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## The Philosopher's Stone: How Basic Skills Programs Fare in Troubled Financial Times

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THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE: HOW BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMS FARE IN  
TROUBLED FINANCIAL TIMES

by

Thomas P. Ray

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Miles T. Bryant

Lincoln, Nebraska

November, 2012

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE: HOW BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMS FARE IN  
TROUBLED FINANCIAL TIMES

Thomas P. Ray, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2012

Adviser: Miles T. Bryant

This mixed methods study examined the relative position of basic skills programs with transfer and career technical programs in a large suburban community college in California during the three-year period of budget reductions from 2009-2010 through 2011-2012. The budget line dedicated to part-time or non-contract instruction was analyzed along with supporting documents such as planning committee minutes and program review data. Knowledge of the budget data and the reduction strategies employed helped to establish a picture of the state of basic skills and the institution's disposition toward them. The budget data proved to be an inadequate tool to measure investment in the basic skills in that it did not consider resources other than instruction.

Four faculty members and administrators integral to the instructional budget decision-making process during the period of reductions were interviewed. An institutional ethnography approach was used for the selection and recruitment of interview participants and the interviews. The combination of the interview and budget findings informed the conclusions of the study.

The study revealed that at this one college, the institution's disposition toward the basic skills remained relatively unchanged to that of career technical education and transfer during the three-year period. The study also revealed that a complete

picture of the impact of the budget reductions on basic skills programming and outcomes could not be determined without expanding the study beyond instruction. The challenge of finding and interpreting data and the complex interdependence of resources internal and external to the college made data-driven decision-making difficult for this college.



## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the family and friends who made it possible for me to be here today. I am indebted to all members of my immediate family, but am particularly grateful for the love and encouragement I got from my sister, Jeannie. Many friends have been part of my journey, but two deserve a special note of appreciation for their exceptional compassion and support. Thank you, Jewel and Carl.

The greatest debt I owe for the opportunities and successes I've had in my life is to my father, Robert "Rugger" E. Ray, Sr., who told me from when I was very young that one day I would go to college. My life led me along many different paths and to a few surprising destinations, and he was always there to support me. His death came before I could finish this degree, but the lasting influence of his working class values made it possible from beginning to end.

## Acknowledgements

During this strangely solitary task, I have had the exceptionally good fortune to discover support—sometimes short-lived, sometimes lasting—in both familiar and surprising places. A recent friend and colleague, Dr. Kim Palmore, deserves my thanks for helping me break through a number of barriers to completion. She has read my drafts, listened to my rants, and given me the appropriate nudges I needed to finish.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Miles Taft Bryant for the guidance and encouragement he provided throughout my program of study. His understanding on the occasions when my life's course sometimes drifted into stormy waters or passed beyond the charted portions of the map altogether into territory marked only with the words, "Here, there be dragons," gave me the time to exchange the flawed guesswork of dead reckoning for the safety of celestial navigation. Once back on course, his sage guidance and gentle reminders to keep working made it possible for me to find smooth waters long enough to give this study the attention it needed and deserved.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee for their dedication and professionalism. Dr. Brent D. Cejda's expertise in community colleges and Dr. Richard E. Hoover's expertise in higher education finance provided depth and breadth to my research. Dr. Robert D. Brown's commitment as a faculty leader and support of LGBT issues reminds me of the value of my own humanity and continues to give me hope for a better world.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

"They must feel like Job, visited with all kinds of afflictions."

—California Community College Chancellor Jack Scott (SF Gate, 2012).

### **Structure of the Chapter**

I begin this chapter with a discussion of the background from which the research problem arose and a statement of the problem. After the description of the problem I include a brief note on changes in the design of the study that became necessary during the course of the research. The purpose of the study and the research questions are next, followed by definitions of specialized terminology. The succeeding sections are the assumptions, delimitations and limitations of the research, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the study.

### **Background**

“As I thought of these things, I drew aside the curtains and looked out into the darkness, and it seemed to my troubled fancy that all those little points of light filling the sky were the furnaces of innumerable divine alchemists, who labour continually, turning lead into gold, weariness into ecstasy, bodies into souls, the darkness into God; and at their perfect labour my mortality grew heavy, and I cried out, as so many dreamers and men of letters in our age have cried, for the birth of that elaborate spiritual beauty which could alone uplift souls weighted with so many dreams.”

— William Butler Yeats, *Rosa Alchemica*



For the last few years, educators in the California community colleges have faced higher expectations than previously, as accrediting agencies have increased their scrutiny and toughened their standards. They have seen higher numbers of students of all kinds than ever before, including among them more of the best and brightest students attending community college to save money on their first two years before heading off to a public or private university and more of the most disenfranchised and underprepared students looking for a path to a better future.

During this same period, these community colleges have faced unprecedented and unrelenting budget cuts (Kanter, 2012), while at the same time having to address a slew of new mandates dropping one by one like low hanging legislative fruit freshly picked by legislators eager to make change, but unable to pay for it. This bumper crop of legislative action grew out of ideas that germinated in the self-described “Bold Plan for Student Success” sowed by the Student Success Task Force (2012) and the “20/20 Vision for Student Success” as foretold by the Commission on the Future of the Community College League of California (2011). Educators in California’s community colleges have not merely been asked, as has often been the case for community college, to do more with less; instead, they are now being expected to be alchemists, turning lead into gold as Yeats envisioned a century earlier.

Since 1960, when California’s Master Plan for higher education proposed to provide access to college for all of its citizens through public support of the California Community Colleges, the California State Universities, and the Universities of California, community college leaders have faced the daunting responsibility of

providing education for a population which includes a significant portion of unprepared and underprepared students. The particular areas in which these students have been and continue to be found in need of remediation are known as the basic skills, comprised of English (reading and writing) and mathematics. Many of these students are English Language Learners, in some cases recent immigrants, and in other cases, coming from homes in which a language other than English was the primary language.

In the fifty year period since the Master Plan was drafted, new efforts to increase the success and persistence rates of this population have been proposed and attempted with extraordinary enthusiasm and vigor, with each new idea elevated by and infused with the confidence and aspirations of educators, whether practitioners or researchers, administrators or instructors, bureaucrats or ideologues. Many, if not most, of these endeavors had some measure of success, in some cases enormous success for a localized population, and in others nominal success across a broader swath. Some of these efforts came with small price tags and others required investments so large that they were only attempted by those fortunate few communities for which cost was a secondary consideration, communities which therefore had the least need or smallest population to serve. When attempted in less affluent communities, where they relied on grants or donated resources, the efforts were frequently doomed to a slow death when the attention of their magnanimous donor or donors was diverted to a new cause. Two examples of these efforts are matriculation, which was created in 1987 by the California legislative mandate Assembly Bill (AB) 3, and assessment, the “holistic process through which each

college collects information about students in an effort to facilitate their success by ensuring their appropriate placement into the curriculum” (CCCCO, 2012).

One particular effort, however, stands out from the rest because of its scale: the Basic Skills Initiative is easily the largest single effort of its kind in the fifty year history since the Master Plan was first drafted. The investment in resources and research and the reach across the entire system is laudable, and if success were a mere corollary of scale, than this initiative would be a supernova on the higher education walk of fame. Perhaps what is most remarkable, however, is that the very institutions and organizations that inspired this initiative and imbued it with energy and resources, appear to be the quagmire in which it has been trapped, resources already shrinking, programs showing the telltale signs of desiccation, and committee membership decimated as enthusiasm begins to wane.

As the State of California has struggled to balance its budget for most of the recent decade, it has been forced to repeatedly reduce funding for education, and community colleges have not escaped the cuts. The highlights of the impact of budget reductions to California Community Colleges shown in figure 1.1 are provided by the Community College League of California (2012).

**CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE FISCAL WOES SINCE 2009-10**

- ACTUAL PER-STUDENT FUNDING HAS BEEN CUT BY \$300, WHILE COST-OF-LIVING HAS INCREASED 16%
- FUNDING FOR 130,000 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENTS SLASHED
- DEEP CUTS TO STUDENT SUCCESS INITIATIVES
- FEES HAVE DOUBLED FROM \$600/YEAR TO \$1,380/YEAR

**Figure 1.1**

One key question I considered in light of the severity of these reductions is how well the basic skills fared when compared to transfer or career and technical programs, which together are the three central elements of the mission of California Community Colleges. Put simply, as budget cuts forced colleges into program reductions, did the basic skills suffer more or less of those reductions when compared with transfer or career and technical programs?

The 112 California Community Colleges, which comprise the largest and arguably oldest system of community colleges in the United States, are influenced by a wide variety of institutional forces, both organizational and environmental. There can be no doubt that the form and function of the system, particularly in terms of its scale and reach, play a significant part in the present state of affairs in California education policy. However, while I found it tempting to rely on a single economic or political theory to describe the form and function (and some would prefer deform and dysfunction, depending on how directly they have been affected by the crisis) of the devastation wreaked on California Community Colleges by the global economic

recession and the subsequent state budget crises, that description might reveal little more than my own preconceived notions of the situation.

It was equally tempting to delve into the political discourse and the media coverage in search of an agent or agency upon whom to lay the blame for the crisis; however, such a cause and effect relationship was unable to withstand even superficial academic scrutiny. Further, the California Community College System, as well as the larger State of California government and other economic, political and social environments into which it is inextricably woven, is so complex, with so many agents and agencies involved, that limiting the scope of the search would be nearly impossible.

A more important analysis than the maelstrom of where, how and by whose hand this budget crisis was initiated, or what California Community Colleges might become in the future as a result of these sustained cuts, is what actions have been and are being taken now within individual colleges that might mitigate or exacerbate the situation (if any) and do those actions reveal a changing attitude toward the basic skills or the populations for whom basic skills education is intended?

## **Statement of the Problem**

Certainly, the current budget crisis is among the biggest challenges California Community Colleges have faced, arguably larger than the decimation caused by Prop 13 (California Tax Data, 2012 & O'Leary, 2009). In each of the three years of this study, 2009-2010, 2010-2011 and 2011-2012, California Community Colleges have laid off employees, cut instructional programs, turned students away at registration by

the hundreds of thousands and reduced course offerings systematically or arbitrarily in an attempt to keep their budgets balanced. Simultaneously they have eliminated some categorical programs, reduced others to skeleton crews and sustained the most cherished with general fund dollars—robbing Peter to pay Paul. Categorical programs, which are those programs supported by dedicated funding sources, include many student support services and some instructional support services. They rely on a combination of dedicated federal funds and line item funding in the annual California State budget, and they include well-known programs such as Disabled Student Personnel Services, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, and Matriculation. In 2006 the Basic Skills Initiative joined the ranks of these and other categorical programs that depends on these separate funding sources. In 2009-2010 categorical programs saw sharp reduction in funds, and some of their budgets cut mid-year by as much as 68% (CCC Budget Comparison, 2012).

Faced with reduced support services, fewer course offerings, and competition for seats in classes, student lines during registration were in the thousands at some colleges. With unemployment at record highs in some California communities, a significant number of students depend on financial aid not just to buy books but also to feed themselves or their families (Irving, 1997). With the added pressure to attend college, students began running into a new problem—greater competition to attend college as more students fight for fewer classes. In a policy brief from the Legislative Analyst Office, Mac Taylor noted:

The CCC system reports that many students—particularly first-time students—have not been able to enroll in the classes they need to progress

toward their educational goals. Thus, in effect, CCC enrollments are currently being “rationed.” This access problem will become even more serious in 2011-12 to the extent that budget reductions further reduce enrollment slots. (2011, p.1)

As more students fight for a place in college, colleges are faced with often-difficult choices about which students are given the best chance. One of the tools colleges have that allows them to determine who gets a seat in class and who takes a quarter or semester off is registration. Priority status allows certain groups to register before general registration is open. Some of these priority groups are “current and former members of the military, students with disabilities, and participants in Extended Opportunity Programs and Services” (Taylor, 2011, p. 2). A variety of other options are available, however, each of which may favor one group while creating a disadvantage for another, and quite often, the students most affected positively or negatively by these policies are students with basic skills needs.

Basic skills courses typically have lower seat counts in order to afford the students more individualized attention from the instructors, making them more expensive to operate, and because of the funding model used in California Community Colleges, less likely to be added to a schedule to meet enrollment pressure (Johnstone, 2010). Yet students who place into basic skills courses must eventually take these courses or be prevented from advancing in their program of study. In combination, these factors, that basic skills courses are more tempting to cut in difficult budget years and fill quickly during registration, and that students who place into basic skills need these courses to advance in any program of study, add

complexity to the question of who should have priority in registration by increasing the stakes.

In an effort to increase or stabilize enrollments, a college may give earlier registration status to new students who complete an orientation or matriculation course and offer that course as an outreach program in key local high schools, but doing so places at a disadvantage new nontraditional students or continuing students who attended high schools that were not included in the outreach. Another college might give priority status to continuing students, based on the number of units taken, but that may include students not fully matriculated, such as community members taking courses for personal enrichment who happen to have accrued large numbers of units. In either case, some basic skills students are potentially displaced by late registration times. The potential conflicts are endless and vary from one community to another; so much so, that the Legislative Analyst Office recommended that “the Legislature adopt statewide registration priorities that reflect the Master Plan’s key goals and, to the greatest extent possible, maximize access for the state’s highest priority students” (Taylor, 2011, p. 3).

Basic skills education plays a significant role in the form and function of all 112 California Community Colleges, which served a student population that reached 2.9 million in the 2008-2009 academic year (CCCCO Press Release, 2009). As one of the trinity of core missions ascribed to California Community Colleges by the legislature (the other two core missions are CTE and transfer), the basic skills, and the various attempts to improve them by nearly every imaginable constituent group, have been a constant star, for better or worse, by which community college education is



navigated. In the California education code and for the purposes of this dissertation, the basic skills are restricted to English (reading and writing), mathematics (from arithmetic to pre-college algebra), and English as a Second Language (the only one of the three not deemed ‘developmental’) courses for students attending Middlesize College whose reading, writing, or math skills are not sufficient to succeed in college-level work. The significance of the basic skills can be seen in the often heated debate that springs up in public forums and the press when budgets are tight and in the vast numbers of students who enter college underprepared.

According to the California Community Colleges Matriculation Professionals Association (2009), a concerted effort to improve the success rates of students entering California Community Colleges has been in place for nearly three decades, having its roots in the state legislature’s inclusion of remedial education in the funding formula for colleges in the 1986 Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act; by 1987 the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges had “adopted four academic standards policies to be phased in over three years.” Those policies define community college responsibilities for pre-collegiate basic skills instruction and Adult Basic Education, require colleges to establish skills requisites for entry-level certificate and degree-applicable courses, require upgrading and enforcement of student progress standards and the establishing of a 30-semester unit limit on enrollment in pre-collegiate basic skills courses, and define the scope of student assessment programs required of the colleges. That effort took on a new intensity in 2006 when the State implemented a new strategic plan for community colleges, a plan that elevated the pre-college preparation courses to a new status with the development

and initial funding of the California Community Basic Skills Initiative (CCCBSI, 2012).

