

2017

Teaching at Branch Campuses: The Faculty Experience

Whitney Harper

Western Kentucky University, whitney.harper@wku.edu

Larry W. Owens

Western Kentucky University, larry.owens@wku.edu

Simon Funge

Western Kentucky University, simon.funge@wku.edu

Dana J. Sullivan

Western Kentucky University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/socwk_fac_pub



Part of the [Community College Leadership Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), and the [Social Work Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Harper, W., Owens, L.W., Funge, S.P., & Sullivan, D.J. (2017). Teaching at branch campuses: The faculty experience. Access: The Journal of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators, 3(1), Article 1, 1-15.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Work Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

Access: The Journal of the National Association of Branch Campus Administrators

Author Submission Format

Author Name: Whitney Harper. Ph.D.

Institutional Affiliation: Western Kentucky University

Mailing Address: 1906 College Heights BLVD, Bowling Green, KY, 42101

Business Telephone: 270.745.5312

Home/Mobile Telephone: 616.334.6493

Email Address: whitney.harper@wku.edu

Biography (maximum 50 words): Whitney Harper is an Assistant Professor at Western Kentucky University. She received her doctorate in Human Development Family Studies at Michigan State University and her Masters in Social Work at Grand Valley State University. Her major research interests include risk factors in adolescence and positive youth development.

Author Name: Larry W. Owens, Ph.D.

Institutional Affiliation: Western Kentucky University

Mailing Address: 1906 College Heights BLVD, Bowling Green, KY, 42101

Business Telephone: 270.745.5312

Home/Mobile Telephone: 502.445.3484

Email Address: larry.owens@wku.edu

Biography (maximum 50 words): Larry W. Owens is an Associate Professor at Western Kentucky University. He received his doctorate in Leadership Education at Spalding University and his Masters in Social Work at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His research focuses on child welfare, leadership, and international issues.

Author Name: Simon P. Funge, Ph.D.

Institutional Affiliation: Western Kentucky University

Mailing Address: 1906 College Heights BLVD, Bowling Green, KY, 42101

Business Telephone: 270.745.5312

Home/Mobile Telephone: 562.714.2326

Email Address: simon.funge@wku.edu

Biography (maximum 50 words): Simon P. Funge is an Assistant Professor at Western Kentucky University. He received his doctorate in Social Welfare at University of California, Los Angeles. His research focuses on efficacy to teach social justice content in social work education, the institutional factors that support social work education for social justice, and educational outcomes of social work education for social justice.

Author Name: Dana J. Sullivan, Ph.D.

Institutional Affiliation: Western Kentucky University

Mailing Address: 1906 College Heights BLVD, Bowling Green, KY, 42101

Business Telephone: 270.745.5312

Home/Mobile Telephone: 270.585.1432

Email Address: dana.sullivan@wku.edu

Biography (maximum 50 words): Dana J. Sullivan is the BSW Program Director/Associate Professor at Western Kentucky University. She received her doctorate in Social Work at

University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky (joint program). Her research focuses on child welfare, mental health, and substance abuse prevention.

Submission Title: Teaching at Branch Campuses: The Faculty Experience

Has this submission been previously published? NO

If yes, do you have permission to republish?

Year, Volume, Issue (provided by Editor):

Page Numbers (provided by Editor):

Abstract (between 150 and 250 words)

There is limited research on the perceptions of faculty who teach branch campus students. Exploratory in nature, this qualitative study explored the branch campus teaching experiences of a particular subset of educators – those who teach in social work education programs. The paper will discuss social work faculty members' perspectives about the advantages and challenges of teaching branch campus students. Eighty-one social work educators from twenty-six states completed an online survey developed by the researchers. The survey included qualitative questions that explored both resident and non-resident faculty members' perceptions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of teaching branch campus students. The predominant themes that emerged from the data identified that connection to students and faculty recognition have a significant impact on faculty members' perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of teaching branch campus students. Both faculty members who were resident and non-resident expressed satisfaction teaching an underserved student population that is motivated, diverse, and full of life experience

Manuscript (in APA Format, if applicable, maximum 7,500 words)

Teaching at Branch Campuses: The Faculty Experience

Seventy-nine percent of students attend college in their home state, most within a few hours' drive of home (The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2016). Limited by financial constraints, family responsibilities, personal characteristics, lifestyle choices, or a combination of these factors, many of these students are fundamentally place-bound. They often seek education within a 30-minute commuting range leading to the increased demand for branch campuses (Fonseca & Bird, 2007). Growing out of the need to increase accessibility to students

where higher education may have been previously unreachable, branch campuses have proliferated (Hoyt & Howell, 2012).

