development and cultivate professionalism. As previously discussed, SDC staff acted in ways participants described as mentors, guides, and therapists. These are all support roles in helping others. In other words, participants likened the SDC as a champion for their cause and advocating for their needs at WU. Kelley’s story is a good example. She shared at length:

...if it weren’t for the staff development center, I probably wouldn’t still be
here on campus, I probably would've sought out other opportunities. I feel when I went into the staff development center, I was at my breaking point. I was seeing all these job postings that again, I wanted to apply for, I just didn't know-how. And I actually-- to be honest with you, I reached out to [another department] first to try to set an appointment. No one would see me, or they said that they didn't have appointments until like a month out, which I found was completely ridiculous! But I understood at the same time because I know their staffing situation. And so, that's when I just had my Aha! moment and I'm like, ‘Okay, I need to utilize the staff development center. Maybe they can assist me.’ And when I went in there [SDC], I was quite defeated and once I got that assistance with my resume and I had it revamped, I came out of there [SDC] so empowered, I came out of there feeling like, ‘Okay, I really feel these opportunities that HR are posting on campus, I have a shot.’ Because at first, I didn't feel like that. I didn't feel like I had an opportunity. So yeah, the staff development center really helped me with that.

Kelley was doing all the right things in seeking assistance from established departments at WU to support her. However, when the aid did not come through, she felt discouraged and defeated. Before giving up, Kelley reached out to the staff development center for one final attempt at getting help. Kelly did not have to wait too long to meet with SDC staff; she had a meeting within just a few days of her appointment request. Fortunately, Kelley’s final attempt led to exactly what
she needed, authentic and genuine advice. In cultivating professionalism, Kelley needed a champion and found it in the staff development center. Through the one-on-one appointment, Kelley received the guidance she needed from the SDC. Kelley is not alone. Other participants experienced similar advocacy.

Harrison interpreted championing for staff a little differently. He said that even before he decided to go back to school, he got that idea from a member of the SDC staff. Harrison recalled, “I had a manager [give] me the same idea. But when you have reinforcement, say someone like [member of SDC], I followed up on it.” Harrison needed confirmation that going back to school was a step in the right direction. Although his manager had initially suggested it, he did not pursue it until he received that same guidance from the SDC. Harrison’s quest for professionalism was reinforced by the SDC, a trusted champion for his professional development needs.

Institutional Archetype

To non-teaching personnel who have utilized the staff development center at WU, the SDC exemplifies a model department, an institutional archetype. From the staffing to the programming, to the services they provide, research participants agreed the SDC is a department that applies what they profess in its daily operations. Kelley not only saw the SDC as a unique destination for staff but also looked at the center as a model department to emulate. Kelley shared what she felt the SDC did well:

What I feel the staff development center does exceptionally well is they
are an awesome model for great customer service. So, great customer service every time you go in there, whatever you need, if they don't have it in there, they find out where it is, they assist you. Again, just the greetings when you walk in, everybody is just so friendly, just a knowledgeable staff and just a great model as to how you should greet people when you’re in your own office or your cubicle, whatever, they really set the bar high for that. So it really makes you step up your game because you see this wonderful office staff, and you’re like, "Okay, now sometimes when people come through my door, how am I really greeting him? How am I approaching them? How am I helping them?" And so again, just setting that example to be a great model as to what we should be doing in our own offices.

Kelley pointed out what excellent service looked like, how to make people feel welcomed, and how to greet visitors to one’s area or department. Kelley was not only a recipient of services but also someone who was inspired by the level of services she received. Like Kelley, Willa found the SDC staff focused on providing service excellence. Willa recalled her initial visit to the center, “It was great. Very friendly, very customer service oriented, and honestly, it was really helpful.” For both Kelley and Willa, the SDC team were their champions.

Consistency is also demonstrative of a ‘model' department. Reese explained, “Every time that I reached out to the staff development center, they have always been very quick and courteous with responses answering all my
questions, making sure that I feel comfortable.” Reese shared the importance of receiving an answer to her questions in a timely fashion. Follow-through is another trait of a ‘model’ department. For Mariah, she appreciated the follow-up and reminders:

The [SDC] staff...is amazing. Even if you forget to do something, you'll get a little reminder email, "Hey, you forgot to this." "Oh, no." Always positive, they're [SDC staff] always very helpful, and they're always happy. You have some departments who you go to [and] you're like, "Oh yeah, okay." But they're [SDC staff] always just really happy and very willing, very positive!

Mariah expressed that there are positive ways to follow-up with her, and even though she may have overlooked something, a reminder that is genuinely supportive and communicated in a friendly way (manner and tone) was vital to her.

For Rhonda, the SDC staff represented a model team. She recollected, “Everybody's pleasant. Everybody's very helpful and accommodating. I didn't have a negative experience dealing with the department at all. Very helpful.” Rhonda interacted with all of the SDC staff and felt all team members were wonderful to work with. Violet also felt comfortable with the SDC staff, and because of the SDC staff’s “professional” demeanor, she had “a great experience” on her end.

In these examples, the SDC represented a model department based on
how they made non-teaching personnel feel. The SDC staff’s responsiveness and demeanor helped to dismantle feelings of invisibility and lack of appreciation. As a department that supports frontline staff and non-teaching personnel who ‘works behind the scenes’, the SDC models the behavior and attitudes to assist employees in their quest for professionalism. The last theme that emerged from the data is ‘Promoting Community’ for which I discuss below.

Promoting Community

Data collected pointed to a sense of community. Although geography was the traditional understanding of how communities formed (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), the sense of community participants felt can be attributed to the presence of the SDC at WU. The SDC at WU was more relational. Influenced by longevity, proximity, and shared goals, the sense of community is not static (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). At WU, there are three main stakeholders, which include students, faculty, and staff. Through its programming, the staff development center promoted a sense of community among staff members and other stakeholder groups. For example, many of the training workshops provided to staff were open to faculty as well. The physical space was available to faculty and students to reserve, upon availability. And despite having a career development center to assist students, the SDC has helped student employees based on staff referrals, as mentioned by the participants.