### **A Note on Changes in the Design of the Study**

The original research design proposed a case study of two colleges, one mid-sized college in a largely rural single-college district and one large college in a suburban/urban multi-college district. For reasons of confidentiality, the colleges will be known as Middlesize College and Bay City College. During the course of requesting permission to conduct the study at Middlesize College, it became evident that successful completion of the study would not be possible within the time constraints of the doctoral program for which the study was conducted. Numerous attempts to solve the problem were made but with little success.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, a number of factors contributed to the change to a case study of a single college. One of these, as I have previously indicated, was the arbitrary time constraint presented by the demands of doctoral program. A second factor was the political environment in which the study was necessarily conducted. This study, addressing ongoing budget problems, was conducted in a politically charged environment in the State of California. Colleges and their budgets are under exceptional scrutiny and receive regular requests for information under the Public Records Act (First Amendment Project, n.d.). Watchdog groups with the intent of “exposing” impropriety make many of these requests. Although colleges are required to comply with those requests, they often do so reluctantly out of fear of having their data or their statements taken out of context or used as evidence in public policy debate. One of the colleges I had proposed to study showed just that type of

reluctance and informed me that my request for information for my study could be granted if I made the request under the Public Records Act.

Given sufficient time and resources, I could have continued to pursue the study of the Middlesize College; however, it was evident that I would find it difficult to conduct successful and forthcoming interviews with key leaders from the college under those circumstances. After weighing these considerations, I chose focus my study on a single college and to dedicate a portion of my findings in Chapter 4 and conclusions and recommendations for further study in Chapter 5 to exploring the resistance presented by the uncooperative college and the environment such resistance might present itself.

### **Purpose Statement**

This study is an examination of the response of one California Community College to the reductions in state appropriations for fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; of particular interest to the study were any changes in the distribution or redistribution of resources that might indicate a shift in the prioritization of the basic skills in relation to the other two parts of the mission of California Community Colleges. By studying fluctuations in the instructional expenses in the budgets of the college over the three-year period of reduced funding, the study attempts to articulate shifting priorities in the balance of investment. Relying on primary institutional documents including annual budgets, board minutes, and planning committee meeting minutes, this case study provides an in depth analysis of the reduction strategies employed at Bay City College and what those strategies reveal about the institution's disposition toward basic skills education. A

picture of the state of basics skills educational programming at Bay City College is explicated through a detailed budget analysis. Distribution/redistribution of resources and reductions within the institution provided greater understanding of the general well-being of basic skills education at the college and offered insight into changing attitudes toward basic skills education. Interviews with key leadership within the college revealed some of the motivations and expectations that surrounded the decisions and procedures of the committees and leadership responsible for the budget adjustments.

### **Theoretical Framework: Resource Dependence Theory**

Conceptually, this study relies on a framework of resource dependence theory in that the relationship between shrinking resources and organizational behavior as measured through the influence of internal and external forces is examined. Resource dependence theory argues that organizations are affected by external resources; changes in the availability of resources produce changes in the behavior and structure of an organization. In other words, when resources change, an organization will also change.

One of the challenges facing community colleges and researchers trying to study them is the large number of agents that have varying degrees of influence over a college's activities and outcomes. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, p. 40) describe this complicated weave of agents, agencies and events as, "interdependence." They provide this simple definition: "Any event that depends on more than a single causal agent is an outcome based on interdependent agents." According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, p. 39), "In social systems and

social interactions, interdependence exists whenever one actor does not entirely control all of the conditions necessary for the achievement of an action or for obtaining the outcome desired from the action.”

In community colleges, and in the basic skills in particular, where the numbers of actors seeking to control the outcomes are numerous and the resources needed to achieve the outcomes are limited or in decline, the outcomes should reflect this context. Two ways outcomes can be better controlled in a complex interdependent environment to reduce the number of agents and to more narrowly define the outcomes. The Basic Skills Initiative is an example of both of these means. The Basic Skills Initiative provided a separate source of funds for supporting basic skills students and programs, thus creating a separate environment with fewer agents than the larger context of community colleges. By doing so, it also provided a different set of outcomes; although as I noted earlier, those outcomes were poorly defined initially.

### **Research Questions**

- What does the annual budget reveal about the status of basic skills programs?
- What, if any, shift in priorities is apparent in the balance of investment among the three missions designated by the State?
  - What does the balance of investment among the three priorities reveal about changes in disposition (favorable, unfavorable, or unchanged) toward basic skills education?

- How does ESL programming, which often serves a different fundamental purpose and population than that of other basic skills education, fare when compared to instruction in remedial math, reading and writing?
- Do any patterns emerge over the three-year period? Has there been a consistent shift toward or away from basic skills education at one or both institutions? Was there a movement in one direction one year followed by a correction the next?
- Insofar as the reductions are apparent or not in instructional investment, in what ways does the behavior of the institution align with the tenets of resource dependence theory?

## Definitions

**50% Law:** A California law that “requires that 50% of district expenditures in certain categories are spent for classroom instruction. The intent of the statute is to limit class size and contain the relative growth of administrative and non-instructional costs” (CCLC, 2007, p. 64).

**525:** The 525 number is derived from the efficiency principle that a “typical” community college class enrolls 35 students.

An example of 525: One instructor teaches 5 classes of 3 units each, each section enrolling 35 students.

$5 \text{ (sections)} \times 3 \text{ (units)} \times 35 \text{ students} = 525 \text{ WSCH/1 FTEF} = 525 \text{ LOAD}$

(College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011)

**The 75/25 Ratio:** The “goal established by AB 1725 for the ratio of classes taught by full-time faculty to those taught by part-time faculty. Districts not at the 75% level have an obligation to make progress toward the goal—a full time faculty obligation” (CCCCO, 2005).

**1100 Line:** An object code classification in the *Budget and Accounting Manual* for instructional salaries. “Expenditures for the full or prorated portions of salaries of all employees in contract or regular faculty positions (CCCCO, 2000).

**1300 Line:** Expenditures for the full or prorated portions of salaries of instructors who have **not** been designated as contract or regular employees. Included are the salaries of instructors designated as temporary employees pursuant to *Education Code* Section 87477 and overload and stipend pay for instructors designated as contract employees or as regular employees (CCCCO, 2000).

**Apportionment:** The payments made to K-12 education and community colleges.

**Basic Skills:** Boroch and the other authors of *The Poppy Copy* (2007) provide the following definition of basic skills, which is used throughout this study:

Basic skills are those foundation skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language, as well as learning skills and study skills which are necessary for students to succeed in college-level work.

**Basic Skills Initiative (BSI):** The California Community Basic Skills Initiative describes the BSI as:

[A] grant funded initiative from the California Community Colleges

Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) which began in 2006 as part of the strategic planning process. The goal of the BSI was improving student access and success. The Strategic Plan guides California Community Colleges as they serve over 2.9 million students annually at 110 colleges. The BSI was a part of Strategic Plan Goal Area 2- Student Success and Readiness (<http://strategicplan.cccco.edu/>). The project addressed credit and noncredit basic skills as well as adult education and programs designed to help underprepared students. (CCCBSI, 2012)

**Board of Governors:** The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges sets policy and provides guidance for the 72 districts and 112 colleges which constitute the system. The 17-member board is appointed by the governor and formally interacts with state and federal officials and other state organizations. The Board of Governors selects a chancellor for the system. The chancellor, through a formal process of consultation, brings recommendations to the board, which has the legislatively granted authority to develop and implement policy for the colleges (CCCCO BOG, 2012).

**Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM):** The California Community College Budget and Accounting Manual is published by the Board of Governors (BOG, 2000) and is given the following authority:

This Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM), which has the authority of regulation in accordance with Title 5 Section 59011 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), is distributed as part of the Board of Governors' responsibility to define, establish, and maintain the budgeting and accounting



structure and procedures for the California Community Colleges. This responsibility is defined in California Education Code (EC) Section 70901. Each community college district is required to follow this manual in accordance with Education Code Section 84030, which states:

‘The accounting system, including the uniform fund structure used to record the financial affairs of any community college district, shall be in accordance with the definitions, instructions, and procedures published in the California Community Colleges Budget and Accounting Manual...’(CCCCO, 2000).

**Career Technical Program:** Programs designated in the Taxonomy of Programs (CCCCO, TOP, 2009) “within which the enrollments are countable for purposes of supplemental apportionments from the federal Vocational Education Act (now called the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act).

**Categorical Program:** Community college programs that rely on targeted financial assistance or earmarks from the State of California or US Government.

**Faculty Load:** Specific load calculations can vary from one district to another and from one discipline to another and the load a full-time faculty member must teach is a contractual obligation. The State of California assumes that a full-time faculty member will have 30 lecture hours per week for 35 weeks each year. Portions of load are expressed in full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF). For instance, if a faculty member in History is expected to teach thirty units per year, fifteen units in the fall semester and fifteen in the spring semester. If each course is worth three units, it is

expected that it will meet for three hours per week. Each course is then equal to three weekly faculty contact hours or  $1/10^{\text{th}}$  of the annual load (Mullen, 2011).

**Faculty Obligation Number (FON):** The base number of full-time faculty a community college district in California is required by the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 5, Section 51025, to employ based on the preceding year's reported credit FTES (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011).

**Full Time Equivalent Student (FTES):** A conceptual representation of a full-time student calculated according to the following formula for a regular credit course in a normal semester: Number of students times the number of classroom hours per week times 17.5 weeks divided by 525 equals one full time equivalent student (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011).

**Productivity:** Represents the ratio between the faculty's hours of instruction per week ("faculty load") and the weekly hours of enrolled students in his/her sections. It is the total weekly student contact hours (WSCH) divided by the faculty member's load.  $WSCH/FTEF = \text{Productivity}$

The State of California sets a productivity and efficiency measure of 525 as standard. In theory, it is the number that instruction must achieve in order to balance apportionment and instructional costs. The higher the number, the more students served by each FTEF, and the lower the cost to the district (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011).

**Proposition 13:** Voter enacted initiative that reformed property taxes in California. Under Proposition 13 tax reform, property tax value was rolled back and frozen at the 1976 assessed value level. Property tax increases on any given property were limited

to no more than 2% per year as long as the property was not sold. Once sold, the property was reassessed at 1% of the sale price, and the 2% yearly cap became applicable to future years. (California Tax Data, 2012)

**Proposition 98:** Voter enacted legislation in California that:

Amends State Constitution by establishing a minimum level of state funding for school and community college districts; transferring to such districts, within limits, state revenues in excess of state's appropriations limit; and exempting excess funds from appropriations limit. Adds provisions to Education Code requiring excess funds to be used solely for instructional improvement and accountability and requiring schools to report student achievement, dropout rates, expenditures per student, progress toward reducing class size and teaching loads, classroom discipline, curriculum, quality of teaching and other matters. (Ballotpedia, 2012)

**Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code:** A “system of numerical codes used at the state level to collect and report information on programs and courses, in different colleges throughout the state, that have similar outcomes” (CCCCO TOP, 2009).

**Temporary Faculty:** The term used to refer to part-time or adjunct faculty in California community colleges. California education code establishes the rationale for part-time faculty and determines the maximum load they may teach:

The governing board of a community college district may employ any qualified individual as a temporary faculty member for a complete school year, but not less than a complete semester or quarter during a school year.

The employment of those persons shall be based upon the need for additional

faculty during a particular semester or quarter because of the higher enrollment of students during that semester or quarter as compared to the other semester or quarter in the academic year, or because a faculty member has been granted leave for a semester, quarter, or year, or is experiencing long-term illness, and shall be limited, in number of persons so employed, to that need, as determined by the governing board.

Employment of a person under this subdivision may be pursuant to contract fixing a salary for the entire semester or quarter. [That person] shall not be employed by any one district under this section for more than two semesters or three quarters within any period of three consecutive years. (California education code, section 87482).

**WSCH (Weekly student contact hours):** equal to the number of weekly faculty contact hours times number of weeks in a semester times the number of students enrolled in a course. Weekly faculty contact hours are usually equal to the number of units for the course in a lecture class.  $WFCH \times \# \text{ of Students} = WSCH$  (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011).

## **Assumptions**

One overarching assumption was that the individual actors who participated in the budget reductions were aware of the express missions ascribed to all California Community Colleges and understood how decisions about the instructional budget could affect the balance of those missions. It was further assumed that the individuals

who held the power to make decisions affecting instructional priorities cared about the effects of those changes.

Another key assumption of the study was the importance of the portion of the instructional budget dedicated to teaching done by part-time faculty or full-time overload faculty an entry point into understanding changing priorities within the institution. According to state regulations, this portion of the instructional budget is reported in the 1300 line of the budget in a California Community College. The Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM) of the California Community Colleges defines the 1300 line as:

**1300 Instructional Salaries, Other**

Expenditures for the full or prorated portions of salaries of instructors who have **not** been designated as contract or regular employees. Included are the salaries of instructors designated as temporary employees pursuant to *Education Code* Section 87477 and overload and stipend pay for instructors designated as contract employees or as regular employees (CCCCO BAM, 2000, Section 4, p. 45).

All instruction by part-time faculty, temporary faculty, and full-time faculty teaching as overload is included in this line. Because of restrictions that stem from state law and contract law this line typically represents the largest flexible portion of the general fund for colleges and districts. When colleges face the need to reduce expenditures, they cannot reduce regular full-time faculty in a discipline unless all part-time faculty in the discipline have already been eliminated or when they eliminate the entire program.

Other regulations also protect full-time faculty and make it difficult to reduce instructional expenses except through reductions in part-time faculty. One of those is the faculty obligation number (FON), which is the number of full-time faculty each district must maintain or face fines (California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 5, Section 51025). Districts that fall short of their FON are fined by the State an amount approximately equal to the cost of the salary for a full-time faculty member for each position they are short. The FON is determined in proportion to the number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) and has historically increased annually in alignment with growth and COLA but has recently dropped proportionally to the drop in enrollments (negative growth).

The tight regulation of full-time faculty obligations mean that districts have very little flexibility in the vast majority of their budgets; even if their negotiated contracts with faculty permitted it, they would not be able to find savings by reducing the number of full-time faculty. In order to save money in difficult budget times, colleges are forced to reduce the sections taught by part-time faculty. It is a primary assumption of the researcher that changes in the details of the 1300 line, particularly movement from one instructional activity to another, reveals a shift in priority. Instructional activities are each given a number based on the Taxonomy of Programs (TOP code). Assuming all other factors are equal, a sudden increase in 1300 line activity code 1520.00 (Reading) and corresponding decrease in 1305.00 (Child Development) would indicate a strategic shift of resources away from the career and technical program dedicated to training early childhood educators to the basic skills program of reading instruction (CCCCO TOP, 2009, pp. 40, 45).