Even with the growth of online education, students often desire access to a physical campus where they are able to physically interact with classmates and faculty (Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Merzer, 2008). Providing greater access to higher education for students who are frequently first-generation and living in rural areas (Ellis, Sawyer, Gill, Medlin, & Wilson, 2005; Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Oliaro & Trotter, 2010; Wolfe & Strange, 2003), branch campuses provide a learning environment with many unique advantages (Austin, Sorcinelli, & McDaniels, 2007). Branch campus classes are typically smaller and offer more flexible class schedules, and may be more conveniently located for students who are unable to commute or live nearer to the parent campus (Bird, 2007; Ellis, Sawyer, Gill, Medlin, & Wilson, 2005; Oliaro & Trotter, 2010; Wolfe & Strange, 2003). Furthermore, in addition to the reputation of the parent campus, students may choose a branch campus given their preference for more personalized relationships with faculty, staff, and classmates who may also share similar life experiences (Bird, 2007; Ellis, Sawyer, Gill, Medlin, & Wilson, 2005, Hoyt & Howell, 2012; Mindrup, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991 [as cited in Merzer, 2008]).

Despite the significant contributions branch campuses make to the education of otherwise underserved students, relatively little empirical research has examined the experiences and perspectives of branch campus faculty. It is all the more important, therefore, that campuses at the frontier of a university's educational reach be seriously examined. Exploratory in nature, this qualitative study explored the branch campus teaching experiences of a particular subset of educators – those who teach in social work education programs.

Review of the Literature

Also referred to as regional, satellite, and extension campuses, branch campuses are educational facilities located at a distance from an institution's main or parent campus that typically offer degree programs also available at the parent campus (Merzer, 2008; National Association of Branch Campus Administrators [NABCA], n.d.; The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2006). In addition to classes, these campuses may provide student services, and may be co-located with other institutions (e.g., a community college) or may be standalone facilities (Bird, 2007; Pebko & Huffman, 2011). A variety of means of delivering educational content are used at branch campus locations including Interactive Video Services (IVS), face-to-face classes, and online education. In some cases, faculty may commute to the branch campus to teach face-to-face or teach remotely (e.g., via interactive television or online) from the parent campus, while others may be resident faculty at the branch campus and primarily teach face-to-face (Bird, 2007). Social work education is utilizing all of these methods (Ayala, 2009; Pardasani, Goldkind, Heyman, Cross-Denny, 2012).

Branch campuses serve a higher percentage of nontraditional students who are place-bound, commute, may be older, and strive to balance multiple responsibilities including work and care for families and may require closer academic advising (Bozick & DeLuca, 2005; Choy, 2002; Compton, Cox, & Lanaan, 2006; Fonseca & Bird, 2007; Knefelkamp & Stewart, 1983; Mindrup, 2012). As such, branch campus personnel must be sensitive to – and accommodating of – the unique characteristics of these students (Mindrup, 2012).

While the empirical literature is limited, faculty who teach at branch campuses have reported both opportunities and challenges teaching on these campuses. Branch campus have experiences and opportunities often not enjoyed by their colleagues based at their institution's main campus including: greater work autonomy; higher levels of collegiality across disciplines;

the chance to work more closely with students including those who are nontraditional; having a greater role in campus life; and a greater level of engagement in the community (Bird, 2007; Poling, LoSchiavo, & Shatz, 2009; Wolfe & Strange, 2003). However, branch campus faculty members' access to resources may be more limited than at the parent campus and/or the campus itself may be perceived as having a lower status than the parent campus (McGrath, 2012; Merzer, 2008; Wolfe & Strange, 2003). In addition, because branch campus faculty members are sometimes the sole lead faculty member from their discipline, they may experience isolation and face additional workload pressures (e.g., advising, student recruitment into their discipline) (Merzer, 2008; Wolfe & Strange, 2003). Further, for faculty with research obligations, additional service demands may adversely impact their focus on scholarship (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). In fact, Fonseca and Bird (2007) have recommended that decisions about promotion and tenure should consider how to accommodate this reality. Moreover, supporting branch campus faculty entails the need to (1) appreciate the unique teaching and student advising needs at a branch campus; (2) promote frequent and open communication between campuses; (3) encourage collaboration and partnerships between parent campus and branch campus faculty members (as well as among branch campus faculty members); and (4) include branch faculty in departmental decision making (Merzer, 2008; Poling, LoSchiavo, & Shatz, 2009). However, whether the organizational culture of institutions with branch campuses adequately promotes or supports strategies like these is not known. Further, how branch campus faculty perceive the extent of their parent campus's support is unclear. Therefore, an exploration of the experiences and perceptions of branch campus educators regarding the support they receive was warranted. For this study, social work educators' observations and insights were investigated.