Findings presented above exposed classifications of engagement rooted in
the chain reaction experienced by participants at Westridge University. Participants described different ways to engage at the University. Individuals involved by attending department-sponsored events, division-sponsored events, university-sponsored events, and events held in the surrounding communities. These events were usually focused on one or more stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, community) or affinity-based (culture, religion, gender, interest) groups. Based on the analysis of the data and representing the voices and experiences of my research participants, I observed a taxonomy of staff engagement. The taxonomy proposes five classifications that may or may not build upon each other to achieve the highest level of engagement. The classifications are 1) Audience Member, 2) Active Participant, 3) Referral, 4) Volunteer, and 5) Altruist. I discuss each classification in detail below.

**Audience Member**

The first classification is the Audience Member. In demonstrating engagement, the Audience Member registers to attend a program or event. During my informal observations of a workshop in the SDC, I saw many employees in attendance. Some registered in advance where their names were pre-listed on a sign-in sheet, while a few were walk-ins. As a member of the Audience, the staff employee may be motivated by meeting a training requirement and the ability to check off a box for compliance. Taylor shared campuswide engagement at WU is often student-centered. For example, athletic events and homecoming. In this case, attendance by an Audience Member at
WU may be coming to an event simply to make an appearance. Behaviors of Audience members may come to a game late, leave an event early, and when in attendance, the attendee may multi-task by responding to emails or text messages. Audience Member(s) demonstrate a superficial sense of engagement. They are physically present but noncommittal.

**Active Participant**

The second classification is the Active Participant. The initial action steps are similar to the Audience Member, where the Active Participant registers to attend an event or program. However, the Active Participant attends professional development opportunities with a different lens. The Active Participant goes beyond just attendance; they are actively participating in the learning opportunity. For example, during learning opportunities, individuals in this layer actively contribute to the discussion and get involved in activities and exercises embedded in the professional development design such as pair ‘n’ share and role-plays. In reviewing their transcripts, Betty, Emma, Isabelle, and Jeremiah align with being an Active Participant. For example, some arrived early, brought materials (if appropriate), asked questions during the program, and engaged in training activities. This classification moves away from noncommittal and towards commitment. However, a poorly planned training event or program may result in the Active Participant straddling their engagement and fall back to being an Audience Member.

**Referral**
The third classification is a Referral. Participants in this classification are moving toward engaging others. Audra, Chase, Daphne, Harrison, Kelley, Kris, Opal, Tayler, Violet, and Wayne referred colleagues to the center because of their positive professional development experiences. A Referral would register for professional development opportunities and recommend sessions to their colleagues. A Referral at WU is the staff who are proactively recommending professional development opportunities to other colleagues. Examples of how research participants were demonstrating this layer were through ‘Staff Success through Personal Testimony,’ a subtheme of ‘Cultivating Talent.’ Participants who referred others to the staff development center did so because of their own experiences. Because of these personal recommendations, the referral felt more genuine and tended to influence others to pursue professional development opportunities at the SDC.

Volunteer

The fourth classification is Volunteer. A volunteer is an employee who willingly gives back to their organization in terms of time. Chase, Kelley, Sienna, and Tayler shared their volunteer involvement at WU, including volunteering in their center for staff development. When volunteering at the SDC, research participants were motivated to help progress the mission and purpose of the center, despite its small staff and limited resources. Participants conveyed gratitude for what the SDC has done for them and aspires to assist in “building success stories” (Chase) for other non-teaching personnel. Examples of
volunteering include helping to redesign programs, agree to be a co-facilitator, serve on a committee, review pilot sessions, or evaluate online courses. Reciprocity through the notion of ‘giving back’ is an essential step in engagement. In this layer, volunteers become an extension of the SDC, invested in its success and continuity. Individuals who volunteer recognize the limitations of a small start-up department and, through their volunteer efforts, help the SDC realize their mission and purpose. WU encouraged volunteerism as part of an employee’s professional development. Chase, Kelley, Sienna, and Tayler gained not only professionalism but also increased their organizational social capital as a result of being a Volunteer.

**Altruist**

The last classification is Altruist. I propose that there is a positive relationship between altruism and staff engagement. The epitome of engagement was when participants approached their work by thinking of others and how their work benefitted other stakeholder groups’ success. At WU, staff recognized that the number one objective is student success. By coming to work with an altruistic mindset, staff looked forward to coming to work, felt accomplished, and optimistic about the impact they were making on other stakeholder groups, including student success, faculty success, and staff success. Violet shared that as she worked with students, she would see a piece of herself in each one of them. As a result of this mindset, she put students first and increased her propensity to be empathetic.
During my observation of an SDC-related committee meeting, these layers of engagement were apparent. Through body language, a committee member who attended the meeting with some semblance of engagement arrived late and unprepared. Another committee member demonstrated a genuine interest by contributing to the brainstorm and asking questions. Another committee member referred vendors and guest speakers they worked with previously with much success. Another committee member volunteered to take the lead with specific action items. Although this was only one formal observation, the notion of engagement classifications was present in that committee meeting. This Higher Education Staff Engagement Taxonomy can be referenced by the SDC when evaluating themselves on how their programs and services can continue to influence employee engagement at WU. Below, I summarize my findings.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I presented the results of this study, discussed themes and related subthemes I constructed from the data. This study aimed to understand the role of a staff development center in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at WU. From the heart of the data, I constructed five themes, 1) Cultivating Talent, 2) Fostering Insights and Introspection, 3) Dismantling Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation, 4) Promoting Community and 5) Strengthening Staff Engagement. I identified 11 related subthemes (Professionalism, Clarity of Professional Identity,
Leadership Capacity and Potential, Technical Proficiency, Staff Success Through Personal Testimony, Intellectual Curiosity, Self-Reflection, Campus Real Estate, Staff Advocates and Champions, Institutional Archetype and Organizational Social Capital. I introduced a taxonomy for staff engagement, which allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the data collected.