## **Delimitations of the Study**

The purpose of this brief section on delimitations is to “help to further define the parameters of the research study” (Creswell, 2009). Bryant (2004) describes delimitations as “the factors that prevent you from claiming that your findings are true for all people in all times and places.” Bryant further distinguishes quantitative and qualitative delimitations: “For the quantitative study, these are the factors that limit generalization. For the qualitative study, these are the factors that limit the relevancy of your study to other populations or individuals.” Restricted to a single college in the California Community College System, the results of this study are not applicable to colleges in other states, private colleges, or four-year institutions. In addition, the interviews conducted for this study are delimited by the perspectives of the four participants. The experiences and dispositions of these four participants will not necessarily parallel those of other faculty and administrative leaders at Bay City College or elsewhere.

The three-year period of the study was delimited by the clear boundary of the beginning of the budgetary downturn that began in the 2009-2010 academic year. With no end to the budget crisis in sight, the 2011-2012 academic year was chosen as an endpoint for the purpose of completing the project within the constraints of the doctoral program. The actual budget crisis is expected to continue well beyond the arbitrary end of the study. Continuing the study over a longer period of time might produce different results.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Bryant (2004) notes, “Limitations are those restrictions created by your methodology.” The use of a sequential mixed methods approach presents the most significant limitations of the study. One notable limitation of the study that results directly from the methodology is the choice to study a single college from a system of 112 colleges. This limitation is due in part to the necessity of scale. An analysis of the budgets of all 112 California Community Colleges would certainly provide more data but the enormous task of reaching key individuals at each of those institutions with first hand knowledge of the decisions made that resulted in the budget decisions would exceed reasonable time constraints and the resources available to the researcher. Further, a researcher may find access to the key individuals restricted. As is noted in the assumptions, the research shows that a single college, while not adequate as a statistical sample, can provide an entry point for further analysis, either through larger quantitative studies or through more narrowly focused qualitative endeavors.

## **Significance of the Study**

An enormous body of research has been done on community colleges and basic skills education, particularly in regard to attempts to improve the quality of instruction and student support. Existing research is focused largely on the students and the faculty, and in some instances addresses administrative practices and program design or delivery method. Less attention, however, has been given to budgeting, except in studies concerned with how to scale up effective practices in cost-effective ways and almost no research has been done on the relationship between budget



reductions and attitudes toward basic skills education. Yet the belief that budgeting and budgets represent both policy and attitude is apparent in lobbying efforts by organizations such as the Community College League of California and in political rallies that bring thousands of students to the steps of the capital in Sacramento to fight for funding for community colleges. The relationship between budget and policy is evident even in accreditation standards; Standard 1, Part B, Institutional Mission and Effectiveness, of the ACCJC shows the connection clearly in subsection 4: “The institution provides evidence that the planning process is broad-based, offers opportunities for input by appropriate constituencies, allocates necessary resources, and leads to improvement of institutional effectiveness” (ACCJC, 2012, p. 3).

The identification of the effects of budget cuts on the mission of the colleges might provide future researchers with a starting point of inquiry into new strategies for strengthening the various outcomes which stem from the mission of the California Community Colleges. It is hoped that this study will reveal corollaries between the ongoing budget cuts and changes in basic skills education. It is further hoped that uncovering these corollaries will provide a foundation for future research into how attitudes toward basic skills education are impacted by changing economic circumstances and perhaps help develop strategies that will provide some protection of basic skills education from threats posed by economic downturns.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

“All evidence gathered in this study points to an unprecedented increase in the demand of the people of California for opportunity to participate in higher education, a chance for all who have the capacity and willingness to profit by college instruction.”

“California can and will, as in both the past and present, provide adequate support for an efficient program of public higher education designed to meet fully the rapidly changing needs of society.”

--The Master Plan for Higher Education in California

(Blair, et al, 1960, pp. 195-196)

### **Structure of the Chapter**

Chapter 2 is divided into two parts, the evolution of the California Community College and a review of the scholarly literature related to basic skills education and community colleges. The larger discussion of the evolution of the colleges and system is somewhat arbitrarily divided into three subsections, each dedicated to a different environmental factor.

The first of these subsections attends to the political context. Included in the political context is a summary of the history and development of the community college in California and the parallel development of basic skills education. Also part of the political context is a discussion of the mission of the California Community Colleges and how that mission has continued to change and develop over time.

The second subsection considers the role that economics has played in the growth and development of the colleges and system and reviews some of the key budgetary policies and practices.

The social environment is addressed in the last of the three subsections, giving special consideration to state and local demographics as well as providing an overview of important characteristics of the college at the heart of the study. The chapter concludes with a review of the scholarly literature related to basic skills education and California Community Colleges.

## **Evolution of the California Community College: The Political Context**

### **History of the California Community College System**

Foremost in my consideration of the evolution of the community college in California is the political/historical context. The many colleges and the communities they serve, which have been painted by Callan (2012, p. 17) as “hampered by barriers of poverty, language, weak public schools, and poor high school completion rates,” perpetuate arguments with one side touting fierce and lengthy exposés that bemoan their inefficiency, failures, bureaucratic excesses, overpaid faculty and staff, and endless expenses, while the other side simultaneously generates complex narratives of workforce renewal through innovative, nimble, just-in-time programs that meet immediate market needs and spur local economic growth, and inspires legion tales of lead-into-gold transformations of individual students who have risen like phoenixes from the ashes of poverty, addiction, a sordid past or some physical or mental

disability to become models of success, masters of industry, or paragons of virtuous creativity. The tendency of politicians and academics alike to rely too heavily on a single or narrow perspective without considering the larger context has often led to idealized solutions, many of which have been tried at great expense, and has at times exacerbated underlying problems by failing to consider consequences.

The history of the California Community College System is simultaneously fat with innovation and famished for change, a paradox that is most evident when the need for change is greatest, as it is now, when the current economic crisis has filled the sails of educational reform with fresh wind. Feast or famine changes also plague the college budgets. Compounding the up and down availability of resources is the use it or lose it requirement that often comes with state or federal funding, leading colleges to spend like drunken sailors or to tighten their belts, respectively, with each shift in their fortune. Coupled with the gale force activity in educational reform circles, pulling colleges in many directions at once, the recent economic downturn has drained the budgets of the colleges, individually and collectively.

One reason for the paradox of this large system of colleges is its enormous size: In the 2010-2011 year, 2,745,135 unduplicated students took one or more classes at a community college in California, amounting to the equivalent of 1,279,621.34 full-time students (FTES) (CCCCO MIS Data Mart, 2012). Bringing change to a system that serves such a large and diverse population across a wide geographical system can be achieved through different means, all requiring huge investments of personal and political energy. Examples of effective methods include emergent grass roots style efforts by many people across different sectors of the

system and organized political movements driven from a central individual or party. Viewed from a system-wide perspective, change happens so slowly that the system seems almost static, but if one looks more closely at the parts, one finds a flurry of activity.

Trapped within this vast and complex system is the egalitarian ideal of education for all, including those who are significantly underprepared for college. Ironically, the very inclusive and progressive ideal laid out in *The Master Plan* over fifty years ago, which was arguably responsible for California once having a system of higher education admired across the United States and beyond, is now under increasing attack, accused by fiscal conservatives of dragging the entire system and the corresponding State economy into decline (Callan, 2009 & CCCCCO Media Statement, 2102). Difficult economic times in California, strained household budgets, increased unemployment and a growing population are all factors that typically drive up enrollments at community colleges. The increased demand for community college offerings comes at the same time as the state faces shrinking tax revenues, and the staunch resistance to new taxes by traditional libertarian and conservative republican groups and the more recent Tea Party activists, a one-two punch that has opened every aspect and activity in public education to scrutiny. Under such a harsh light, it is not surprising that the question has arisen about whether offering basic skills education in community colleges and adult schools is a replication of resources that might be better used in other ways.

## **Basic Skills Education in the Community Colleges of California**

Basic skills instruction in community colleges, partly because of the funding it demands and the populations it serves, finds itself at the core of a variety of ideological and scholarly debates, which are sometimes remarkably public and political. A full appreciation of the intensity and scope of the ideological and scholarly discourse regarding basic skills education is made easier by examining the environment in which the conversation is rooted. A hermeneutical study of the environment in which the colleges and basic skills instruction exist, persist, subsist, insist, and resist, is likely to expose a complex weaving of innumerable agents and agencies aspiring to change the status quo to equally innumerable new, and in the mind of each agent or agency, better state.

The turbulent history of basic skills education and funding began in California with *The Master Plan* in 1960 and was refined through the structural and governance mandates and encouragements of AB 1725 in 1988 (Vasconcellos, 1988; Livingston, 1988, pp. 7-8). One recent and significant high point in the history of the California Community Colleges, at least in regard to investment, was the 2006 attempt to establish dedicated state funding mandating a statewide unified and cohesive attempt to collect and share best practices while distributing funds on a local level to allow districts to adopt the practices most suited to their needs (Boroch, et al, 2007, p. ES 3). Each of these three legislative efforts was simultaneously visionary and reactionary, attempting to establish through political and ideological will a new system of education that could provide sufficient course corrections to steer California away from an apparent collision course with economic and social collapse.

Other than investment by the state, either through legislation or financial support, a number of other factors have affected the course of basic skills education in California; they include changing demographics, new skills required in the workplace, and new or renewed academic research and interest (Callan, 2009).

The impact of these other factors has meant that the political will that led to the creation of the Basic Skills Initiative has withered somewhat in the face of three years of battling deep and dangerous waters, and the continued dearth of resources in a state seemingly overflowing in wealth at times have allowed for some to see the BSI as an albatross about the neck of higher education; nonetheless, the impetus that sparked the initial effort continues to infuse education programs and political discussions across the state and even adds wind to the sails of those who support the original intent of the Basic Skills Initiative and continue to work on its behalf.

One of the first accomplishments of the Basic Skills Initiative was the publication of, "The Poppy Copy," which summarizes the purpose of the effort as well as providing an annotated bibliography and literature review of best practices in four categories of basic skills education. In its introduction, Boroch, (2007), notes that among other objectives a fundamental purpose of the Basic Skills Initiative is to, "Ensure that basic skills development is a major focus and an adequately funded activity of the Community Colleges" (p. ES 3). Many of the objectives laid out in this introduction must have seemed easily achievable early in the development on the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI). The Basic Skills Initiative has in many ways followed the pattern set by the Master Plan itself: a large initial investment that diminished over time. Callan (2009) finds that, "It is ironic that the state that first put forth the

principle of universal college access has reneged on that principle at a time of major demographic and economic transitions” (p. 23). Seemingly, and unfortunately for students with basic skills needs in California, the noble ideas of the Master Plan and the Basic Skills Initiative have received more ideological and verbal support than fiscal support.

### **The Mission of the California Community Colleges and System**

The three primary missions of the California Community Colleges are defined in Education Code 66010.4:

The missions and functions of California's public and independent segments, and their respective institutions of higher education shall be differentiated as follows: (a) (1) The California Community Colleges shall, as a primary mission, offer academic and vocational instruction at the lower division level for both younger and older students, including those persons returning to school. Public community colleges shall offer instruction through but not beyond the second year of college. These institutions may grant the associate in arts and the associate in science degree. (2) In addition to the primary mission of academic and vocational instruction, the community colleges shall offer instruction and courses to achieve all of the following: (A) The provision of remedial instruction for those in need of it and, in conjunction with the school districts, instruction in English as a second language, adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the



postsecondary level are reaffirmed and supported as essential and important functions of the community colleges.

From this part of the California Education Code one can clearly see the different functions colleges are authorized to provide, including academic and vocational instruction up to but not beyond the second year of college and remedial instruction. English as a second language, noncredit instruction, student support services, community services, work force improvement and institutional research concerning student learning and retention are addressed in the code as well. Close examination of the language reveals that some of these functions are always required, while others are required only insofar as they can be shown to be in the interest of the state, and still others are permitted when necessary to support the primary missions. It is the primary missions, those the colleges “shall” provide that are of greatest interest to this study. Those are “academic and vocational instruction,” “remedial instruction for those in need of it,” and ESL, adult noncredit, and support services that help students succeed at the postsecondary level.

The Chancellor’s Office offers this shortened interpretation of the mission of the colleges: “Community colleges provide basic skills education, workforce training and courses to prepare students to transfer to four-year universities. Colleges also provide opportunities for personal enrichment and lifelong learning” (CCCCO, 2010). The three commonly understood required elements in nearly every explanation of the mission of the California Community Colleges can be seen in the first sentence in the preceding quote from the Chancellor’s Office: “Basic skills education, workforce training, and courses to prepare students for transfer.” Put more

simply, the three central elements of the mission of all California Community Colleges are basic skills, career technical, and transfer.

### **The Economic Context**

Community colleges in California operate under a variety of different regulations and restrictions that govern how they manage their resources. The authoritative guide for how they use financial resources is the Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM), which informs “individuals who work daily with the community college accounting system” that they are “required to present their financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles” (CCCCO, 2000, p. 1.2, p. 1.3). Because of their nonprofit status, community colleges primarily record and report their economic resources through the “use of the flow of current financial resources measurement focus used by other government entities” (CCCCO, 2000, p. 1.5). In essence, the community colleges are first accountable as nonprofit entities and are governed in that regard by all the usual federal, state, and local regulations concerned with “financial resources measurement.”

However, not all activities in which California Community Colleges engage are nonprofit; some activities, such as bookstores or cafeterias, operate in much the same fashion as their private enterprise equivalents. This added complexity necessitates that the colleges use fund accounting, in which “A fund is defined as a fiscal and accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts recording cash and other financial resources, together with all related liabilities and residual equities or balances and changes therein, which are segregated for the purpose of carrying on specific activities or attaining certain objectives in accordance with special

regulations, restrictions, or limitations. [NCGA Statement 1, paragraph 17] (CCCCO, 2000, p. 1.6).

Before 1981, the Legislature had direct control over much of the accounting decisions for the community colleges in California, and in many ways that active authority still exists today. Decisions about fees and tuition, for instance, are still made by the Legislature. However, the authority to establish a system of accounting rules and regulations that govern the community college districts in California were given to the Board of Governors and that authority resulted in the creation of the Budget and Accounting Manual (BAM) still in use today. The introductory chapter of the BAM includes the written background that led to its creation. The short history explains that in 1973 the first BAM was adopted. It established standards for districts to use. It has been updated and the authority vested in it modified or strengthened for purposes of accountability a number of times since its creation. Some of the most substantive changes resulted from AB1725, which was signed into law in 1988. That same year a committee was formed to review changes in the law and keep the manual updated. Cooperative efforts between the Chancellor's Office and district representatives continue to review the law and keep the manual up to date (CCCCO, 2000, p. 1.4).

This brief summary of the history of the Budget and Accounting Manual only hints at the restrictive environment in which California Community Colleges must manage their resources. In spite of the authority vested in the Board of Governors to draft this manual, the effective power to significantly increase revenue does not rest with California Community College System, the Chancellor's Office or any of the 72

districts or 112 colleges. The ability to significantly affect revenue is largely retained by the California Legislature, which controls both the distribution of tax dollars in the form of apportionment to colleges and the amounts colleges are permitted to collect from students in the form of fees, making budget management highly dependent on the annual budget of the state.