Methodology

Selection of Subjects

At the time of this study, no comprehensive database of social work programs at branch campuses was maintained by social work's accrediting body, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Therefore, the authors and a graduate research assistant reviewed the website of each of the 542 institutions that delivered accredited social work programs in the U.S. at the time. In addition, a request for programs to self-identify was posted to a social worker educator listserv. From this effort, 89 social work programs were determined to provide branch campus education. The program administrators from these programs were then emailed three requests to forward an invitation to participate in the study to their part-time and full-time faculty members who taught social work classes to their branch campus students.

Instrumentation

Approved by the researchers' Institutional Review Board (IRB), a 55-item survey included items relevant to the institutional characteristics of branch campus social work education programs. The institutional characteristics included method of course delivery, the types of students in these programs, and the demographics and experiences of resident branch campus faculty and non-resident social work educators who taught branch campus students. In addition, the survey incorporated two open-ended questions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of teaching on a branch campus. An earlier version of the instrument was pilot tested with colleagues who had taught branch campus social work students to assess content and face validity.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns across the data derived from the two open-ended items regarding the advantages and disadvantages of teaching on a branch campus

from the perspective of both resident and non-resident branch campus faculty. The process of coding took place in six phases. The researchers (1) familiarized themselves with the data; (2) created a grid and generated initial codes; (3) searched for themes among the codes; (4) reviewed and defined the themes; (5) named the themes; and (6) reported out the final themes to each other. This approach best emphasized the perceptions of the survey participants and captured their broad range of experiences as resident and nonresident branch campus social work faculty members.

Results

Sample

Eighty-one social work educators ($n = 81$) from programs in 26 states responded to the survey. Sixty-four (79.0%) identified as female and 17 (21.0%) as male. Sixty-eight educators (84.0%) were white/non-Hispanic; 7 (8.6%) were African-American, 3 (3.7%) were Latino(a)/Hispanic, 3 (3.7%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1 (1.2%) identified as American Indian/Native American. The majority ($n = 64$, 79.0%), reported they were full-time faculty members and 17 (21.0%) indicated they were part-time or adjunct faculty members. Eleven (13.6%) were Professors, 14 (17.3%) identified as Associate Professors, 25 (30.9%) were Assistant Professors, 27 (33.3%) were classified as a Lecturer or an Instructor, and 4 (4.9%) identified as “other”. Twenty-one participants (25.9%) reported they were tenured, 22 (27.2%) were on the tenure track, 36 (44.4%) were not on the tenure track (though their institutions had a tenure system); and 2 (2.5%) reported their institution did not have a tenure system. Collectively, survey participants had taught social work courses for an average of 11.7 years ($SD = 9.3$) with half having taught for 8 or more years. In terms of assignment, 29 (36%) were a resident faculty of the parent/main campus and 45 (56%) were a resident faculty member at the

branch campus. Seven participants (9%) indicated they were not a resident faculty member on any campus.

Thematic Analysis

As noted, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns across the data relevant to the experiences and characterization of the advantages and disadvantages both resident and non-resident faculty identified relative to teaching in their branch campus programs. Twenty-three ($n = 23$) non-resident faculty and thirty-eight ($n = 38$) resident faculty members provided written comments. The following themes are reported by rank of frequency. (See Tables 1 and 2 for specific frequencies.) Advantages and disadvantages are discussed in order by highest indicators by resident faculty.

Advantages of teaching at branch campuses.

Theme 1: Autonomy and ownership of program. The most common theme for resident faculty was their expression of having autonomy and ownership of the social work program at the branch campus. This theme was not identified by non-resident faculty. The theme was expressed in several ways. For instance, respondents reported having more freedom and latitude to direct their programs. As one resident faculty shared, “I can coordinate the program and enjoy significant autonomy to shape it.” Similarly, another noted, “We have a lot of freedom to run our program on this campus.” For several, this sense of autonomy and ownership fostered a greater sense of satisfaction and responsibility: “Having a sense of 'ownership' and pride in the program.”

Theme 2: Supportive environment. Working in a supportive environment emerged as the second most common theme for resident faculty. This was expressed in several forms. First, resident faculty felt support from the administration at both the branch and parent campus.

Support from department faculty was also noted. As a resident faculty member reported, “I receive support from administration and full-time faculty. The university provides supports that extends beyond the main campus walls to ensure that students and staff attending the branch campus receive the level of support needed and expected.” Several resident faculty expressed being close to their branch campus colleagues. A few supporting statements included, “We are very supportive of each other and work well together as a team”; “I have tighter knit relationships with my branch colleagues”; and one respondent highlighting the significance and importance of these relationships, “I never want to move from my branch campus position.”