The participants in this study held an appreciation for the SDC, a center dedicated to their professional development with a staff that demonstrated genuine intentions toward their individual and collective success. Non-teaching personnel sought out programs and services offered through staff development in the spirit of growth, both professionally and personally. Many were self-directed, which lead to advancing their learning abilities and complemented the definition of professional development applied in this study, as discussed in Chapter Two. Participants in this study possessed an inherent disposition for self-improvement through self-awareness. They recognized the small, incremental steps the SDC has taken in moving the dial forward on staff success. Participants were optimistic about the SDC and hope the center continues to grow to meet their ever-increasing needs. In the following chapter, I present my recommendations and conclusions.
CHAPTER FIVE
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of a staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at Westridge University (WU). I chose an intrinsic case study approach because I was intrinsically interested in the SDC at WU (Stake, 1995, 2000). I was particularly interested in learning about the SDC in light of its existence, considered the first of its kind within its university system. Using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as my conceptual framework, and other existing literature on professional development and employee engagement, I aimed to understand the experiences of non-teaching personnel with WU’s center for staff development and how those experiences shape professional development and influence employee engagement.

The research questions that guided my study were: 1) What are the experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel with the staff development center? 2) How has the staff development center shaped the professional development experiences of Westridge University’s non-teaching personnel, if at all? 3) How has Westridge University’s staff development center influenced employee engagement, if at all? This study contributes to the existing yet limited literature on professional development and employee engagement.
that are vital to the employment experiences of non-teaching staff (Kahn, 1990; Fusch, 2017). The affirming implication of the SDC’s presence in the workplace has been significantly favorable in helping non-teaching personnel with their professional development needs, career aspirations, and staff engagement.

I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 24 participants who met the criteria for my study. All 24 participants were non-teaching personnel whose primary role at the university does not include research and instruction. I met and interviewed all 24 participants face-to-face. Twelve of the participants worked at WU for less than ten years, and the remaining 12 participants worked at WU for more than ten years. Of the 24 participants, 21 identified as female, and three identified as male. Of the 24 participants, 20 completed a career track program, 16 sought out career services, and four completed a leadership development program. In addition to conducting interviews, I examined university documents such as SDC/WU websites, professional development flyers, university strategic plan, SDC/WU mission and vision statements, cohort self-reflections, meeting agendas, newsletters, and observed a committee meeting. The in-person interviews, coupled with my observations and document analysis, provided me with a deeper understanding of the role the SDC played at WU among non-teaching personnel.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the findings, offer recommendations for policy and practice, share recommendations for future research, highlight limitations of the study, and impart synthesizing statements in the conclusion.
Overview of the Findings

In this study, I have shown that the SDC’s existence has shaped professional development among non-teaching personnel, influenced staff engagement by cultivating talent. Also, the SDC fostered insights and introspection, dismantled invisibility and lack of appreciation while promoting community, and enhanced staff engagement at WU.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) guided my inquiry into the staff’s professional development experiences with the SDC (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). AI is an asset-based approach, which examines the best of an organization, not what is wrong with it (Reed, 2007).

Triangulating non-teaching personnel’s experiences, document review, and observations, this study is critically important and supports existing literature on cultivating talent, promoting community, fostering insights, and dismantling perceptions of invisibility and lack of appreciation (Coats, 2018; Eurich, 2018; Fusch, 2017; McMillan, 1996). The positive influence the SDC has had on staff has helped to move the needle forward on staff success. In a way, the SDC has helped staff realize the value of investing in their professional development. The best investment is an investment in yourself is a maxim staff is seeing when participating in learning opportunities provided through the SDC. Non-teaching personnel who participated in this study learned more about themselves through self-reflection. In addition, they fulfilled their intellectual curiosity and felt appreciated as contributing members of the university. Below, I present a
summary of the major findings of my study.

**Finding 1: Cultivating Talent**

The participants in the study revealed that the SDC cultivated talent (Khalid, 2018). Upon the establishment of the SDC, participants experienced a wide variety of programs and services intentioned to increase professional development opportunities. There were 100+ training workshops or approximately 300+ training hours available to staff within the first year of the SDC’s existence. These workshops focused on an array of topics, including employee enrichment, leadership development, and workforce readiness, as well as university-related benefits, policies, procedures, and systems training. Through the SDC’s purpose, the programming was intentional and drew on supporting staff’s desire to be a more competitive applicant when competing for a promotion or job change and increasing their salary. Three of the programs and services participants were motivated to take advantage of were supervisory training, career tracks, and career-related services. Although these programs existed in some form or manner previously, there was no direct pipeline for staff until the opening of the staff development center. Mentoring emerged as an opportunity for staff to gain personal guidance on their personal and career aspirations. Many of the participants alluded to finding a mentor in the staff development center. Mentoring is an important factor in contributing to one’s personal growth (Kram, 1995). Participants who referred to having a mentor in the SDC shared a sense of trust and confidentiality during meetings with their
mentor. Participants believed they were more productive and more accomplished than those who did not have a mentor (Specht, 2013). Some participants felt more effective in doing their work because of the training recommendations offered by their mentor. Participants felt a sense of accomplishment in different ways. Some felt accomplished when they finally got an invitation to interview for the job they really wanted or invited back for second interviews for a highly competitive position. Some participants felt a sense of accomplishment when they finally received a job offer. In the eyes of the participants, the SDC cultivates talent at WU. Related to nurturing talent, programming through the SDC fostered insights and introspection for the participants.

**Finding 2: Fostering Insights and Introspection**

Through the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel with the staff development center, participants exhibited evidence of insight and introspection, interrelated with intellectual curiosity and self-reflection. Participants in the study shared how much the SDC helped increase their self-awareness, including how they perceive themselves and how others see them. While much of this was through self-reflection exercises within one of the ‘signature programs’ offered through the staff development center, such a healthy approach would not have been completed if not for the structure and accountability the SDC put in place. Because the SDC provided feedback on the self-reflections, participants were more apt to take the exercises more seriously. The SDC fostered insights within the participants and helped the participants
gain an intuitive understanding of themselves (Eurich, 2018).