The rate the colleges charge in per unit fees to students is determined by the Legislature and expressed in the Education Code:

76300. (a) The governing board of each community college district shall charge each student a fee pursuant to this section.

(b) (1) The fee prescribed by this section shall be thirty-six dollars (\$36) per unit per semester, effective with the fall term of the 2011-12 academic year.

(2012)

At \$36/unit in colleges on semester systems (\$24/unit for quarter systems), community colleges in California still have the lowest tuition of any of the 50 states, and even were the fee to be increased to \$60/unit, California would remain among the lowest cost states in which to attend community college (Taylor, January 2011). The fees collected by community colleges in California are retained by the colleges that collect them; however, the apportionment distribution is proportionally reduced.

According to Education Code section 76300 (c):

For the purposes of computing apportionments to community college districts pursuant to Section 84750.5, the board of governors shall subtract, from the total revenue owed to each district, 98 percent of the revenues received by districts from charging a fee pursuant to this section.

Colleges or districts are free to not collect fees, but according to a legal opinion written by Fred Harris, Director of the College Finance and Facilities Planning Division of the Chancellor's Office (2002), their apportionment is reduced the equivalent of 98% of the fees they would have collected regardless. And there is an additional cost to a college or district that might choose not to collect fees, as can be seen by Education Code 76300 (d): "The board of governors shall reduce apportionments by up to 10 percent to any district that does not collect the fees prescribed by this section."

But what percentage of the cost of educating a community college student do the fees they pay cover? According to the Legislative Analyst Office, in 2007-2008, the last year before the current ongoing budget crisis began, student fees paid about ten percent of the cost of their education (LAO, 2012). In 2011-2012, the portion of the total cost of their education paid for by students had doubled, to 20%. Nonetheless, the 98% rule continues to apply, and colleges and districts are dependent upon the allocation of apportionment dollars to survive.

Complicating matters of economics even further for colleges and districts are the growth formula by which apportionment is distributed and the potential drop in enrollment that comes when fees are raised (Murphy, 2004).

Opportunities to expand revenue must essentially come from one of two means: 1) either through influencing legislative decisions or 2) through diversifying revenue streams to include sources other than state allocations or student fees. Some districts have been able to shield themselves from the budget crisis because of their affluence. These districts have undergone an audit process and applied for fiscal

independence (CA Education Code, Section 85266.5, 2012). However, only a handful of districts have applied, leaving those that do not have such resources to contend with the statewide legislative process, a process that is politically charged, and any number of individuals and interest groups may attempt to swing the process in their favor. In most districts, the debate over how colleges spend their resources begins well before the colleges know what their resources will be in the coming year.

In addition to the tight regulations regarding sources of income and restrictions on how much community colleges may charge or how much they may retain of what they charge, districts budgets are significantly bound by the timing of the budgeting process. Community colleges are required to follow a specific timeline each year in creating and sharing their budget with the public. This timeline means that often colleges are operating on monies borrowed from the county or from bonds while they await statewide budget decisions. The chart in figure 1.2 shows the timeline established in the *Budget and Accounting Manual* for districts to adopt and publish their budgets (CCCCO, p. 1.7, 2000):

<b>Important Dates in the Adoption and Publication of Budgets in California Community College Districts</b>		
<b>Action Required</b>	<b>On or Before</b>	<b>Title 5 Section</b>
Tentative Budget Adoption	July 1	58305
Newspaper Publication stating Budget is Available	as appropriate	58301
Public Hearing	September 15	58301
Final Budget Adoption	September 15	58305
Annual Financial and Budget Report (CCFS-311) Sent to State Chancellor	September 30	58305
Informational Copy of Budget Sent to County (if required)	September 30	58305

**Figure 2.1** (CA Dept of Finance, 2006)

As noted in the preceding chart, California Community Colleges are required by law to have adopted a tentative budget by July 1<sup>st</sup> and a final budget by September 15<sup>th</sup>. This timeline works well when the legislature and governor adopt the state budget by the constitutionally required deadline of June 15<sup>th</sup> (California Department of Finance, 2006). Unfortunately, in recent years the legislature has regularly failed to achieve the two-thirds vote needed to pass the budget by the deadline (Brooks 2011). In fact, in 2009 a budget deal was not reached until July 20<sup>th</sup>, in 2010 the legislature finally agreed on a budget on October 8<sup>th</sup>, and in 2011 the legislature met the deadline only to have the budget rejected by the State Controller for failing to

abide by the additional requirement of a balanced budget (Brooks, 2011; Taylor, August 2011, p. 11).

No discussion of economics and California Community Colleges would be complete without consideration of Proposition 13 and Proposition 98. On June 6, 1978, Californians passed Proposition 13, which reduced property tax rates on private property by more than 50% (California Tax Data, 2012). In a 2009 article for Time Magazine, Kevin O’Leary saw the relationship between Proposition 13 and the current budget situation in California:

Proposition 13 shot the tires out of Pat Brown's liberal state. Liberal legislative leaders such as Willie Brown and John Burton jerry-rigged repairs and kept the damaged vehicle running for 30 years. Now Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger says there is no choice but to complete the demolition by slashing essential services.

In 2009, as soon as State budget shortfalls began to threaten the allocations community colleges would receive, people began to talk about Proposition 98. Another voter enacted initiative, Proposition 98 provides a formula to guarantee a minimum level of funding for k-14 education and specifies how those funds may be used. Public discussion increased in temperature and volume when Schwarzenegger proposed the suspension of Prop 98 in order to balance the budget, an action which would require a two-thirds majority of both houses of the legislature (Ballotpedia, 2012). Proposition 98 was not suspended in that budget year, and has not in the ensuing years, but accusations of “shell game” budgeting have been made regarding the budgets of Governor Schwarzenegger and Governor Brown.

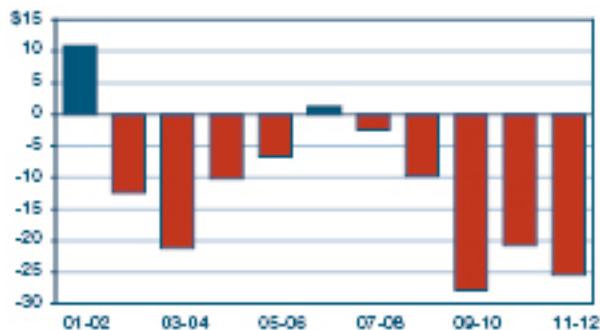


As early as 2004 analysts were predicting that the budget problems in California would lead to reduced opportunities for students with basic skills needs. Schulock (2004, p. 55), “The likely combined effect of these [changes in funding and college cost] is to shift the composition of the community college student body toward younger, better prepared students and away from those who are less prepared for college and, more importantly, less prepared to navigate the increasingly overcrowded and competitive environment of the community college.” In the same article Schulock also noted that some of the expected negative effects were already taking place, “Everyone agrees that the greatest impact on access has been felt by the less well-prepared students, who are not as savvy to deadlines, fees, financial aid, and ways to navigate the system,” and that “Without exception, district officials noted that the loss of access has likely been most severe for the less sophisticated students who do not know how to play the game to get enrolled in classes—the students whose ‘road map of higher education’ is not well defined” (pp. 58 & 60, 2004).

Since those early warning signals, budget problems have continued almost entirely unchecked. The chart and data in figure 1.1, provided by the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO, 2011), the State of California’s nonpartisan fiscal and policy advisor, shows that the state has suffered serious budget shortfalls in nine of the past eleven years, and that those shortfalls were most significant in the past three.

### *Significant State Budget Shortfalls Since 2001*

*(Projected Budget Problem at Beginning of Each Budget Cycle<sup>a</sup>, in Billions)*



<sup>a</sup> Based on LAC projections made in November preceding each fiscal year shown. Represents difference between current-law resources (including reserves) and expenditures.

- California has dealt with large state budget shortfalls since 2001. The 2001 recession and the “Great Recession” of 2007 to 2009 were major causes of the shortfalls. In addition, major new program and tax cut commitments were made in 1999 and 2000 that raised the level of state spending.
- The state’s fiscal condition deteriorated rapidly in the months following the near collapse of world credit markets in late 2008. Eventually, the Legislature had to enact about \$60 billion of one-time and ongoing actions to address the 2009–10 budget shortfall. In 2010–11, the enacted budget, as well as 2010 special session actions, contained about \$20 billion of budget solutions.

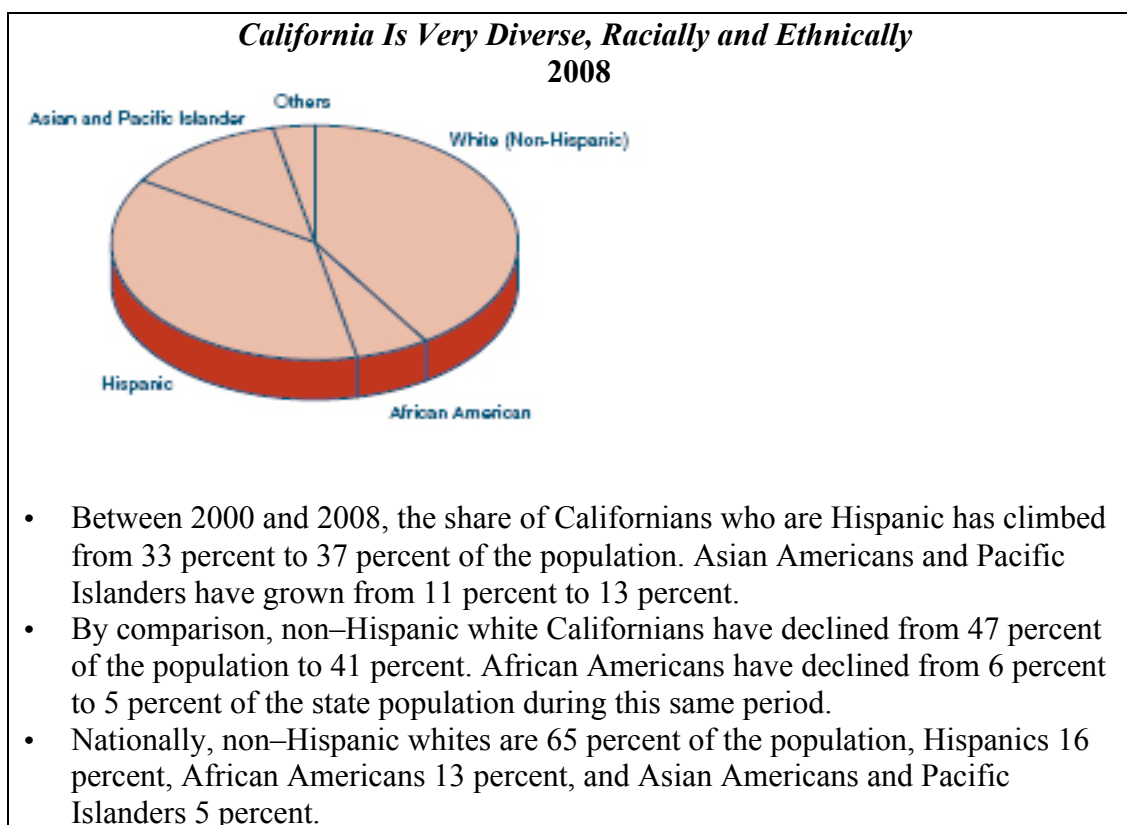
**Figure 2.2**

Even before the recent crisis, community colleges in California had spent years tightening their belts, battling increasingly expensive costs for employee benefits and wages and searching for alternative sources of income. If not for the brief respite provided by the 2006-2007 state budget when revenues exceeded expenditures, the Basic Skills Initiative may have never left the harbor; instead, it eked out a successful launch, but quickly began taking on water as it entered open water. By 2009, only three years into its existence, the BSI was facing a descent into the maelstrom.

## The Social Context

### State and Local Demographics

California is incredibly rich in cultural and ethnic diversity, boasting some of the most diverse cities and counties in the nation. The richness of its diversity is reflected nowhere better than in its community college system and the two colleges originally chosen for this study are excellent examples of that diversity. Taken from the annual *Cal Facts* report of the Legislative Analysts Office (2011), Figure 2.3 below shows both the racial diversity of the State of California and the rapid transformation that continues to create new demands and opportunities in the community college system.



**Figure 2.3**

### **Description of the College Chosen for this Study**

Because of their diverse student populations and many other factors, the two colleges were chosen for this study because they were hothouses of experimentation and investment in basic skills education. Situated in very different communities, both colleges serve diverse student populations and both have a similar relatively large percentage of their matriculating students needing remediation in English and Math. Both colleges also have significantly large populations of English language learners and rely on State funding for more than 80% of their operating expenses. While they share these and many other similarities, they also differ from one another significantly in regard to factors important to this study. Among these factors are the geographical setting, the size of the service area, the socio-economics of the communities in which they reside, the demographics of the students they serve, their governance and administrative structures, the programs they offer and available local educational alternatives.

The college that participated fully in the study is a large college in a multi-college suburban district. In the 2011-2012 academic year, it served more than 20,000 unduplicated students. It offers programs in career technical education, transfer programs and basic skills education. Students come from urban and suburban service areas in the district and a large number of international students also attend. Like the larger population in the State of California, the student body is ethnically and economically diverse. The college studied is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

## Scholarly Literature

There has been extensive research done on basic skills education at the college and university level, and the need for community colleges to consider basic skills in their planning and policies is well known. The publication in 2007 of *Basic Skills as a Foundation for Student Success in California Community Colleges*, commonly referred to as “The Poppy Copy” for its golden poppy colored cover, represents perhaps the most thorough review of literature related to basic skills education ever achieved. This seminal work was the culmination of efforts of a team of researchers, faculty, and administrators of The Center for Student Success and The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges. In describing their findings in the literature review, they note:

An extensive body of literature spanning more than 30 years of research has documented a surprisingly unified view of effective practices in developmental education. Study after study by a multitude of researchers confirms a consistent set of elements that commonly characterize effective developmental education programs. These elements can be organized under the broad categories of organizational and administrative practices, program components, staff development, and instructional practices. (p. 14)

The four broad categories they use to organize the effective practices can also be used to categorize the different approaches to improving success in basic skills instruction found in the scholarly discourse.

A search of the phrases, “basic skills,” and, “community college,” finds numerous dissertations and theses written since 1978, with the largest number written

in the decade of the 1980's. In addition to the four broad categories for studying practice, a number of research projects attempted to describe or understand the students with basic skills needs, the faculty who teach them, the pedagogy and tools used to teach or assist them, and the policies that help or hinder them. When the search terms are further narrowed to include "California," the research is reduced by nearly 75%. The majority of dissertations focus on the students; early studies looked at cognitive and behavioral characteristics, while later studies place more emphasis on equity and social justice concerns such as race or ethnicity. Studies that focus on public policy or finance are less common than those that are primarily concerned with students, instructors, or instruction.