Theme 3: Connection with students. The next theme to emerge from the data was respondents’ sense of experiencing a connection with the students on a branch campus. This theme was primarily expressed by resident faculty. Faculty often attributed this connection with student to the ability to get to know their students more personally due to having smaller cohorts of students. One resident faculty shared: “Because of smaller cohorts, I get to know each student well.” This closer connection with students resulted in resident faculty being able to better meet students’ needs at a branch campus. As one resident faculty reported, “We are able to help students be successful and meet challenges with individualized, personal care.”

Theme 4: Location/close to home. Resident faculty frequently stated that having the branch campus close to home was an advantage. This theme was not addressed as often by non-resident faculty. One resident faculty summarized the thoughts of several faculty by stating: “I live in the same city as the branch campus so it is very convenient for me.”

Theme 5: Removed from university/college politics. Another theme extracted from resident faculty responses was the advantage of avoiding main campus politics. This theme was as frequently expressed as location/close to home by resident faculty. The expression of this

theme was direct and succinct. One faculty member shared this common sentiment, “Being somewhat removed from the politics of the main campus.” Some resident faculty shared they are removed from the university politics while still feeling supported by administration. One resident faculty stated, “I am very well supported by leadership and yet I don't have to get tangled up in politics that may exist at the main campus.” This theme was not expressed by non-resident faculty.

Theme 6: Smaller setting. The theme describing the advantage of teaching in a smaller setting was expressed by both resident and non-resident faculty but more frequently by resident faculty participants. There were several ways in which this theme was expressed. Resident faculty discussed the advantage of having a smaller program which included a smaller cohort of students and smaller class sizes. One resident faculty shared: “I think being smaller makes us better able to respond to opportunities and challenges and make changes.” It was a resident faculty who shared: “Smaller class numbers allows me to build positive relationships with my students.” Another connotation expressed regarding a smaller setting was having a smaller faculty group at the branch campus. A resident faculty stated: “I enjoy the smaller and closer faculty unit. We are very supportive of each other and work well together as a team.”

Theme 7: Opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The resident faculty expressed an advantage of teaching at a branch campus was the opportunities to collaborate with other faculty in different disciplines. This theme did not emerge for non-resident faculty. The experience from resident faculty was that this collaboration was easier primarily due to having a smaller campus and offices next to each other rather than in separate building across the campus. One resident faculty shared, “It's easier to conduct interdisciplinary research. Our branch campus has mixed office space, meaning my office is just down the hall from faculty in other

disciplines. This makes it easier to conduct research with them because we chat about projects in the hall that leads us to start them with greater ease.” A similar expression was also shared by another resident faculty who wrote, “Collaboration is easier in an environment where other faculty from other disciplines are also in residence.”

Theme 8: Meeting needs of underserved students. Themes 8 through 10 stand out as the most frequently expressed themes by non-resident faculty. These themes were also reported from resident faculty but not as frequently. It was Theme 8 that non-resident faculty expressed most frequently. For them, the opportunity to meet the needs of students who otherwise may not have the option to attend college as a major advantage of teaching at a branch campus. It was the rural student who was most often cited as the underserved student. Both resident and non-resident faculty indicated these students were unlikely to seek a college degree if it was not for the branch campus. The non-resident faculty expressed meeting needs in a variety of ways. One way was by offering students with online course options as a way to reach an underserved demographic of students. Another non-resident faculty discussed meeting a need not only for the underserved student but also an underserved community. This faculty member shared, “Giving educational opportunities to students in more rural areas who might likely not be able to attend the main campus, thereby offers communities with more social workers needed at area social service programs.”

Theme 9: Students with diversity of life experience. The second major theme for non-resident faculty was teaching students with a diversity of life experience. Both resident and non-resident faculty shared this theme by describing students at branch campuses as older than the traditional student and as a result having more life experiences to share in their classes. One resident faculty member stated: “Fantastic focused students who integrate a wealth of experience

into their education and share with their classmates.” This sharing of experience included providing insights in the social work field. One non-resident faculty shared: “Students are older and are working in the field and see relevance of courses to develop and advance their skills and knowledge.” The expression of diverse students also included demographic diversity. Both resident and non-resident faculty observed students as being older as compared to students at the main campus. A non-resident faculty stated: “Students are more diverse so there is more opportunity to see issues from multiple perspectives.” It was non-resident faculty who expressed this theme more frequently than resident faculty.