Furthermore, participants were more insightful; they felt more control over their professional lives and seemed more content with their careers (Coats, 2018; Eurich, 2018). This feeling of control aligns with the notions of career clarity and professional identity (Murphy, 2004). Through self-reflection, non-teaching personnel can discover who they are, just as Chase did (“I found who I am”), resulting in being a happier and fulfilled employee. Resulting from the voluntary activities developed with SDC programming, participants were exposed to courses on emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, and communication, which are components of insight (Coats, 2018). Also, exercises and activities allowed participants to get in touch with their inner self, and their mental state, increasing their introspection about their past and their present (Schwitzgebel, 2019). Introspection aligns with the literature on professional development because of its self-directed process and the research on employee engagement because it requires employees to bring their physical, cognitive, and emotional self to work (Fusch, 2017; Kahn, 1990). Through insight and introspection, some of the participants expressed feeling invisible, feeling undervalued, and not feeling appreciated as staff (Magolda & Delman, 2016). Participants began to see the SDC strip away the negativity through professional development opportunities and intentional efforts of engaging staff employees (Alias, Hamdani, & Othman, 2017).
Finding 3: Dismantling Perceptions of Invisibility and Lack of Appreciation

Participants recognized student success was a core objective for WU. Many of them understood the maxim; *it takes a village* to ensure student success. However, they often felt invisible and unappreciated because much of their work is not directly ‘student-facing’ as it is with faculty (Magolda & Delman, 2016). Student-facing is a WU colloquialism used to describe a non-teaching position that works directly with students regularly, such as student advisors and academic advisors. Some participants could not help but feel unappreciated for the work they do to support both students and faculty (Lowe & Gayle, 2010). Thus, non-teaching personnel welcomed the center with both excitement and ambiguity. There was excitement in the visible investment the university made in creating the center. There was also excitement in how the university involved staff in the recruitment process of who would oversee the staff development center.

When staff felt alone and needed an advocate or a champion, participants reached out to the staff development center. The physical space and the location of the center were centrally located on campus and easily accessible by all employees. The SDC staff recognized that not all non-teaching personnel worked typical university hours of Monday through Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm. To bridge the gap of reduced department services before 8:00 am or after 5:00 pm, the SDC offered 1:1 appointments before, during, and after regular business hours, upon request. When facing employment issues, participants would run it
by the SDC just to check on their sanity, and then receive guidance on whether or not their situation warranted additional actions. Participants found it helpful that members of the SDC possessed expertise in how to navigate resources in other areas of the university. Also, SDC staff had a professional network and prepared to activate professional connections as warranted (Blanchard, 2014).

For example, job shadowing opportunities. At WU, there were minimal opportunities for staff to shadow other employees. By expanding its network, the SDC helped to provide job-shadowing opportunities. Because of these creative ways to leverage their social network and broad expertise, the SDC was able to help promote a sense of community at WU.

Finding 4: Promoting Community

Findings highlighted a feeling of community (McMillan, 1996). These feelings varied from pure excitement and a sense of belonging in having a physical destination to go to and the friendly and welcoming atmosphere one received when entering the physical space of the SDC to attend workshops, webinars, and conferences. The presence of the SDC nurtured relationships among other stakeholders on campus, including administration, faculty, and students. The sense of community was critical in gaining support and buy-in for programs, services, attendance, and participation at the staff development center. For example, faculty members volunteered to share their expertise by facilitating workshops, sometimes, just for staff. Faculty would also attend some of the training sessions provided or sponsored by the SDC. A year-end training
report published by the SDC showed that approximately 5.5% of attendees were faculty members. Another example faculty showed in promoting community was serving on SDC-related committees, as noted in photos and credits published on the SDC website. Administrators, too, helped to build a sense of community. Participants shared that if it weren’t for their manager or another administrator’s encouragement, they might have missed out on professional development opportunities with the SDC. Influenced by several factors such as longevity of non-teaching personnel, the proximity of the SDC, and shared goals of the university (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), the sense of community was ever-present at WU. The promotion of the sense of community resulted in various levels of engagement, presented as a taxonomy for enhancing staff engagement.

Finding 5: Strengthening Staff Engagement

Findings showed a varying degree of engagement among non-teaching personnel. Participants described different ways they engaged with the SDC and the campus community. For some, engagement meant attending campus events to being an active participant in a training workshop. For others, it was engaging colleagues to utilize a service by referring them to a specific department or person at WU. For others, engagement meant volunteering, being a part of something that required some time away from their regular work duties. Participants such as Chase, Genevieve, Giada, Harrison, Kelley, Kris, Opal, Reese, Violet, and Willa, attributed some level of their success to the SDC. Their level of engagement focused on how their work can contribute to the success of
others, including other non-teaching personnel, faculty, and students. The Higher Education Staff Engagement Taxonomy consists of five roles, 1) Audience Member, 2) Active Participant, 3) Referral, 4) Volunteer, and 5) Altruist, as shown in Figure 2 below.

The first role is Audience Member. As a member of the Audience, individuals register for a program with the initial intention of attending the program. Tayler shared that attending university-sponsored events like Homecoming is an example of engagement at WU. However, due to a variety of reasons including last minute conflicts, an increasing workload, forgetting all
about it, or simply changed their mind, the Audience member does not attend the program, event, or professional development opportunity. As a member of the Audience, the initial motivation was attendance. However, the commitment to fully participate was challenged by external and/or internal factors. Examples of external factors include university-related barriers such as the lack of office coverage or a change in work deadlines. Internal factors include self-imposed barriers such as running late from a meeting or choosing to stay at work to catch up on emails. An Audience Members may be motived to attend an event just to *make an appearance*, to be visible, and be seen. However, if they do attend, they will most likely be late, leave early, or if staying for the event, their time will be spent multi-tasking by responding to emails and text messages. A few of the research participants admitted to being members of the Audience, especially as it related to required training or mandatory events. Also, participants were part of the Audience with some of the sessions they attended as part of the career track program. These programs were approximately nine months long, and for some non-teaching personnel, their schedules and commitments changed with ever-changing departmental responsibilities. Participants would also miss events due to a lack of office coverage. With little to no consequences for missing the event, their level of engagement is, at best, minimal. If members of the Audience are physically present, likely, their attention is elsewhere, demonstrated by checking email, texting, or leaving the event early.