Much of the academic literature concerned with issues of finance and public policy in the California Community College System is directly related to the major economic transitions and public policy movements that have had the greatest impact. As mentioned earlier, Proposition 13 (1978) and AB1725 (1987) are two of the most well known. Proposition 13, passed by the voters in 1978, was perhaps the most influential and dramatic changes in public policy to affect California community colleges. In the immediate aftermath of the passage of Proposition 13, community college budgets in California shrunk by 40%.

Over the subsequent decade, at least three studies were written about how Proposition 13 impacted different aspects of community college finance and practice. Throop (1981) surveyed the business officers of colleges in the counties of Los Angeles and Orange regarding the relationship between their budgetary practices and their facilities maintenance. His findings showed that the colleges had different

methods of budgeting, different sources of funds, and different concepts of budgeting guidelines. Also in 1981, Walsvick completed a study of job satisfaction among community college presidents in California. His findings showed that the college presidents had high degrees of job satisfaction. He noted that Proposition 13 and other legislative and financial pressures were among the top concerns of the respondents. Marquis (1986) also studied the executive branch of community colleges in California. His study focused on the changes in job functions from 1975 through 1983, a period in which Proposition 13 and other changes such as bargaining rights influenced college administration.

In 1987, Bidwell completed another study connected to the impact of Proposition 13. The focus of his study was the change in funding for community service programs from public support to fee-based funding and the impact of the drastic 62% cuts that ensued.

Another major policy change, one which attempted to restore some funding to colleges and provided new directions in the areas of college missions, faculty rights and accountability, among others. Miller (1993) completed a study that analyzed the resulting impacts of the new funding and mandates on the colleges and their spending patterns.

Boroch (2005) completed a descriptive study of the strategies implemented in Southern California community college science divisions as a result of severe state funding reductions from spring of 2003 through the spring of 2004. Many of the strategies Boroch describes in her study are the same as those that have been employed in the more recent budget crisis. The current crisis has gone on longer and

the reductions have been more severe, but attempts to increase productivity and questions about the centrality of offerings to the mission have continued to be primary response strategies to budget reductions.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

“One of the philosophical assumptions underlying this type of research is that reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality.”

Sharan B. Merriam (1998, p. 22)

### **Structure of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose of the study and research questions. These sections are followed by the updated research design and three sections on the sources and collection of the data: 1) Sources of Data, 2) Data Collection and Analysis: Budget and Minutes, and 3) Data Collection and Analysis: First Person Interviews. The chapter concludes with a discussion of

### **Restatement of the Purpose of the Study**

This study is an examination of the response of one California Community College to the reductions in state appropriations for fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012; of particular interest to the study were any changes in the distribution or redistribution of resources that might indicate a shift in the prioritization of the basic skills in relation to the other two parts of the mission of California Community Colleges. By studying fluctuations in the instructional expenses in the budgets of the college over the three-year period of reduced funding, the study attempts to articulate shifting priorities in the balance of investment. Relying on primary institutional documents including annual budgets, board minutes,

and planning committee meeting minutes this case study provides an in depth analysis of the reduction strategies employed at Bay City College and what those strategies reveal about the institution's disposition toward basic skills education. A picture of the state of basics skills educational programming at Bay City College is explicated through a detailed budget analysis. Distribution/redistribution of resources and reductions within the institution provided greater understanding of the general well-being of basic skills education at the college and offered insight into changing attitudes toward basic skills education. Interviews with key leadership within the college revealed some of the motivations and expectations that surrounded the decisions and procedures of the committees and leadership responsible for the budget adjustments.

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

- What does the annual budget reveal about the status of basic skills programs?
- What, if any, shift in priorities is apparent in the balance of investment among the three missions designated by the State?
  - What does the balance of investment among the three priorities reveal about changes in disposition (favorable, unfavorable, or unchanged) toward basic skills education?
  - How does ESL programming, which often serves a different fundamental purpose and population than that of other basic skills education, fare when compared to instruction in remedial math, reading and writing?

- Do any patterns emerge over the three-year period? Has there been a consistent shift toward or away from basic skills education at one or both institutions? Was there a movement in one direction one year followed by a correction the next?
- Considering any changes or patterns observed, to what degree does the budget represent a plan that re-imagines the mission of the college?

## **Research Design**

As I noted in Chapter 1, the original research design changed from a two-college case study to a single college case study. This change affected the scale and scope of the project, but the purpose of the study was not otherwise impeded. Faced with unexpected conditions and unwilling subjects for my study, I was able to adjust my focus and continue rather than discard the entire project and start again from scratch. This approach follows one of the characteristics of qualitative research that Creswell (2009) describes as emergent design:

The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent. This means that the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and all phases of the process may change or shift after the researcher enters the field and begins to collect data. For example, the questions may change, the forms of data collection may shift, and the individuals studied and the sites visited may be modified. The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants and to address the research to obtain that information. (Kindle locations 3578-3581)

The environment in which a study is conducted is one of the many features of qualitative research that has the potential to be the impetus of change in a research design. Creswell (2009) names this characteristic the “natural setting” and observes:

Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. They do not bring individuals into a lab (a contrived situation), nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete. This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. In the natural setting, the researchers have face-to-face interaction over time. (Kindle Locations 3561-3565)

Unlike a scientific laboratory, the natural setting in which my study was conducted is the dynamic and diverse State of California. Miles T. Bryant advises students hoping to complete a dissertation to have a contingency plan because of the unpredictable nature of research. He observes, “Human beings are not like corn seedlings in an experimental plot under the control of the researcher. They change; things change” (2004, p. 102). The environment in which this study took place was and remains politically charged and rather than allow my study to be delayed indefinitely while the political turmoil continues, it seemed prudent to accept the environmental factors and adjust the design accordingly. As I have previously indicated, I will address a number of environmental factors, including the politics of taxes, in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Although reduced in scale and scope by adapting to the very real constraints of time, the revised study nonetheless provided sufficient data to answer the research questions and achieve its purpose. Although troubling, the resistance of Middlesize College provided the benefit of raising material questions about the political, social and economic forces at play in the environment in which the study was conducted. In this regard, the value of the environment or “natural setting” as a characteristic to be considered in this study is unequivocal.

From a philosophical perspective, this study is pragmatic in design (Creswell, 2009). Creswell notes, “Pragmatists agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political, and other contexts. In this way, mixed methods studies may include a postmodern turn, a theoretical lens that is reflective of social justice and political aims” (2009, Kindle Locations 509-511). This study was conducted in an active social and political context, and my perspective as researcher, while aiming for objectivity, was certainly influenced by my pre-existing advocacy for basic skills education as a matter of social justice. My sincere and ongoing concern that basic skills education is in danger of diminishment through the influence of those who see it as a waste of public money and consider its reduction a matter of fiscal exigency in times of economic strife further influences my perspective. Admittedly, my interest in the subject is based in part on the assumption that basic skills education, insofar as it affords individuals opportunities for personal and career advancement to students often from the working classes or from other disenfranchised groups, contributes to the greater welfare of the larger society. I will address my own interests in greater detail in the “Researcher Bias” section at the end of this chapter.

In order to develop as complete a picture as possible of the reduction strategies implemented by these two colleges, this study is largely descriptive and applies what Creswell (2009) describes as a “Sequential mixed methods procedure” in which “the study may begin with a quantitative method in which a theory or concept is tested, followed by a qualitative method involving detailed exploration with a few cases or individuals (Kindle Locations 582-583, 585-586). In this instance, the research begins with a simple quantitative test of a concept followed by the use of the qualitative strategy of the case study. The concept tested in the quantitative portion of the research is the use of the 1300 line budget data as a measure of investment in and disposition toward basic skills education in Bay City College while under the duress of ongoing State of California budget reductions. Following the conceptual test, the qualitative portion of the research completes the case study by interviewing four individuals in leadership positions at Bay City College in order to provide an exploratory description of the budget reduction process.

Creswell (2009) describes the case study as “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Kindle Locations 555-557). This study explored the formal and informal processes that comprised the enactment of budget reductions at Bay City College during the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 academic years. The study is clearly bounded by the three-year period of the study and restricted to the activity related to budget reductions at Bay City College.

The application of the quantitative research stratagem was first applied to the priorities represented in the budget of Bay City College over the three-year period of the study. The concept tested through analysis of the distribution and redistribution of funds in the 1300 line of the budget of Bay City College was whether changes in distribution during the three years of the study would reveal useful data reflective of educational priorities in regard to basic skills programs. The understanding and explication of the 1300 line budget data depended in part on the analysis of supporting documents that included the meeting minutes of the committees tasked with oversight of the budget lines in question at Bay City College. The composite analysis in turn helped to guide the formation of interview questions and the interviews themselves of the key actors on those committees. This approach of investigating the process of administration and governance during the budget crisis through multiple entrance points is reflective of the practice of institutional ethnography (DeVault and McCoy, 2003; Smith, 2005). The selection and recruitment of interview participants and the conduct of the interviews also relied on many of the tenets of institutional ethnography.

## **Sources of Data**

The primary sources of data considered in this study were: 1) 1300 data as produced in a special report by a budget accountant at Bay City College, 2) A variety of publically available documents that provided the means to interpret the data in the 1300 report, 3) Minutes of the shared governance committees responsible for budgeting, primarily the Instructional Planning Committee at Bay City College, and

4) First person accounts of the process gathered in interviews with key actors in those meetings, including administrative and faculty leadership.

### **Data Collection and Analysis: Budgets and Minutes**

Access to the budget data needed for the study proved more difficult than expected. Having worked as an administrator in the California Community College System I was familiar with the 1300 line budget data and had in fact used it along with enrollment data, WSCH, FTEF, FTES, faculty load, and productivity as a tool for managing a division budget. Detailed explanations of each of these terms are provided in the definitions section in Chapter 1, but a quick review of these terms is provided in Figure 3.1 (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011). The definitions and data that these terms represent is evidence of the central role that enrollment management plays in the administration and budgeting in the California Community College System. Many, if not most colleges in the system have presentations that explain these terms and reporting practices built into their staff development and/or posted on their public websites. The California Association of Community College Registrars and Admissions Officers also has a helpful PowerPoint presentation by John Mullen posted on its website. The collective reporting of this data is done three times a year to the California Community College System Office on the CCFS-320 Report, most often called the “320 Report” (2011).



### Enrollment Terminology

**Faculty Load:** The State of California assumes that a full-time faculty member will have 30 lecture hours per week for 35 weeks each year. Portions of load are expressed in full-time equivalent faculty (FTEF).

**FTEF (Full-time equivalent faculty):** The amount of course load taught by one full-time faculty member in a contract year.

**FTES (Full-time equivalent students):** The number students in a course multiplied by the number of weekly scheduled hours, multiplied by the term length multiplier (17.5 weeks in a normal semester; 11.67 weeks in a normal quarter) divided by 525. One FTES equals 1 student X 15 hours/week X 35 weeks or  $1 \text{ FTES} = 1 \times 15 \times 35 = 525$  contact hours.

**Productivity:** Represents the ratio between the faculty's hours of instruction per week ("faculty load") and the weekly hours of enrolled students in his/her sections. It is the total weekly student contact hours (WSCH) divided by the faculty member's load.  $\text{WSCH}/\text{FTEF} = \text{Productivity}$

**WSCH (Weekly student contact hours):** Equal to the number of weekly faculty

**Figure 3.1**

(College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011)

The complexity of the data required for enrollment management and the central role played by enrollment management in keeping a balanced budget in a California community college necessitates an intimate working knowledge of these terms and their reporting. It was because of my experience working with these data

sets and specifically with the 1300 line data that I expected Bay City College to be able to quickly provide the information in the format I needed for my research. It came as a surprise to learn that a report of the 1300 data in the disaggregated form I required had not previously been created at Bay City College. The report, a sample year from which is included in Appendix A, was created for me through the assistance of a budget accountant at Bay City College over a period of three weeks. After the report was completed, the accountant informed me that the vice-presidents of the college had found it informative and it would become a regular part of their internal data reporting in the future.

In addition to the 1300 line data, a number of other public documents were used in my analysis. Among the other source documents are program review data sheets, Instructional Planning Committee minutes, and Board of Trustees meeting minutes. These other sources provided necessary additional data for interpreting the 1300 line data and helped inform and steer the interviews. Of these three additional source documents, the largest amount of information came from the program review data and Instructional Planning Committee meeting minutes.

Except to confirm full-time faculty hiring or retirement surprisingly little information came from minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees. Although the Board minutes contain very detailed information as required by law, the information needed was often not disaggregated into the composite parts needed to inform my research. In California Community Colleges, a portion of the Board of Trustee meeting agenda is dedicated to consent items of a budgetary nature. Budget and expense transfers are one valuable information resource commonly included in

this portion of the agenda. Any transfer of funds from one type of purpose to another would appear in this part of the agenda. Consent items on the agenda of this type were expected to yield information about an expense over-run in the cost of part-time faculty through reports of funds transferred in or out of a particular line.

Unfortunately, the minutes are not detailed enough to reflect changes in part-time instruction by discipline. However, in combination with the 1300 line data provided by the budget accountant, reports in the minutes of staffing changes such as new hires or retirements became more meaningful. By looking at the disciplines where there were decreases or increases in 1300 dollars expended, and verifying these changes were or were not the result of a new full-time hire or retirement, I was able to measure changes in investment in the basic skills or other college missions. The researcher's hope to tease out information about which programs enjoyed favorable treatment and which did not during the three-year period of reductions was achieved through the investigation of these multiple source documents.

Reports of full-time hires or retirements in Board and other committee meeting minutes items were significant to the study in a number of ways. Colleges, in spite of difficult budget reductions, must continue to hire new faculty and staff even while reducing faculty and staff in other areas. Not hiring a new faculty member in a discipline when a full-time member has retired leaves the college forced to reduce offerings in that discipline or to cover the load of that faculty member with part-time faculty, which would appear as increased 1300 line expenditures. This shift in investment from one area to another reveals corollary changes in priorities. If, for instance, a faculty member who retires from Criminal Justice is not replaced, either

the total offerings in the discipline would be reduced by the equivalent of one FTEF or the part-time expenditures would increase by a corresponding amount. Further meaning might be found if a new faculty position were created in Health Technologies and the FTEF was moved from Criminal Justice to cover the new position. A transfer of FTEF from one discipline to another would reflect a change in priorities by the institution. However, to understand more about what a change of investment of that type meant, more information was needed than could be garnered from the 1300 data, program review data sheets and Board minutes.

To begin to understand the underlying strategies and intentions that led to changes in investment from one discipline to another, I turned to the minutes of the shared governance committees where the decisions behind the changes occurred. These committee minutes began to reveal the strategies used to make the decisions, and also revealed where such decisions may have been made easily or may have followed difficult deliberations. The Instructional Planning Committee meeting minutes, in particular, helped me to identify the potential faculty and administrative leaders to recruit for the last part of the data gathering, the interviews.

### **Data Collection and Analysis: Interviews**

As I indicated in the introductory portion of this chapter, the use of personal interviews aligns with the mixed method approach of the study, which asserts a pragmatic worldview and collects both quantitative and qualitative data in sequence. As Creswell (2009) observes regarding a mixed methods approach, I have based “the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data best provides

understanding of a research problem.” Following Creswell’s model, the second phase of such a study, “focuses on qualitative, open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants.” In the interviews, I used open-ended questions designed to encourage the participants to feel relaxed and free to focus on what they considered important (McMillan, 2003; Charmaz, 2004).