Theme 10: Motivated students. This theme was expressed equally by resident and non-resident faculty. The description of motivation included seeing students as committed, focused, and ready to work. Resident faculty specifically identified students as being dedicated to their studies and that the students thoughtfully chose to major in social work. Several resident faculty shared observing this by stating, “Students are more motivated toward the profession,” and “The branch campus students participate much more in class.” Non-resident faculty expressed the theme of motivation by observing that students are happier in school and excited about learning. The motivated students theme was expressed more frequently by non-resident faculty.

Table 1

Advantages of teaching at a branch campus ($n = 36$)

	<i>Resident Faculty n (%)</i>	<i>Non-Resident Faculty n (%)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Autonomy & ownership of program	13 (33.1%)	0 (0.0%)	13 (33.1%)
Supportive environment	10 (27.8%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (27.8%)
Connection to students	9 (25.0%)	1 (2.8%)	10 (27.8%)
Location/close to home	7 (19.4%)	3 (8.3%)	10 (27.7%)
Removed from university/college politics	6 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (16.7%)
Smaller setting	5 (13.9%)	2 (5.6%)	7 (19.4%)

Opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration	4 (11.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (11.1%)
Meeting needs of underserved students	3 (8.3%)	8 (22.2%)	11 (30.6%)
Students with diversity of life experience	4 (11.1%)	6 (16.7%)	10 (27.8%)
Motivated students	4 (11.1%)	4 (11.1%)	8 (22.2%)

Disadvantages of teaching at branch campuses.

Theme 1: Isolation. A major theme that emerged for disadvantages in working at a branch campus was isolation from the parent institution voiced only by the resident faculty and was overwhelmingly their foremost concern. The theme of isolation included, but was not limited to: lack of communication with parent campus; lack of a connection with colleagues and department faculty; not included in parent campus activities; and not being invited to meetings that impact branch campus students. One resident faculty commented, “Sometimes people make comments about hating to come to the branch campus. Often, people don't know me when I go to faculty senate meetings and full professors ignore me.” Additionally, several faculty shared, “Not having more immediate access to management and not being included in more meetings that affect the students at the branch campus,” and “I feel out of the loop regarding administration at the university level.” Finally, these faculty shared, “The downside is that I have to work harder than others to fully know what transpires at the main campus because I am flying a bit solo,” and “Aren't seen as a full member of the parent campus.”

Theme 2: Lack of understanding by main (parent) campus. The second most frequent theme pulled from the data for resident faculty was the lack of understand by the parent campus. Lack of understanding was described as not being treated as a full-time member of the department, not being considered when decisions are made, and a lack of understanding of the skills resident faculty bring to the branch campus. A common concern expressed by a resident

faculty was, “Decisions are made for the branch campus based on assumptions determined elsewhere, and do not necessarily reflect the reality, needs, or culture of our campus.” This faculty shared, “Faculty from main and other branch campuses do not fully understand my skills or workload, which is not a bother to me, but sometimes feels as though they don't have a real idea of all I do, and for which they have no similar duties.”

Theme 3: Lack of resources and support. This was the third most frequent disadvantage for resident faculty and the most frequent for non-resident faculty of teaching at a branch campus. The expressions of this theme were described as a gap in services that are provided at the parent institution, fewer resources for research, lack of technical support, and a lack of monetary support. A resident faculty shared, “Limited access to campus resources such as writing center and teaching support”, and another stated, “There is a lack of access to the same resources but have higher expectations in teaching and advising.” A non-resident faculty shared, “There is a lack of support such as resources for technology and less security.” A final comment shared by resident faculty indicating gaps in services, “More difficult to access professional development opportunities (e.g., workshops) on parent campus.”

Theme 4: Lack of collaborative opportunities. The theme of lack of collaborative opportunities was only shared by the resident faculty. Resident faculty expressed concern that there are very limited opportunities to collaborate with department faculty as well as interdisciplinary faculty. One faculty stated, “Limited ability to collaborate with colleagues from social work.” Another shared, “We do not have the same access to doctoral students as at the main campus, or to colleagues from other disciplines for collaborative research.” Finally, this faculty shared, “It's not as easy to collaborate when in residence at the branch campus due to

fewer opportunities to pop into a social work colleague's office to troubleshoot issues (research, service, and teaching).”

Theme 5: Heavier workload. This theme emerged from the data more so from the resident faculty. Resident faculty described having a heavier workload including higher expectations of advising, mentoring and teaching, and the extra effort required to serve on parent campus committees for both the department and university. This resident faculty shared, “Student advising demands are higher given that a higher percentage of branch campus students seem to be first generation college students and require more directive guidance.” Another resident faculty commented, “It's not clear that parent campus colleagues fully appreciate the unique demands of being based on a regional campus (particularly related to advising and recruitment).”