The second role is the Active Participant. Contrary to the Audience
Member, the Active Participant is just that, actively participating in the program. For example, during learning opportunities, participants actively contributed to the discussion and got involved in activities and exercises. The Active Participant went beyond just being physically present at an event; they planned their attendance to avoid being late and found themselves arriving early. If pre-reading was distributed, Active Participants often read the material to prepare for open discussions. Once the Active Participant arrived at an event, they interacted with others in attendance, event coordinators, and training facilitators. Non-teaching personnel shared how much they enjoyed the career tracks and leadership development because of the balance between lecture, facilitation, and group exercises, which encouraged active participation.

The third role is Referral. In this role, Referrals are moving from their engagement to engaging others. Referrals, through word-of-mouth, are proactively recommending professional development opportunities to others because of their own positive experiences with other people and departments, including the staff development center at WU. Several of the participants, including Audra, Chase, Daphne, Harrison, Kelley, Kris, Opal, Tayler, Violet, and Wayne, all shared that they have referred colleagues to the staff development center because of their favorable experiences with the SDC and the SDC staff. In demonstrating their role as a Referral, they have somewhat become ambassadors of the SDC; they are committed to helping the SDC succeed and engaged in its sustainability.
A volunteer is the fourth role. In this role, Volunteers were motivated to help progress the mission and purpose of the SDC, recognizing its small staff and limited resources. Participants as Volunteers implied that they would not be where they were in their careers without help from the SDC. Therefore, many of them wanted to give back to the center. Examples of volunteering included helping to redesign programs, facilitate/co-facilitate workshops, serve on committees, review pilot sessions, serve on mock interviews, or evaluate online courses for learning bundles. Participants in their role of Volunteer became visible extensions of the SDC, highly engaged, and invested in the SDC’s success and continuity.

The last role in this Taxonomy is Altruist. Altruists approach work by thinking of others and how their work benefits other stakeholder groups’ success. At WU, staff recognized that the number one objective is student success. By coming to work with an altruistic mindset, staff looked forward to coming to work, felt accomplished, and optimistic about the impact they were making on other stakeholder groups, including student success, faculty success, and staff success. In summary, some employees exhibit behaviors that demonstrate their level of engagement in the workplace. In this section, I shared five classifications within a taxonomy of staff engagement. These classifications are Audience Member, Active Participant, Referral, Volunteer, and Altruist. Below, I share recommendations for policy and practice.
Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Given the uniqueness of a center dedicated solely to the professional development of staff, I share several recommendations for policy and practice geared toward higher education administrators. I also provide recommendations specifically to HR/Professional Development Practitioners.

Higher Education Administrators

Participants shared their higher education administrators played an influential role in their livelihoods, including professional development and their engagement as non-teaching personnel. Higher education administrators influence pay, benefits, and working conditions of staff (Rebore, 2015). Administrators need to be seen as partners and supporters of staff employees through the eyes of non-teaching personnel. As such, they were forging a collaborative relationship with the staff development center will reinforce that support and partnership. Below are recommendations for higher education administrators. These recommendations align with the sentiments of my findings.

Leadership Endorsement and Communication. As the newness of the staff development center begins to wear off, leaders need to continue to communicate the programs and services offered through the center. Leaders can also convey the ‘chain reaction’ experienced by staff who have utilized the SDC promotes engagement and retention at WU. Administrators need to stay informed with what is happening in the SDC, encourage staff to attend, and arrange for office coverage, if appropriate. There are several ways to stay informed, one way is to
read emails sent out by the SDC and forwarding the email to staff, adding their endorsement of the event while encouraging staff to attend. Another suggestion to stay informed is by designating a training champion for their department who will be responsible for collecting all professional development opportunities and sharing it with the department during department meetings. A suggestion offered by several participants was to have the SDC present an overview at department or division meetings. The summary would include the SDC’s mission and purpose, programs, and services, as well as a preview of upcoming professional development opportunities.

Administrators need to incorporate the staff development center in their modus operandi, find ways to engage the center for staff-related activities. For example, reserve the SDC for staff meetings and reach out to the SDC for department-specific training. Participants posited that when their manager or the University President mentioned the staff development center, they felt less invisible; when professional development opportunities are encouraged, staff feel comfortable about participating. Absent the message from management, some staff will be reluctant to ask permission to attend events during regular business hours. Leadership endorsement and communication also mean engaging in the programming of the SDC. For example, attending events along with staff goes a long way in showing support for the investment WU made in the center; it conveys a message that administrators also believe in the power of personally investing in one’s self through professional development opportunities.
Therefore, I recommend higher education administrators endorse the staff development center by intentionally communicating its programs and services to its department staff consistently. For universities that do not have a center dedicated to staff development, I recommend adding a center for staff development in your university’s strategic plan, just as WU did.

**Mentor Program.** Echoed by the participants, it was necessary for them to have someplace to go, where they felt welcomed, but also assisted with serious decisions impacting their career at WU. Although the SDC did not offer a formal mentoring program, participants alluded to having a mentor in the SDC. By establishing a formal mentor program, the staff has an opportunity to build relationships with others who will assist them in navigating their careers at WU. The mentoring program can first focus on newly hired staff members, especially those new to higher education, and need guidance in navigating the higher education system for a successful acclimation to WU. Mentoring programs already exist in higher education for faculty and alumni, just to name a few.

Based on the themes constructed from the data, I believe the best mentors for non-teaching personnel are within the existing employee population at WU as alluded to earlier about ‘familiar faces.’ The design of this mentor program would include an application process for staff interested in having a mentor, and for those interested in becoming a staff mentor. The application form for staff seeking a mentor will include contact information, selection for the length of the mentor/mentee relationship (three months, six months, or nine months), and
serve as an intake form, soliciting goals for securing a mentor. The application form for those seeking to be a mentor will be similar; motivation for wanting to be a mentor and a list of their areas(s) of expertise. Provide mentor training and mentor/mentee orientation to cover expectations and guidelines of mentoring, including do’s and don’ts. By having a mentoring program for non-teaching personnel, it may lead to being a part of the overall employee value proposition at WU. Therefore, in the spirit of staff success, I recommend higher education administrators invest in a staff-mentoring program.