I relied on the detail of the meeting minutes to disclose moments of change or points of contention or consensus, and from those details I was able to begin to form a picture of the key faculty and administrative leadership. It was through the interviews that I hoped to garner first-person accounts from faculty and administrators who had served on the committees for greater insights into the strategies and politics employed in the process.

Although it was possible, even before any analysis of meeting minutes had been completed, to predict who the primary stakeholders were, making final selections involved speaking with a number of them to try to capture a picture of who they understood to be central to the decision-making process. Leaders among the faculty, staff, and administration were easily identified, and quite often they were able to recommend others they considered integral to the process as well. From the faculty, I was not surprised to find that the presidents of the faculty senate and the leaders of the faculty union were active in the Instructional Planning Committee during the budget crisis. Clearly, they were vested in the outcomes of the process and would have valuable insight into the underlying strategies if they were available and willing to participate.

Similar leadership from the administration was also expected to provide valuable insight on the strategies and actions that resulted in the ultimate distribution of resources. For the administration, the key actors I considered as I narrowed the field of potential leaders to recruit for interviews were the Vice-Presidents who chair or co-chair the committees responsible for planning and budgeting. Interviews were ultimately conducted in person with four individuals who were integral to decision-making processes during the three-year period of reductions from 2009-2010 through 2011-2012. The various conversations that occurred during the recruitment and selection process also helped to create a list of interview questions and topics. From that open ideas list, I was able to draft a set of common questions, which provided a loose structure for the interviews.

### **Interview Recording Hardware and Software**

Because of the various locations of the interviews, I relied on two separate tools for recording. I was concerned about the possibility that I may not have ready access to a power source in every interview location, so I used an iPad to record the audio files for each of the interviews. The iPad offered sufficiently long battery life for the task, allowing continual recording for many hours before needing to be recharged, and also allowed me to record the interviews directly into secure cloud-based storage through a private Evernote account. This meant the audio data files were immediately backed up and secured and there would be less chance of the loss of data to an equipment failure such as a failed hard drive failure or a lost flash drive. Similarly, I chose to type my notes during the interview on my Apple MacBook Air

in Microsoft Word during the interview. The MacBook Air again offered long battery life that freed me from concern about being near an electrical outlet and was easy to carry. Finally, once I had finished typing the notes, I saved them with a coded name and uploaded the coded file to secure cloud-based storage.

## **Chapter 4: Analysis and Results of the Study**

### **Structure of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with an overview and description of data collection and analysis, including a discussion of the obstacles that led to changes in the research plan. Following the overview of the data collection, the results of the research are reported in two halves, according to the “Sequential mixed methods procedure” described in the methodology chapter (Creswell, 2009, Kindle locations 582-583, 585-586). The report of the results begins with the quantitative analysis of the 1300 budget information and a review of meeting minutes and other public documents that provide additional insight into the budget-reduction or program review discussions. The findings of the quantitative analysis of the budget and related document analysis lead to additional questions, which the researcher seeks to answer in the subsequent interviews.

The interviews are the focus of the second half of the chapter. How they were conducted and the explication of the interviews of select faculty and administrative leaders is divided into smaller parts that include a review of the interview methodology, the selection and recruitment of the participants, participant confidentiality, and a brief analysis of the interview environment. The data collected in the interviews is considered in the next three sections, dedicated respectively to the participant backgrounds, participant perspectives on the Bay City College planning process, and participant reflections on the outcomes and expectations for the future.



The interview results and their relationship to the quantitative results are discussed in the summary that brings the chapter to a close.

## **Overview of the Data Collection**

### **Obstacles to the Research Design**

My research project, as it was proposed, was an analysis of the budget crisis in which the California Community Colleges have been mired for more than three years. Beginning with the 2009-2010 budget, community colleges in California faced significant reductions in their funding from the state. The reductions in state funding were repeated in each of the next two years, forcing colleges, if they had more than the minimal 5% reserve funds required by law, to begin spending their reserves, and as Scott Lay (2010), President of the Community College League of California, put it so succinctly, “worrying about whether colleges will have the cash to keep the doors open.” According to Matt Krupnick (2012) of the Bay Area News group, some colleges and districts have spent their reserves “to dangerously low levels,” and are now “brushing up against that [5% reserve minimum].”

Considering that community colleges are now facing cuts for a fourth straight year, cuts which could be the largest yet depending heavily on the outcome of Governor Brown’s tax initiative, Proposition 30, on the upcoming November ballot, some apprehension by community college leadership when addressing questions related to the budget is to be expected. Budget decisions and discussions are now regularly documented in the media as voters prepare to decide on a tax question the results of which will reach across nearly all public services in addition to K-14

education. In an environment charged with the same tension about who should pay for the public good, an environment where the question is often presented as an either/or--either the wealthy or the middle class—it is not entirely surprising that I met with some resistance when I asked colleges to release budget information. I was nonetheless discomfited when my proposed study met with a number of obstacles and unexpected changes in direction.

My original research plan proposed a quantitative and qualitative analysis of three primary sources of data: 1) Budget data from the 1300 line, 2) Public meeting minutes and supporting documents, and 3) Interviews with faculty and administrative leadership who had been part of the decision-making process. The first obstacle was that the publically available budget information was not rendered in sufficient detail to be of use to me, so I needed to request that a new report be generated for me. Creation of a new report was in fact a significant challenge since both colleges in my study have been forced to lay off staff in recent years, leaving existing staff feeling overworked. I discovered another less imposing obstacle once I had a complete 1300 line budget report; in order to split out transfer level English and math expenditures from basic skills English and math, an additional set of data from the research office had to be generated.

In addition to the challenges related to the quantitative data, I met with a variety of minor obstacles while attempting to gain approval to complete the study and conduct interviews at each of the colleges. I met with delays at both colleges in seeking approval to pursue the research and conduct the interviews. In the case of Bay City College, I received verbal approval quickly and delays were largely due to

the difficulty in scheduling time with the individual whose signature was needed to conduct the interviews. Nonetheless, once I attained the necessary signature, I was able to schedule interviews with all but one of the individuals with whom I wished to speak.

Middlesize College, however, offered resistance to all of my requests. Eventually, following more than a month of phone calls and emails which bounced me from the institutional research office to the public information office, and conversations that included three vice-presidents, I was sent their Institutional Review Board application and other documents and informed that they were willing to consider my request and would likely convene in the next thirty days. I was further informed that I could complete a request for the other data I wanted under the Public Records Act, but that they would charge me “for the time staff devoted to the request and any materials they were able to produce,” and that they “would still not guarantee a quick turnaround” (Middlesize College Email 2012). Additional detail about the obstacles I encountered in my attempts to begin my study at Middlesex College can be found in Chapter 5. A discussion of the environmental factors, political and economic, that contributed to the necessary redesign of the study can be found in the conclusions and recommendations in the final chapter as well.

### **Description and Analysis of the Quantitative Data**

As I indicated previously, one of the first unexpected discoveries I made in this research study was that the quantitative data required for the first stage of my analysis could not be extracted from the publicly available budget documents without

additional information. Although the data exists, it is not recorded in public documents or reported to the state in sufficient detail to serve my needs. The specific data I needed to begin my analysis was the monthly or annual dollars expended on part-time and full-time overload classroom instruction disaggregated by program or discipline for each of the three years of my study, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012.

Two separate resources govern this information. The expense code that indicates part-time or full-time overload instruction, described in this dissertation as the 1300 line, is defined by the *Budget and Accounting Manual of the California Community Colleges* (2000, p. 4.45). In California Community Colleges, programs are identified by a “system of numerical codes used at the state level to collect and report information,” which is published as the *Taxonomy of Programs* (2009, p. i). According to the *TOP* (2009), “In reports on staffing, the teaching assignment of each classroom faculty member is characterized by the two-digit TOP discipline of most of the courses he or she teaches.” The *TOP* also notes that, “In budget reports, spending on instructional programs is broken down by two-digit TOP discipline.”

Unfortunately, a detailed report, which disaggregates both *TOP* code and full-time overload/part-time expenditures, is not available from the Management Information Systems Data Mart of the California Community College Chancellor’s Office.

Having worked as an instructional dean in California Community Colleges, and been responsible at one college for managing this particular budget line, I was surprised to learn that this information was not readily available as a report at some colleges, and I was even more surprised to learn that Bay City College would need to

create this report in this format for the first time. I have included a copy of the report, with any college identifying information removed, in Appendix A.

In seeking other means to disaggregate the specific data I needed from the publically available budget information, I considered the possibility that it would be available from statewide resources. Unfortunately, I discovered that although the California Community College Chancellor's Office gathers and publishes data on full- and part-time expenditures from the colleges, including demographic and salary data of faculty and staff for each district, it does not disaggregate these expenses by discipline or *TOP* code (CCCCO 2011). In the discussion of the results in Chapter 5, I consider some of the potential factors that contributed to the difficulty I faced in gathering data, the variety of sources required in order to extract and disaggregate data specific enough for my study, and the nebulous quality of some of the sources.

At Bay City College, I worked with a budget analyst in the budget office who met with me on multiple occasions to get a clear understanding of what I needed. A week after our initial meeting, she met with me again and showed me the spreadsheet for 2009-2010. I confirmed that the data was what I had requested and she promised to generate the spreadsheets for the other two years as soon as she could. Although delayed by the closing of the books for the preceding fiscal year, in a few short weeks I had the spreadsheets I needed to begin my analysis.

I began my study of the spreadsheets from Bay City College with a cursory examination. The spreadsheets, one for each year, provided the monthly and annual total expenditures of 1320 dollars broken out by discipline. I familiarized myself with the data over a period of weeks, looking for patterns in how the expenditures are

distributed across disciplines, months and year. I quickly realized that the data still presented a number of challenges. As I indicated in the previous section regarding obstacles, one key challenge was to differentiate basic skills expenditures from other types. The Taxonomy of Programs Manual codes for basic skills instructional programs are provided in the following table:

**Table 4.1**

<b>Basic Skills Taxonomy of Program Codes</b>	
4930.84	English as a Second Language–Writing
4930.85	English as a Second Language–Reading
4930.86	English as a Second Language–Speaking/Listening
4930.87	English as a Second Language–Integrated
1701.00	Mathematics, General
1501.00	English
1520.00	Reading

Of the seven codes provided in Table 4.1, Reading and ESL fall entirely within the basic skills. The coding for ESL was changed at the state level beginning in the fall of 2010, but that change was easily accounted for by totaling all types of ESL into a single category. The TOP codes for English and math in the reports I was provided, however, include both basic skills level and transfer level courses. In order to determine how much of the expenditures listed in each of these codes were basic skills, it was necessary to know what percentage of the courses offered under each code were pre-transfer level. According to program review documents, the

percentage of English courses that are not basic skills is 69%. The percentage of English courses that are basic skills is 31%. For math, the percentage of all sections that are not basic skills is 78% and the percentage that is basic skills is 22%.

Multiplying the basic skills percentage by the total expenditures for math and English provides an approximation of the 1300 expenditures as seen in the tables below.

**Table 4.2**

**Mathematics and English 1300 Expenditures 2009-2010 through 2011-2012**

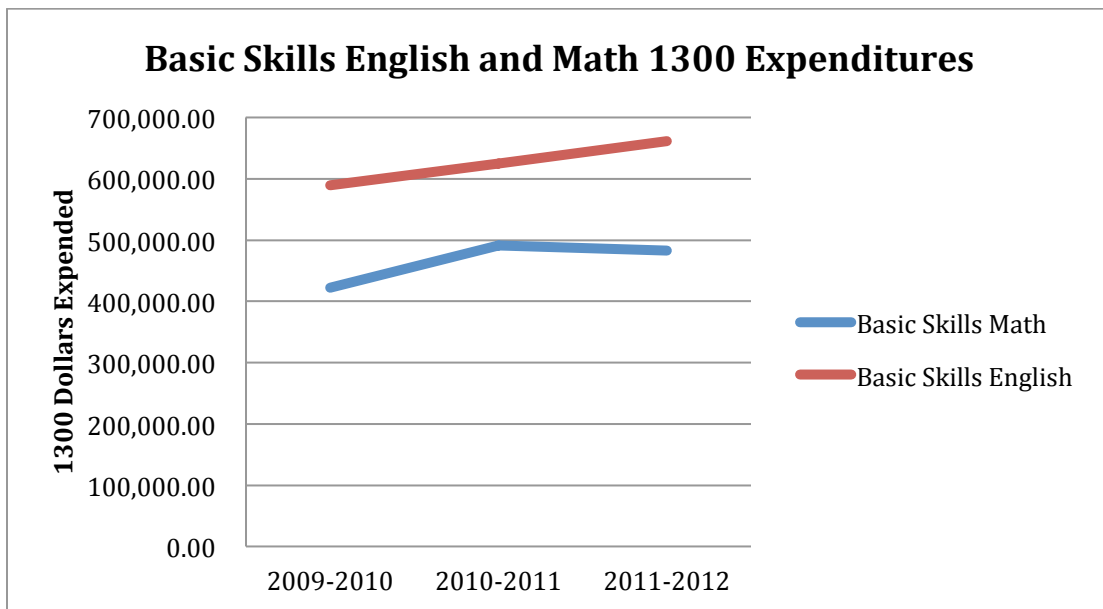
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Math	\$1,917,733.35	\$2,230,529.32	\$2,193,935.46
Basic Skills Math	\$421,901.34	\$490,716.45	\$482,665.80
Transfer Level Math	\$1,495,832.01	\$1,739,812.87	\$1,711,269.66

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
English	1,901,116.92	2,014,506.15	2,132,989.21
Basic Skills English	589,346.25	624,496.91	661,226.66
Transfer Level English	1,311,770.67	1,390,009.24	1,471,762.55

These calculations are based on a matching ratio of full-time to part-time faculty in both basic skills courses and transfer level courses, which is not always the case in all disciplines or all colleges. In fact, in the interviews that ensued from the study of these expenditures, one of the participants shared her doubts that the full-time English faculty were living up to an informal agreement to teach both basic skills and transfer level courses. Nonetheless, the numbers are consistent over multiple years based on my own counts of sections by year, level of instruction and faculty type, which fell within one percentage point of that provided in the program review information.

While this contradictory to the balance of instruction at many universities, it is consistent with the goals of both the college and the program and mirrors the ideal of the 75/25 ratio regulations.

A further notable aspect of the expenditures in English and math for the three years of the study is in their growth. While English grew at a nearly steady rate of just under 6%, math grew at a remarkable 16% in the first year and then declined by less than 2%. The graph below compares the growth patterns for English and math.