Theme 6: Travel. The theme of travel was expressed primarily by non-resident faculty. Travel and theme seven and eight all tied for the third most frequently expressed disadvantages for this group. Both resident and non-resident faculty expressed being required to travel to multiple campuses to teach, including the parent institution. The theme of travel was also taxing for the faculty and allowed less time to complete other faculty responsibilities. One non-resident stated, “Travel time reduces grading, class prep, and other time.”

Theme 7: Students unmotivated and underprepared. The theme of unmotivated and underprepared students was cited as a significant disadvantage for non-resident faculty. This theme did not emerge for resident faculty. The descriptors for this theme included students being less prepared academically, more likely to be employed, having less time to study or read, and less prepared for college level work after transferring from a community college. This non-resident faculty shared, “They are not prepared for college level work. Even after taking

remediation support courses, they still are below level. Most are direct transfers for degree completion through a local community college.” Additional concerns raised was that branch campus students felt entitled to get A’s without doing the work and are unprofessional in the classroom. This resident faculty shared, “Students are more challenging, many expect a good grade but don't feel they have to earn it.” One non-resident shared: “Students admitted to the branch campus are unprepared and hostile.” Another non-resident faculty member shared a similar thought, “They tend to complain more and some do not understand the concept of professionalism at the level necessary for undergraduate social work students.”

Theme 8: Lack of connection with students. The last theme that emerged as a disadvantage was shared only by non-resident faculty. Non-resident faculty expressed a lack of connection with students. This theme ranked at about the middle of all themes and was described as not having enough face-to-face time with the students and not getting to know all the program students. One non-resident faculty member shared: “Not face-to-face with all students every week, students are sometimes less likely to contact main campus faculty and obviously, students can't just drop in the faculty's office on a daily basis.”

Table 2:

Disadvantages of teaching at a branch campus (*n* = 23)

	<i>Resident Faculty n (%)</i>	<i>Non-Resident Faculty n (%)</i>	<i>Total n (%)</i>
Isolation	18 (78.2%)	0 (0%)	18 (78.2%)
Lack of understanding by main (parent) campus	13 (52.1%)	0 (0%)	13 (52.1%)
Lack of resources and support	13 (52.1%)	7 (30.4%)	20 (86.9%)
Lack of collaborative opportunities	7 (30.4%)	0 (0%)	7 (30.4%)
Heavier workload	7 (30.4%)	2 (8.6%)	9 (39.1%)
Travel	1 (4.3%)	5 (21.7%)	6 (26%)
Students under motivated and underprepared	0 (0%)	5 (21.7%)	5 (21.7%)

Lack of connection with students	0 (0%)	5 (21.7%)	5 (21.7%)
----------------------------------	--------	-----------	-----------

Discussion

This study uncovered a number of themes that were either shared by both resident and non-resident faculty or separate themes because of specific contexts unique to the different groups. Exploratory in nature, this study aimed to discover faculty perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching at branch campuses. Further, the study sought you better understand the unique needs of faculty who teach at branch campuses. The advantages and challenges that emerged from the data can inform institutions with branch campuses of best practices in shaping branch campus culture. The following are two major themes present for both comparison groups (resident and non-resident) and expressed in both categories (advantages and disadvantages): connection to students and recognition by the parent campus and autonomy and ownership that can serve better inform of social work professors considering a teaching assignment at a branch campus. Having a better understanding of the advantages and challenges faced by branch campus social work faculty can also benefit university administration by highlighting factors that best assist newer faculty transitioning into their new roles as instructors and advisors.

Student Connections

Both resident and non-resident faculty expressed feeling a great sense of satisfaction with teaching branch campus students who were motivated, full of life experience, and belonging to an underserved student group. This sentiment was overwhelmingly expressed, by both faculty groups, as a major advantage of teaching at a branch campus. However, it is important to highlight that non-resident faculty expressed student motivation and preparedness as a concern and challenge. It appears non-resident faculty judgement on student motivation and

preparedness arrives from comparing branch campus student to students from their primary teaching assignment at the parent campus. Some non-resident faculty expressed that branch campus students are not as prepared for college level course work as the students at the parent campus. Further, some non-resident campus faculty attributed branch campus students' lack of preparedness due to being transfer students from community colleges. It is important to consider that branch campus students are more likely to be commuting to campus from their home, older, balancing multiple responsibilities including work and care for families (Bozick & DeLuca, 2005). The student that brings rich life experiences and diversity to the classroom also may have more demands on their time.