**Assessment and Reinvestment.** Participants expressed appreciation to WU leaders for having the vision to build a center just for staff. As the center continues to operate, many of the participants saw the SDC outgrowing its physical space, with the staff not keeping up with the demand for their services. It is necessary to assess the SDC, its programs, services, and staff to understand how to know that what they are doing is working. Furthermore, assessment can help key stakeholders understand how the SDC can enhance what they do to meet the continual staff needs, especially as non-teaching personnel retires. Then, based on the outcomes of the assessment, reinvest in the SDC accordingly.

In describing their ideal SDC, participants complimented the existing SDC staff on what they have already done with a small team in a short period. As the SDC continues to establish itself, Harrison, along with colleague participants, through the AI Dream lens (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2006) described, the ideal
center would have its own space. The SDC space would allow training to occur in the center instead of reserving space in other parts of the campus. In addition, other participants, through the AI Design lens, shared that the ideal center would have more staff, with Francis explicitly stating a team of 4-5 people. The additional personnel would focus on designing more career tracks, along with developing and overseeing a formal mentoring program (as mentioned in Chapter Four).

In addition to assessing the staff development center’s programs and services, I recommend Learning Gain (Andrade, 2018) be applied to measure the participant’s knowledge and understanding of the training content. By having Learning Gain applied to assessments, it will help to glean meaningful data toward improvements in staff’s learning. Therefore, I recommend higher education administrators to assess and reinvest in the staff development center and non-teaching personnel who utilize the center.

**Accreditation.** For accreditation purposes, some universities address how they will “sustain its operations and support the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources...” as part of the Criteria for Review (CFR) for sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 (WASC, 2013). In light of preparing for reaccreditation, WU can include the SDC as one of their strategies in addressing CFR 3.1 - 3.3.

**HR/Professional Development Practitioners**

For the immediate future, I recommend taking incremental steps toward
understanding the professional development needs and level of engagement of staff in their university. These steps include looking around their university to determine who has the expertise in conducting a training needs assessment (TNA). Knowledge may be in the Human Resources department, College of Business, or Institutional Research. Conduct a TNA through an Appreciative Inquiry lens and then hold focus groups of non-teaching personnel to understand the data further and then begin to build department action plans to provide the training identified. If there is no one internal, consider outsourcing this activity to training consultants. There are advantages and disadvantages to outsourcing these training activities. Benefits include the ability to “deliver more training than internal resources can provide and to access expertise” (Anderson, 2008, p.63). Disadvantages of outsourcing TNAs include displacing the importance of training and development from core operations and losing control of their training function (Anderson, 2008). However, one way to combat these disadvantages is to partner with other universities who have this functional expertise. Depending on your university climate and culture, having a third-party consultant may add integrity to the TNA process.

Find ways to weave in professional development in your regular operations so that it does not become the “flavor of the month training” (Furnham, 2005, p. 466). One way to do this is to incorporate professional development goals in the division or department goals for each academic year. A second recommendation is to include professional development goals in employee performance
evaluations. Universities without a staff development center need to assess how they communicate the value and contributions of staff visibly and palpably.

Utilize the Higher Education Staff Engagement Taxonomy (HESET) to gauge staff engagement for programs and events occurring in your institutions. HESET can be a useful tool to survey your employee population and revisit programs with a large community of self-identified Audience Members. Understanding what your employees are recommending to other colleagues may be helpful in redistributing funding of those programs and services.

Recommendations for Future Research

The goal of this study was to explore the professional development experiences of non-teaching personnel with the staff development center and its influence on employee engagement. The findings of this study provided a comprehension of the role the staff development center played in helping staff navigate their professionalism, professional identity, leadership capacity, potential, technical proficiency, and intellectual curiosity at WU.

In examining the data collected, my findings and results revealed limitations that lead to recommendations for future research. One limitation was the participant gender. Although there were 24 participants for this qualitative study, there were only three male participants. Therefore, not highly represented in the study were non-teaching male employees’ voices. It is unclear if the results would have changed with a balance of gender representation. Future research
into this subject is to focus on men’s professional development experiences and level of engagement. At the heart of the findings, additional recommendations emerged for future research. A second recommendation is to conduct a similar study and expand on the demographics collected. For example, race and educational level may help illuminate the experiences of people of color and the accessibility of education.

A second recommendation for future research is to conduct a qualitative study similar to this one, and with participants who have not utilized the staff development center. Participants in this study were staff who used the programs and services of the staff development center. Non-teaching staff was a specific population, who met specific participant criteria, with some of the same career trajectories. What we did not learn from this study is why other non-teaching personnel, who abstained from participating in professional development opportunities at the SDC, did not visit the SDC. Future research could investigate this group of staff members and render a balanced perspective on the utilization and impact of the staff development center.

With the third recommendation, I would like to see this work expanded to a cross-case analysis across different higher education sectors and institutional types. Some findings in this study may be limited in scope compared to other, more established centers focused on the professional development of its employees.

A fourth recommendation is to conduct a study with the staff that works in
the SDC. The members of the staff development center played a critical role in the findings. By interviewing members of the SDC staff, additional insights would glean rich data. Results may suggest a recruiting model or criteria WU can use to recruit staff, especially since participants described the center as a model department based on the professional demeanor, attitudes, behaviors, and responsiveness of SDC staff.