**Figure 4.1**

The question of whether this difference in trajectory between these two primary basic skills programs is due to a change in investment, i.e., fewer offerings, or due to a change in the full-time to part-time ratio of instructors in one or both of these programs, led me to program review documents and planning committee meeting minutes. The program review data for these two programs shows a steady but slight increase in number of total sections over the period of the study (Bay City



College, Program Review Data Sheet). Based on the combined data, it appears that the change in the rate of increased spending in the 1300 line was due to the hire of multiple new full-time faculty members in math and not the result of an overall change in direction. In other words, the decline in part-time math instruction is not representative of an overall decline, but rather it represents a shift in instruction from part-time to full-time. The trajectory of the spending pattern in the 1300 line in English appears to be an accurate measure of growth in overall investment. Overall, it appears that Bay City College has not only retained its investment in basic skills English and math, but that it has increased its investment during a period of reduced funding.

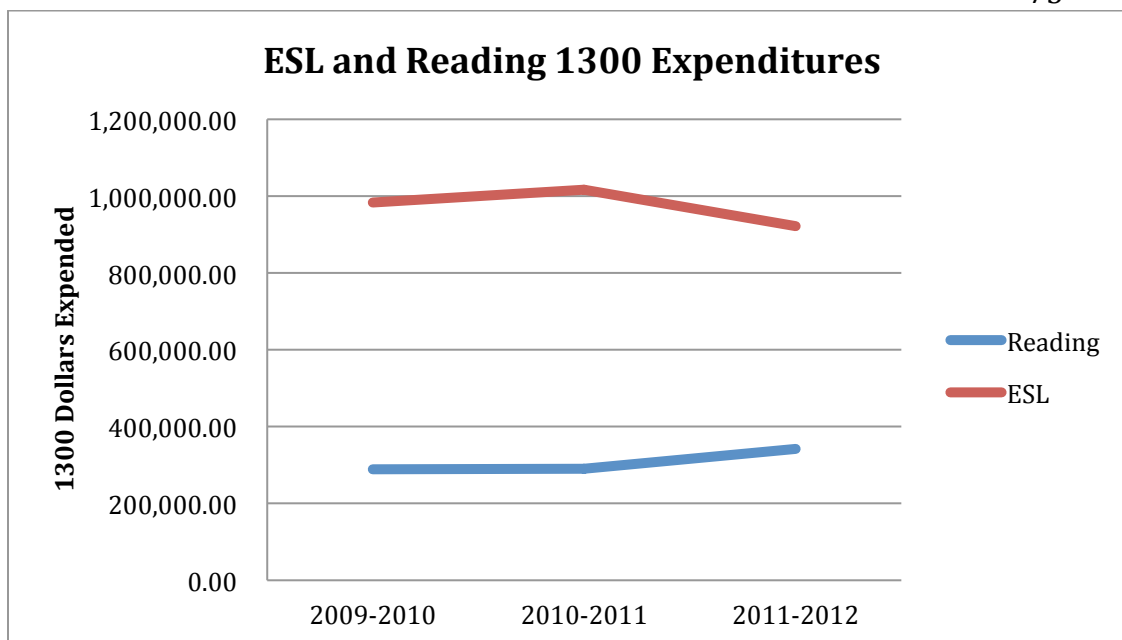
The next table provides the same data for the other two basic skills instructional programs, ESL and Reading.

**Table 4.3**

**Reading and ESL 1300 Expenditures 2009-2010 through 2011-2012**

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Reading	\$288,935.50	\$289,696.76	\$342,671.21
ESL	\$983,327.65	\$1,017,103.01	\$921,882.07

Quickly apparent from this table is the scale of the programs. At Bay City College, Reading is the smallest of the basic skills programs and ESL the largest. The charted trajectories of the 1300 lines of these two programs during the three years of the budget reductions also reveal an apparent inconsistent investment in these two programs at Bay City College.



**Figure 4.2**

In this graph, both programs showed marginal gains in investment in the first year, yet in the second year, the 10% reduction in investment in the 1300 line of ESL and the climb of over 18% for Reading are dramatically portrayed. The inconsistency of investment in these two programs again led me to investigate program review documents and meeting minutes for changes in section offerings or changes in full-time staffing.

One key change I discovered that impacted the number for both of these programs was the elimination of additional lab sections at the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. Although listed as separate sections, these labs were co-requisite requirements for all students in Reading courses and for some levels of ESL. Because these courses were only a half unit, the impact of their withdrawal on total 1300 expenditures for ESL was minimal. For Reading, however, the total number of sections offered in 2010-2011 was less than half of that offered in the previous year,

yet because of the small unit value of these labs the total faculty load for the department (both 1100 and 1300 lines combined) was reduced by less than the equivalent of one full-time faculty member. The overall reduction, taken mostly from the 1100 line, was balanced by the modest increase in the 1300 line. That modest increase was not due to an increased in part-time instruction; instead, it occurred in spite of an actual reduction in sections and was due to the increased cost for the part-time instruction of those sections. Similar factors can contribute to any individual program increase or decrease in 1300 expenditures from one year to the next. In addition to the hire of a new full-time faculty member causing a decrease in expenditures in 1300 line, in a department as large as ESL, multiple faculty members may go out on sabbatical or return from sabbatical, skewing the numbers in either direction. Over a period of many years, such fluctuations may level off, but in a period of transition like that of this research project, those fluctuations are difficult to trace.

Like ESL and Reading, a number of transfer or career and technical programs appear to experienced sudden declines or increases in their 1300 expenditures, and in some cases these changes were due to deliberate reductions in the program offerings. It is important to note, however, that as was the case with Math, not all reductions in 1300 expenses are due to program reduction. For instance, the Nursing program saw a reduction of nearly \$50,000 in its 1300 expenditures from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012, yet this reduction was the result of a full-time faculty hire in that program, creating a shift of course load from the 1300 line (part-time and full-time overload) to the 1100 line, which represents full-time, regular contract faculty (*BAM*, 2007, p. 4.43). An

overall program reduction was not, in fact, realized in this instance, nor was there a savings for the college. What the analysis of these apparent anomalies reveals is that without additional information about other factors such as changes in full-time contract expenditures 1300 data is not a reliable method for measuring institutional investment in an individual program.

Individual program budget line expenditures may fluctuate significantly, particularly in small programs that may have few or no full-time faculty. In such cases, the hire or retirement of a full-time faculty member could shift as much as half or more of the expenditures into or out of the 1300 line. Taken in light of these discoveries, the value of the 1300 line as a measure of investment increases significantly when the size of the program grows or when multiple programs are viewed cumulatively, thus reducing the impact of the hire or loss of one full-time faculty member. When questions arise from analysis of the 1300 line expenditures, additional resources are needed to provide answers.

In addition to program review information, other key documents that provide insight into the 1300 line data and that add depth and complexity to the picture it provides are announcements of new full-time hires and retirements in Board of Trustee meeting minutes and planning committee minutes in which decisions are made regarding new hires. In addition to these sources, which are especially effective at understanding apparent anomalies or inconsistencies in the 1300 line data, the planning meetings in which budget reduction plans are discussed or finalized can provide a broader understanding of the disposition toward particular programs.

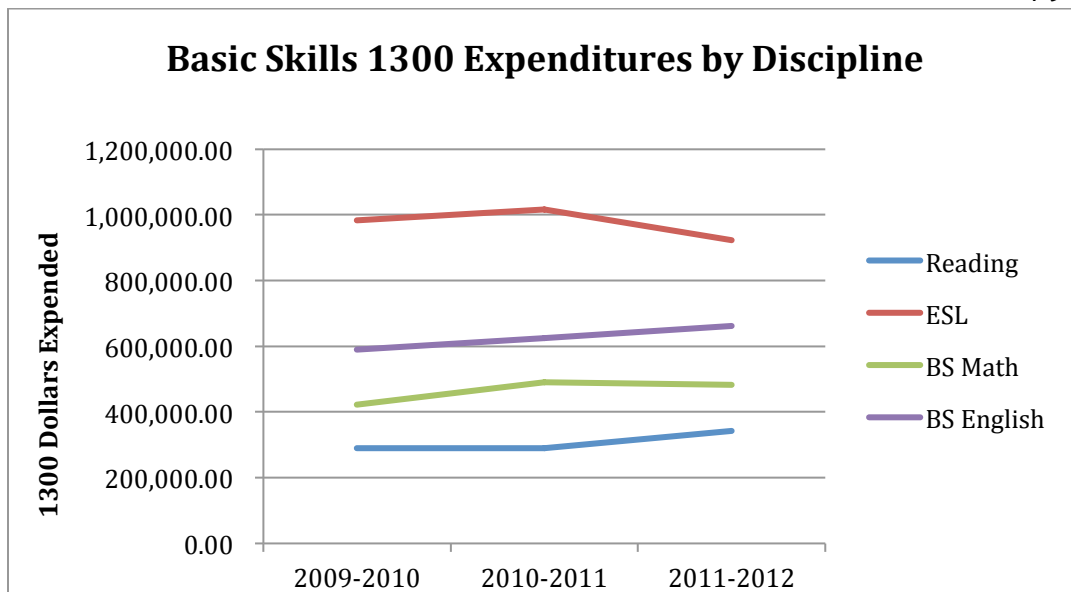
Having found an effective way to approach the large amount of information in the 1300 line report and a means of enhancing my understanding of that information through the use of a number of supporting documents, I returned to the original data set and organized it into three groups. Having now separated basic skills English and math from transfer level English and math and with a better understanding of what the data represents, I collected the four basic skills values into the table below.

**Table 4.4**

**Adjusted Basic Skills 1300 Expenditures 2009-2010 through 2011-2012**

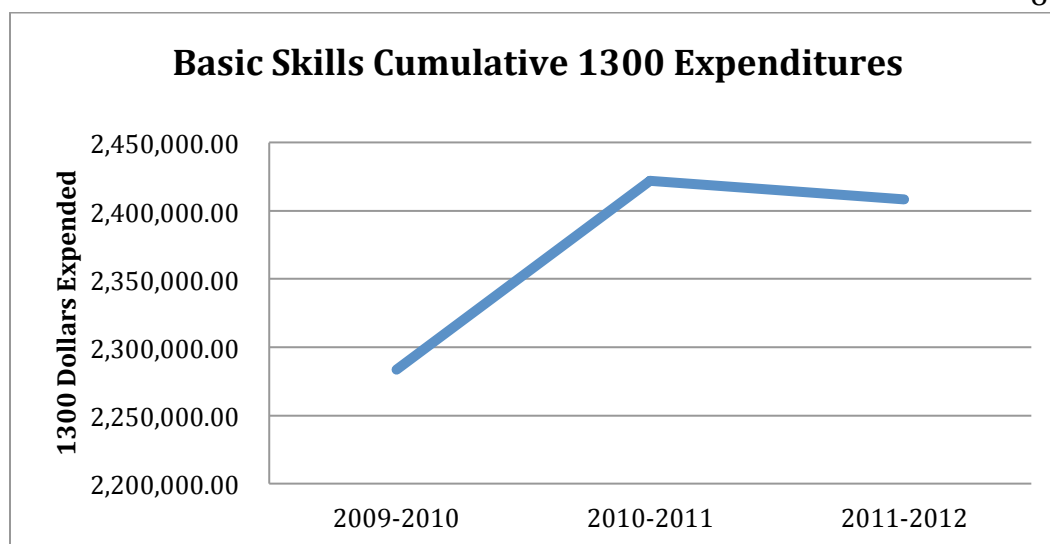
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Reading	288,935.50	289,696.76	342,671.21
ESL	983,327.65	1,017,103.01	921,882.07
BS Math	421,901.34	490,716.45	482,665.80
BS English	589,346.25	624,496.91	661,226.66
<b>BS Total</b>	<b>2,283,510.74</b>	<b>2,422,013.13</b>	<b>2,408,445.74</b>

Over the two-year period, reading grew 18%. ESL declined by 6%. English grew by 12%. The significant variation in pattern, showing clear reductions to two programs and modest but steady growth in the two others, is an important topic that I will address further in the explication of the interviews. A number of questions arise from the different patterns. Was the college aware of the impending crisis in the first year? Did the leadership of the college expect the crisis to be short enough that they would not need to respond? Was it able to sustain the first year's reduction through spending reserves? Were cuts taken in other areas in order to retain instructional levels? The graph below shows the changes to the 1300 line funding for each program during the budget reduction years.



**Figure 4.3**

It is important to remember that these numbers represent the cost of part-time instruction, not the numbers of part-time faculty. What appears to be a 5% increase in the first year is likely due to an inflationary adjustment not an actual increase in part-time faculty. In fact, the program review data reveals that there was not an increase in the number of sections taught by part-time faculty (Bay City College Program Review Data, 2009-2010). The combined effect of the increases in English and Reading and the reductions in the final year for ESL and Math create an overall leveling off of basic skills growth from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012. The individual basic skills programs appear to have continued relatively unchanged in the first year. In the second year, clearly some adjustments had been made.

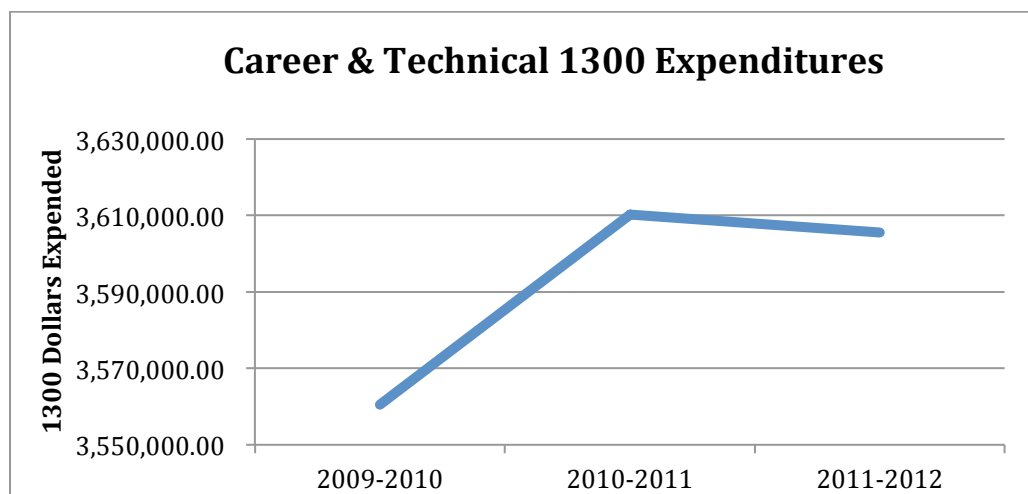


**Figure 4.4**

Presented in this format, the expenditures reveal an apparent adjustment in the second year of the budget crisis. This possibility is discussed further later in this chapter in the reporting of the interview results.

As I had with the basic skills, I extracted the Career and Technical Programs from the data set and totaled the expenditures for each year. For this category, I relied on whether the program was offered for a certificate or transfer. In some cases, programs are offered as both, such as Child Development, Business, or Speech Communications. Rather than address the question of what percentage of students in a particular program were seeking certificates or transfer degrees, I relied on the list of programs designated as a CTE (Career Technical Education) program by the college. Some of the typical programs included in this list are Accounting, Automotive Technology, Environmental Studies, Nursing and Technical Writing.