Interestingly, the resident faculty voiced having a deeper connection with the branch campus students than did the non-resident faculty. This may be attributed to the extended contact with students for resident faculty and having a reported sense of ownership of the program compared to non-resident faculty. Bird (2014) found that branch campus faculty had greater opportunities to be involved in efforts to affect change at the campus and in the community. As a result, for resident faculty members, the branch campus often offers more opportunities to work closely with students, in particular those students with non-traditional experiences. In addition, resident social work faculty are often the only faculty assigned at the branch campus and, therefore, serve as students' only advisor. Thus, they have the opportunity to develop a stronger sense of the students' personal and career trajectories.

Recognition by Parent Campus

Resident faculty expressed that parent institution department faculty lacked an understanding of the workload involved in teaching at a branch campus. This workload included the increased need for advising, teaching, mentoring, and recruiting students as the only faculty

member representing the social work department at the branch campus. In addition to the increased workload, faculty shared that they were solely responsible for this work versus their colleagues at the parent institution. Nickerson and Schaefer (2001) also found a perception that branch campuses are less prestigious and that resident faculty have a lesser workload compared to faculty at a parent campus. Because of the smaller number of program students, some non-resident faculty might assume that the workload is lighter at a branch campus. Reinforcing this point, non-resident faculty did not highlight workload as a disadvantage of teaching at a branch campus.

In addition to a lack of understanding of the branch campus faculty workload, some resident faculty expressed a lack of opportunities for collaboration as an obstacle in achieving tenure track requirements. It was expressed exclusively by resident faculty that, although the expectations are the same in terms of research productivity, resident faculty have more teaching and mentoring demands as well as limited opportunities to connect with other researchers on scholarly projects. Branch campus faculty often reported feeling undervalued as a tenure track professor by the parent institution. Similarly, studies have shown that branch campus personnel have to contend with negative perceptions, imagined or real, that branch campuses hold a lesser status and enjoys fewer resources relative to the parent campus (McGrath, 2012; Merzer, 2008; Wolfe & Strange, 2003).

On the bright side, branch campus resident faculty alone voiced the value of being away from the department and university politics that they feel plagues the parent campus. In addition, resident faculty alone expressed enjoying the autonomy and associated ownership of the social work program at their branch campus. Having more freedom to shape and decide on elements of the program was a definite plus for resident faculty. It seems logical that non-resident faculty

did not mention either advantage though both faculty groups enjoyed the smaller classroom setting and student cohort size. In contrast, resident faculty expressed the disadvantage of isolation and lack of communication from the parent institution and other department faculty. This dichotomy speaks to the need to strive for a balance. In addition, both resident and non-resident faculty expressed a need for more resources and technical support. Laursen and Rocque (2006) found that faculty concerns that inhibit their effectiveness has the largest impact in reducing their job satisfaction.

Future Research Recommendations

As a field of study, branch campus faculty and student perceptions has not been explored to better understand best practices. More investigative research regarding faculty job satisfaction would better serve the needs of the campus, faculty and student. Although this study examines the feedback from faculty that may better inform the branch campus in developing a more satisfying work environment, there are additional factors that could be more significant. There is little research on the possible differentiation of tenure and promotion requirements for branch campus faculty. Although some universities have a different tenure and promotion structure for the branch campus faculty, there has been little investigation into these practices.

In addition, future research should also involve the direct feedback from college students who attend branch campuses to shed light on the qualities they identify as positive practices they experience attending a branch campus. Understanding that branch campus students encompass different characteristics than parent campus students, meeting the need of this student population is of particular importance. Examining different disciplines or multiple disciplines would add to the diversity of this much needed field of study.

Conclusion

The university branch campus has emerged as a significant addition to the landscape of higher education. This development of branch campuses contributes to the goals of a growing number of institutions to extend postsecondary learning to students who may lack access to a post-secondary education. Despite the significant contributions of branch campuses in providing social work education, relatively little research has examined the experiences of branch campus faculty. Much of our understanding of academic life has long been dominated by selective observations of faculty in research-oriented flagship universities and highly competitive liberal arts colleges (Wolfe & Strange, 2003). A number of observations about the advantages of teaching at a branch campus stressed the value of this underserved group of students and for the most part, working in a supportive environment. The broader systemic problems identified by faculty teaching at a branch campus can inform institutions on tailoring policies, procedures and resources that can foster a supportive culture that values branch campus faculty. Assisting branch campus faculty in developing more collaborations with departmental faculty to foster a better understanding of the workload and ameliorate feelings of isolation can improve branch campus faculty job satisfaction. Institutions that develop a comprehensive menu of faculty developmental offerings can help to build a faculty who can weather challenges and offer creative solutions (Wolfe & Strange, 2003).