The fifth consideration for future research is to conduct a longitudinal mixed-methods study with the current group of participants. This consideration for future research stemmed from participants’ interest in knowing exactly how many people from each career track cohort ended up securing jobs in those fields. The new study could yield specific insights into how staff advance in their positions and what factors affect their career decisions over time. Qualitative data can help us understand how staff fostered the ‘chain reaction’ they experienced with the SDC in terms of retention and engagement at WU. Based on a span of time, quantitative data can help us understand changes in pay and job classifications. For example, quantitative data could potentially reveal how the utilization of the SDC has changed over time, from one Director of the SDC to the next, or from one university presidential administration to another. Understanding if there are any external pressures on non-teaching personnel’s professional development experiences would help pinpoint sources of motivation towards one’s ability to cultivate talent among university staff.
Limitations of the Study

A limitation of my study is the non-representative sample. The majority of my participants were women and did not entirely represent WU's non-teaching personnel. Of the 24 participants I interviewed, only three participants were male. Also, because I did not consider other demographics, this limited my study in helping to illuminate the experiences of, for example, non-teaching personnel of color or varying levels of education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the findings, recommendations for higher education administrators and HR practitioners, shared recommendations for future research, and highlighted limitations of the study. The participant’s narratives supported the influential impact the staff development center had on cultivating talent, fostering insights and introspection, dismantling perceptions of invisibility and lack of appreciation, promoting community, and enhancing staff engagement. Also, professional development opportunities through the SDC supported their pursuit of professionalism, served as their advocate, and helped them feel “safe” in this hierarchical structure of higher education. In several instances, participants attributed their job promotions to staff development center services. In other cases, participants shared their frustrations in navigating resources to improve their current work environments and appreciated the ability
to reach out to the SDC for help. Collectively, participants conveyed numerous ways in which the SDC was a resource for much need guidance and championed for their professional development needs.

The most important takeaway in this study was understanding that non-teaching personnel have similar desires for advancement and being a part of a community. The participants in this study recognized the core mission of most universities is student success but not at the cost of their invisibility. They sought out services created just for them as they navigated their roles within higher education. Participants in this study were authentically genuine and dedicated to the mission of the University. Their career journeys were similar in some regards, yet different in other ways. What stayed consistent with all participants is their investment in continuous learning through professional development, including employee engagement to enhance their contributions to WU. By taking the time to get to know our staff better, we can understand how to support them better, and in turn, get closer to moving the needle forward on staff success.

My hope for this research is twofold: 1) it contributes to the literature on professional development experiences of staff in higher education, and 2) it serves as a resource for more senior education leaders and HR practitioners interested in establishing centers dedicated to non-teaching personnel. For faculty, this research can serve as a reminder that a part of their success in the classroom is dependent upon non-teaching staff working behind the scenes in support of them. For administrators, this research can serve as a reminder that
we are all employed by the same university, and dedicated resources allocated just for staff is appreciated and goes a long way in building employee engagement, loyalty, and retention. For non-teaching personnel, I hope that this research encourages you to utilize all of the services your university has available to you. For higher education institutions with a staff development center, I recommend visiting it. And maybe, just like Chase, your “existence” will be “changed by this small little center.”
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Interview Protocol

Description: Interviews will be semi-structured and follow the subsequent protocol.

I. Introduction
II. Share purpose of the study
III. Provide consent form to participant and review contents of informed consent form with participant
IV. Provide participant the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns (if any)
V. Upon completion of consent form, begin recording and proceed with interview

Questions: Some of the interview questions were sourced and adapted from Moore (2019) and the Center for Appreciative Inquiry. The following questions will guide the interview between researcher and participant.

1. How would you describe your experience with the Staff Development Center (SDC)?

2. How has the SDC assisted in your professional development?

3. Think of a time when you really connected with your work (physically, cognitively, and emotionally).
   a. How would you describe your emotions during that experience?
   b. How do you believe that you yourself brought about this feeling?
   c. How did others (including the SDC) help enable this?
   d. How did you feel they helped in creating this sense of engagement?

4. What behavioral change(s) have you made as a result of utilizing the SDC and participating in the following:
   a. Career-related services (e.g. individual learning plan, resume review, interview preparation)
   b. ASP Career track (if applicable)
   c. SSP Career track (if applicable)

5. What does the SDC do exceptionally well, in other words, what are the strengths of the SDC? (Appreciative Inquiry, 4D-Discovery)
6. From your perspective, what would an ideal SDC be like? (Appreciative Inquiry, 4D-Dream)

7. What would be your best aspirations for the SDC in future years to come? (Appreciative Inquiry, 4D-Dream)

8. What three wishes would you make to heighten the vitality and mission of the Staff Development Center? (Appreciative Inquiry, 4D-Design, Adapted from the Center for Appreciative Inquiry)

9. How else might you utilize the SDC for other positive outcomes? (Appreciative Inquiry, 4D-Destiny)

10. If you could offer any recommendation(s) to university leaders regarding the SDC and/or professional development for non-teaching personnel, what would it be? Do you have any final comments?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Getting to the heart of professional development and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel in higher education: An appreciative inquiry into the influential role of a staff development center

INFORMED CONSENT

PURPOSE:
Under the supervision of Dr. Edna Martinez, Rowena Casis Woidyla, Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) invites you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of XXXXX’s Staff Development Center in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among higher education non-teaching personnel. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino on January 30, 2020.

Expected results include insight on efforts and outcomes of programs and services offered through a staff development center. In addition, results will highlight implications for institutional policy and planning to help other colleges and universities plan for the establishment of staff development centers.

DESCRIPTION:
I would like to ask you to participate in an interview. The interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a format preferable to you, either in person, by telephone, or remotely, using Zoom. The interview will take place during a time and location that is convenient to you. With your permission, all interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I will rely on a secure transcription service to help transcribe the interviews. If you prefer that I transcribe your interview, I will transcribe your interview. I will also conduct observations at the Staff Development Center (SDC) during training events and committee meetings. These observations will help me understand the services and opportunities the SDC offers, as well as how the SDC engages staff employees. I will also analyze documents and invite you to share, if you are willing, documents that speak to your experience with the SDC, for example, self-reflections, career development plans, and/or portfolios.