Tables and Figures (place in manuscript, if applicable)

Located in manuscript.

Reference Section (if applicable)

References

- Austin, A. E., Sorcinelli, M. D., & McDaniels, M. (2007). Understanding new faculty background, aspirations, challenges, and growth. *The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: An evidence-based perspective*, 39-89.
- Ayala, J. S. (2009). Blended learning as a new approach in social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 45(2), 277-288.
- Bird, C. P. (2014). *Out on a limb: A branch campus life*. Athens, OH: Author.
- Bozick, R., & DeLuca, S. (2005). Better late than never? Delayed enrollment in the high school to college transition. *Social Forces*, 84(1), 531-554. Retrieved March 14, 2014, from EBSCOhost/Education Full Text (H. W. Wilson).
- Choy, S. P. (2002). *Condition of education 2000: Nontraditional undergraduates*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002012.pdf>
- Compton, J. I., Cox, E., & Laanan, F. S. (2006). Adult learners in transition. *New Directions for Student Services*, 114, 73-80. doi: 10.1002/ss.208
- Ellis, B., Sawyer, J., Gill, R., Medlin, J., & Wilson, D. (2005). Influences of the learning environment of a regional university campus on its international graduates. *The Australian University Researcher*, 32(2), 65-85. Retrieved March 14, 2014, from EBSCOhost/ERIC.
- Fonseca, J. W., & Bird, C. P. (2007, October). Under the radar: Branch campuses take off. *University Business*. Retrieved from <http://www.universitybusiness.com/article/under-radar-branch-campus-take>.

Hoyt, J. & Howell, S. (2012). Why students choose the branch campus of a larger university. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 60(2), 110-116.

doi:10.1080/07377363.2012.687304

Knefelkamp, L. L., & Stewart, S. S. (1983). Toward a new conceptualization of commuter students: The developmental perspective. In S. S. Stewart (Ed.), *Commuter students: Enhancing their educational experiences* (pp. 61-69). New Directions for Student Services No. 24. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laursen, S. & Rocque, B. (2006). An Assessment of Faculty Development Needs at the University of Colorado at Boulder. (Report to the LEAP Project) Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, Boulder, Ethnography & Evaluation Research.

McGrath, G. (2012). Attracting and retaining students at a campus of a multicampus system: Engagement and athletics. In S. Schuman (Ed.). *Leading America's Branch Campuses* (pp. 97-126). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.

Merzer, M. R. (2008). *Perceptions of inter-campus relations by branch campus and main campus student affairs administrators in multicampus public universities in Florida*. (Doctoral dissertation). (Order No. 3302751, Florida Atlantic University). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304568393?accountid=15150>. (304568393).

Mindrup, K. S. (2012). *Academic and social experiences of undergraduate college students at a branch campus: A case study*. (Doctoral dissertation). (Order No. 3516744, The University of Iowa). *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1030440349?accountid=15150>. (1030440349).

- National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (n.d.) *NABCA Definitions and Organizational Models*. Panama City, FL: NABCA. Retrieved March 14, 2014 from <http://www.nabca.net/assets/nabca-definitions---models.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). *Postsecondary Education Facilities Inventory and Classification Manual (FICM): 2006 Edition* (NCES 2006-160). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Nickerson, M., & Schaefer, S. (2001). Autonomy and anonymity: Characteristics of branch campus faculty. *Metropolitan Universities*, 12(2), 45-59.
- Oliaro, L., & Trotter, C. (2010). A comparison of on-campus and off-campus (or distance) social work education. *Australian Social Work*, 63(3), 329-344.
doi:10.1080/0312407X.2010.496866
- Pardasani, M., Goldkind, L., Heyman, J. C., & Cross-Denny, D. (2012). How much does the distance in distance education matter? Our students speak. *Social Work Education*, 31(4), 406-421.
- Pebko, P., & Huffman, D. (2011). Developing a typology of branch campuses: Findings from the NABCA campus and center administrator survey. *Metropolitan Universities*, 22(1), 48-64. Retrieved March 14, 2014, from EBSCOhost/ERIC.
- Poling, D. A., LoSchiavo, F. M., & Shatz, M. A. (2009). Regional campus success: Strategies for psychology faculty. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36, 194-196.
doi:10.1080/00986280902959788
- Wolfe, J. R., & Strange, C. C. (2003). Academic life at the franchise: Faculty culture in a rural two-year branch campus. *The Review of Higher Education*, 26(3), 343-362.
doi:10.1353/rhe.2003.0006