PARTICIPATION:
Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to be in this study and you
do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
I will do everything to protect your confidentiality. Specifically, your name will not be used in any dissemination of the study (e.g. articles, presentations). You will be assigned a pseudonym. In addition to using pseudonyms, specific titles and employee profiles will be further disguised. For example, a custodian in the College of Education will be referred to simply as a custodian, and a Dean’s Assistant in the College of Arts & Letters will be referred to simply as an Administrative Support Professional. Also, demographic information such as gender, race, and ethnicity will not be collected or revealed. Lastly, in efforts to protect confidentiality, any data collected will be kept under lock and key and in a password-protected computer file. The audio recordings and transcripts will be destroyed three (3) years after the study has ended.

DURATION:
The extent of your participation would include one interview, with the possibility of one follow-up interview, if needed. The interview(s) would last approximately 45-60 minutes each. Following the interview(s), you could be contacted via e-mail with follow-up or clarifying questions. Such an exchange would require no more than ten (10) minutes time. Following the interview, you will receive a transcript of the interview along with a scanned PDF of the signed consent form. Participants will be given the opportunity to review, confirm, and/or withdraw the transcript from the study.

RISKS:
I do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study as you will not be identifiable by name. Answering questions about your experience(s) with the SDC may make you feel uncomfortable, however, you may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

BENEFITS:
I do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, the general benefits resulting from this study would be a deepened understanding of professional development experiences within a staff development center among non-teaching personnel in higher education.

AUDIO:
With your permission, all interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I will rely on a secure transcription service such as Rev to help transcribe the interviews. If you prefer that I transcribe your interview, I will manually transcribe your interview. I understand that this research will be audio-recorded and transcribed using a secure
transcription service. Initials _____

**CONTACT:**
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Edna Martinez at emartinez@csusb.edu or (909) 537-5676. You may also contact Michael Gillespie, CSUSB’s Institutional Review Board Compliance Officer at (909) 537-7588 or mgillesp@csusb.edu.

**RESULTS:**
The results of this study will be disseminated through various outlets including conference presentations and publication. This study will be available online through ScholarWorks, an open access institutional repository showcasing and preserving the research, scholarship, and publications of CSUSB faculty, staff, and students. An executive summary of findings will also be provided to research participants and their respective institutions.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:**
I have read the information above and agree to participate in your study.

Name __________________________________________________________

Signature ________________________________________________________

Date _____________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT FLYER
ATTENTION STAFF!

HAVE YOU UTILIZED THE STAFF DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SDC) FOR CAREER DISCUSSIONS, RESUME REVIEW, OR INTERVIEW PREP?

If yes, you are invited to participate in a research study regarding your experience with the SDC XXXXX.

For more information, please contact Ro Woidyla at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or email xxxxxxxx@xxxxx.edu.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, San Bernardino.
APPENDIX D

EMAIL INVITATION
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear (Name of Non-Teaching Personnel):

I hope this message finds you doing well. I am a doctoral candidate at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). I am conducting a research study, working title, “Getting to the heart of professional development and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel in higher education: An appreciative inquiry into the influential role of a staff development center”.

Broadly stated, the purpose of this study is to understand the role of a staff development center (SDC) in shaping professional development experiences and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel at XXXXX.

Based on publicly available information found on the SDC website, you have been identified as an individual ("non-teaching personnel") who participated in and completed a career xxxxxxx. Therefore, I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study.

Attached you will find a statement of Informed Consent, which details the parameters of your potential participation. Essentially, I am inviting you to participate in one interview, for approximately 45-60 minutes, with the possibility of one follow-up interview for approximately 10-15 minutes, if needed. Additionally, attached are the proposed interview questions to inform you of the nature of the interview.

Please read the attached Informed Consent statement and let me know if you are willing to participate. If you agree to participate, I will schedule a day/time for your interview, at your convenience. Prior to the interview, I must receive a copy of the Informed Consent statement with your signature and date signed. On that form, you may also indicate if you will allow the interview to be audio-recorded.

Thank you in advance your time and consideration.

Regards,
Rowena

CSUSB Doctoral Candidate
Email: xxxxxxxx@xxxxx.edu
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL LETTERS
January 31, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2020-163
Status: Approved

Ms. Rowena Casis-Woidyla and Prof. Edna Martinez
COE - Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Casis-Woidyla and Prof. Martinez:

Your application to use human subjects, titled “Getting to the heart of professional development and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel in higher education: An appreciative inquiry into the influential role of a staff development center” has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended using the IRB Cayuse system protocol change form.

Your application is approved for one year from January 30, 2020 through January 29, 2021.

Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study end date.

Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following four requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online
Cayuse IRB Submission System.

1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.
2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.
3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.
4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.

Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia

Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

DG/MG
February 26, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Protocol Change/Modification
IRB-FY2020-163
Status: Approved

Mrs. Rowena Casis Woidyla and Prof. Edna Martinez
COE - Doctoral Studies, Human Resources
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mrs. Woidyla and Prof. Martinez:

The protocol change/modification to your application to use human subjects, titled "Getting to the heart of professional development and employee engagement among non-teaching personnel in higher education: An appreciative inquiry into the influential role of a staff development center" has been reviewed and approved by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). A change in your informed consent requires resubmission of your protocol as amended. Please ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following by submitting the appropriate form (modification, unanticipated/adverse event, renewal, study closure) through the online Cayuse IRB Submission System.

1. If you need to make any changes/modifications to your protocol submit a modification form as the IRB must review all changes before implementing in your study to ensure the degree of risk has not changed.
2. If any unanticipated adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research study or project.
3. If your study has not been completed submit a renewal to the IRB.
4. If you are no longer conducting the study or project submit a study closure.

You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.
If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application identification number (above) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

*Donna Garcia*

Donna Garcia, Ph.D, IRB Chair  
CSUSB Institutional Review Board  

DG/MG
REFERENCES


Association for Talent Development (2018). *Our history, seven decades of helping to create a world that works better.* Retrieved from https://www.td.org/about/our-history


Bates, B. (2010). Perceptions of faculty development practices and structures that influence teaching at high performance colleges and universities


Hoyle, E. (1975). An update to that definition describes professionalism as a combination of behaviors and attitudes toward one’s occupation.


Jaitli, R. & Hua, Y. (2013). Measuring sense of belonging among employees working at a corporate campus: Implication for workplace planning and


DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2017.1359180