The graph below shows the cumulative trajectory of the 1300 line for Career and Technical programs during the three-year period.



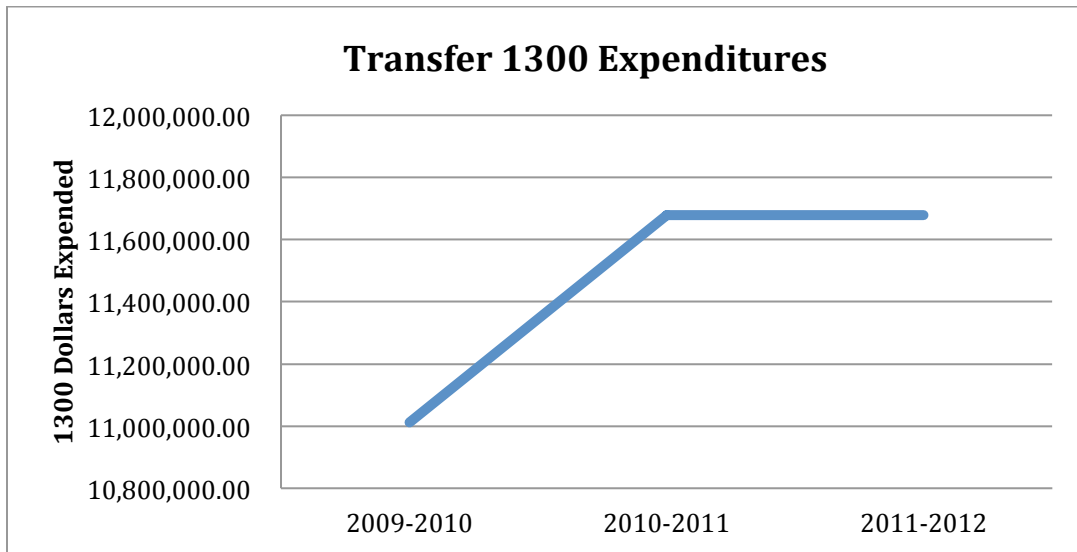
**Figure 4.5**

The pattern is clearly similar to that of the basic skills 1300 expenditures over the same period, again suggesting the possibility of an adjustment being made in the second year of the budget crisis.

Finally, I grouped the Transfer Programs into one category and totaled those expenditures for each year. Although not the case at all colleges, transfer at Bay City College is by far the largest of the three categories, as can be seen in the charts below. This difference may seem like an imbalance; however, other factors contribute to this distribution. One of these is that this data is representative of expenditures on instruction of individual sections of courses, and those courses are identified by their Taxonomy of Programs codes, but that does not mean that the students taking those courses are taking them for the same program. For instance, biology has its own TOP code, yet many of the students who take biology are in a technical program such as nursing.

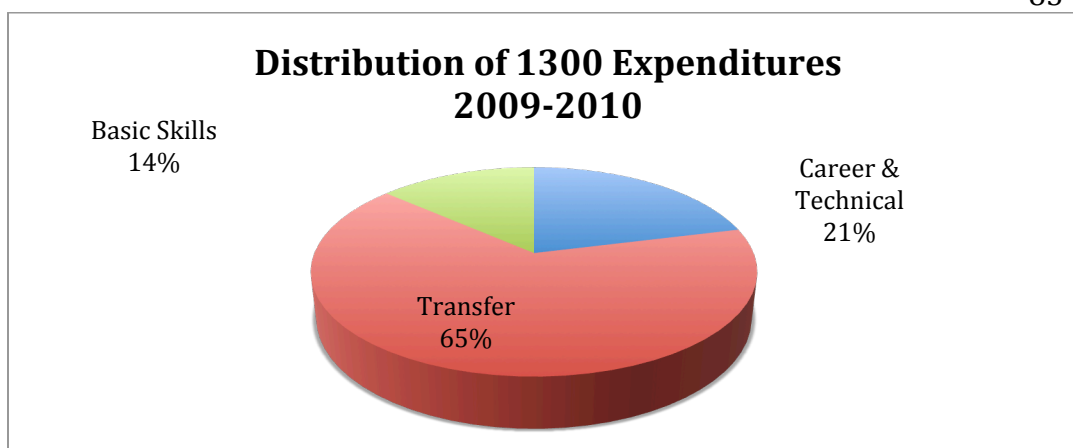


The purpose in analyzing the data in this form is not to determine whether an institution values transfer more or less than basic skills but to determine if a shift in resources to or from any of the three missions has occurred during this three-year budget crisis. The graph below shows the trajectory of the 1300 budget line for the transfer programs during the period of the study.



**Figure 4.6**

Most striking to me as a researcher was that the pattern was consistent for all three categories. Although the categories represent different portions of the total 1300 expenditures for Bay City College, they fared similarly during the budget reduction period. The pie chart below shows the initial distribution of 1300 funds among the three categories.



**Figure 4.7**

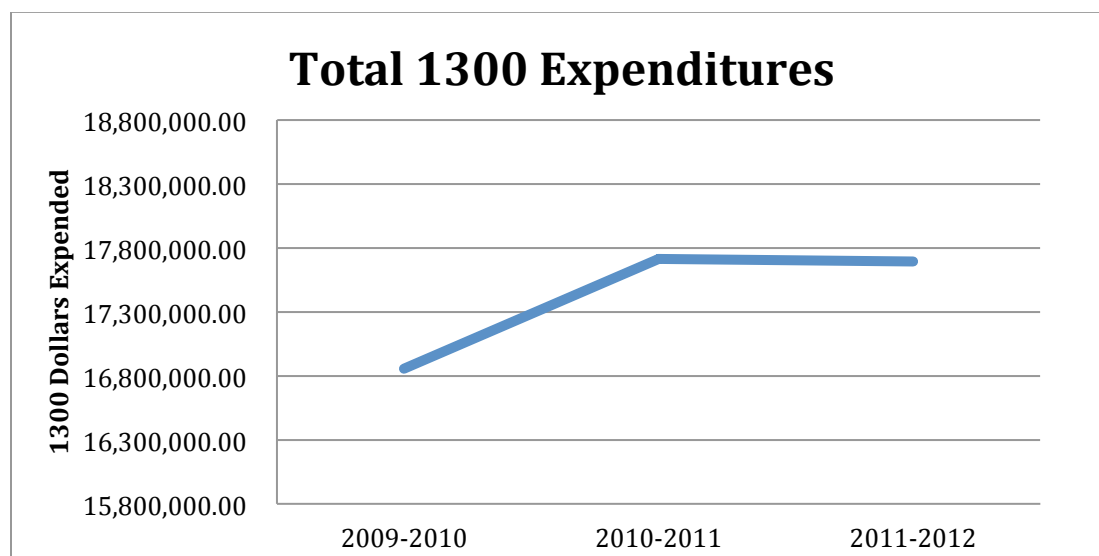
In fact, the change in distribution only occurs from the first measurement to the second and is an almost negligible one percent drop from 21% to 20% in CTE and an equal rise from 65% to 66% in Transfer. The slice of the pie served to Basic Skills remains a consistent 14% throughout. Whether intentionally as a budgetary decision, accidentally through lack of awareness and control, or the result of some incidental factor such as numbers of sections determined by student registrations, the budget crisis does not appear to have affected the balance of investment in the three primary missions of Bay City College.

Although the distribution in the cumulative analysis was consistent from year to year, the total expenditures were not: The total increase in 1300 expenditures in the first year was followed by a slight overall decrease in the second year. Table 4.5 below shows the how the values changed from the first to the second year.

**Table 4.5****Overall 1300 Expenditures by Primary Mission 2009-2010 through 2011-2012**

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Career & Technical	3,560,486.31	3,610,179.69	3,605,546.57
Transfer	11,011,903.65	11,679,544.79	11,679,098.20
Basic Skills	2,283,510.74	2,422,013.13	2,408,445.74
Total	16,855,900.70	17,711,737.61	17,693,090.51

The change is best represented in a line graph, as in figure 4.8.

**Figure 4.8**

The 5% increase in the first year is what might be expected in a year without any section growth; that is, 5% could be due entirely to faculty salary increases and not indicate any actual increase in the number of classes taught or the students served. Although 5% growth might seem relatively large, it is important to remember that growth across the system had been incredibly robust in the years preceding the budget crisis. By 2008-2009, enrollment at California community colleges had soared to

more than 2.9 million students, an increase of more than 400,000 students above the 2004-2005 year. Factoring surges in enrollment and increased costs due to step and column advancement, it is easy to see how difficult it would be to contain expenditures to 5% growth or less. During the same period the program review data, which includes the number of full-time equivalent faculty covered by part-time instructors, declined slightly, indicating an attempt to restrict growth as the college faced its first signs of declining enrollment (Bay City College Program Review Data, 2009-2010). Considering the rising cost of salary and benefits for faculty, the subsequent slight decline in expenditures (only 0.1%) as the college entered the second year of the crisis represents an actual reduction across the college.

The nominal change in the balance of the distribution of expenditures, particularly when viewed in conjunction with the visible adjustment made to total expenditures in the second year, appears to show a delayed response on the part of the college. When the college did respond, it appears to have distributed the pain of the reductions evenly, at least insofar as instructional expenses were concerned.

A key question left unanswered by the 1300 line analysis is how the college managed to leave classroom instruction relatively unharmed in the first year and still appearing to hold steady in the second year of serious budget reductions. The answer to that lies in sources of information. The first and clearest piece of the answer can be found in the annual budget proposals presented to the Board of Trustees in each of these years and in memos to the college from the district chancellor. One way the college was able to hold some internal divisions or departments harmless in the face of major reductions was to spend its reserve funds down to the bare minimum required by law.

A sense of how serious the impact of the cuts had been and was expected to be to the district was provided in a memo sent in April 2011 from the chancellor to all employees of the district:

The bottom line is that we are preparing for possibly having to reduce our operating expenses by approximately \$30 million. This is due to a possible 16 percent funding reduction from the state under an all-cuts budget and the loss of 4 percent of our current apportionment revenue based on projections that the district's enrollment will be down 4 percent in the current year. The result is that we will have to reduce the number of students we serve by approximately 10,000 and cut our instructional costs by \$10 million for 2011-12. Even after reducing the instructional budget by \$10 million, we will still have a deficit of approximately \$20.3 in expenses to reduce on a permanent basis. (Bay City Community College District Chancellor Memo, 2011)

Another factor not revealed in either the instructional budget data or the memo above is the number of staff positions that were eliminated in order to protect the instructional budget. Although the use of stability funds helped to reduce the loss of staff positions and minimize program reductions, some staff positions were lost to actual lay offs and others were not replaced following retirements or resignations and were removed from the books. And in spite of the use of attrition to reduce staff, the proposed reductions for 2012-2013 include over 70 staff positions. The positions may not be faculty, but even within instruction there is concern about those reductions in staffing as became apparent during the interviews.

## **The Interviews**

### **Review of the Interview Methodology**

“The researcher is the screen through which most qualitative data flows.”

Miles T. Bryant (2004, p. 101)

Before beginning the interviews, I chose the method by which I would approach and conduct the interviews. After my initial analysis of the budget data and a cursory study of the other documents I used to generate a picture of the first three years of the budget crisis at Bay City College, I began an outline of what I hoped to learn from the interviews. In doing so, I concluded that the interviews would be most helpful if they could provide fresh insight regarding the relationship between the balance of investment among the three primary missions of the college and any changes in the general disposition toward basic skills education. I began generating a series of questions that fell into three categories: 1) Questions about the individual leaders themselves, their backgrounds and motivations; 2) questions about the budgeting and planning process and its effectiveness; and 3) questions about their role in the process. Because of the expectation that the individuals I interviewed would have very different backgrounds and roles, I planned to use a semi-structured approach and developed questions that would allow some latitude for the participant to focus on what he or she considered important and allow me room for follow-up question (McMillan, 2004).

The three categories of questions I used for my interviews also parallel the type and order of questions recommended by Charmaz in her discussion of grounded theory analysis and interviewing (2003, pp. 315-316). Aware that the college leaders

I would interview have personal and professional investment in the outcomes of the budget crisis, it was important to be conversational and informal and to keep the participants comfortable. Charmaz (2003, pp. 316-317) warns that “Interviewing, more than other forms of qualitative data collection, challenges researchers to create a balance between asking significant questions and forcing responses.” This warning suggested two separate dangers to me as the interviewer. The first danger lay in asking questions that were too imposing and might cause the participants to freeze up. The second danger was the possibility that my inherent researcher bias might generate a series of leading questions the answers to which would be answers I expected or wanted to find. I guarded against both of these risks by vetting my questions informally with colleagues in both faculty and administrative roles who were familiar with the subject of my study. The questions became, through multiple conversations and revisions, what I hoped were friendly, unassuming, and open-ended. I felt about the individuals I interviews that “Their comfort should be of higher priority than obtaining juicy data” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 315). The general list of interview questions can be found in Appendix D.

### **Selection and Recruitment of Participants**

My next step was to determine who might be able to provide the deeper insights I needed to sharpen the definition of the picture that had begun to develop in the first two steps of my research. Although the means to reduce any particular college program is often accomplished through changes to the class schedule and the formal authority over the schedule resides in management, the reality is that decisions

affecting budget reductions at many colleges are largely the result of lively in discussions in shared governance committees (CCC Curriculum, 2012). The leadership of these committees represents faculty and administration, and I felt it was important to include both perspectives in the interview data.

At most public colleges, a number of different groups and individuals have influence over instructional budget matters. At Bay City College, the primary shared governance body in instructional matters is a planning committee that makes recommendations to the President's Council, which is the key advisory committee to the president. For the purposes of protecting the anonymity of Bay City College and the interview participants, I will refer to this committee as the Bay City College Instructional Planning Committee (American Psychological Association, 2009, p. 17). Three key areas with which this committee is charged are: 1) Program initiation, expansion, consolidation and discontinuance, 2) Full-time faculty positions, and 3) Significant budgetary augmentation or reduction (College A, 2012). The committee is co-chaired by the Chief Academic Officer and the Vice-President of the Faculty Senate and has as a majority of its membership five administrators and five faculty members.

I generated a list of faculty members and administrators who had been actively involved in the Instructional Planning Committee process during the three years of the study. In selecting potential candidates, I looked first at the administrators and faculty members who had held leadership roles and had knowledge of both internal and external environmental factors related to college budgeting and programming. A number of individuals I contacted had also served the



institution in multiple capacities. Some had held different roles in the committee structure, such as serving on both Faculty Senate and the Instructional Planning Committee, and some had held both faculty and administrative positions.

Before beginning to recruit for the interviews, I had reduced my list of potential participants to five individuals who had served in some capacity on the Instructional Planning Committee in addition to other duties that would make them familiar with the budgeting process. Once I began recruitment, I was happy to discover that each of these five potential participants eagerly recommended others they felt could contribute to my study, and it was due to multiple recommendations that I added a sixth name to my list. In fact, of the six individuals who made my final list of potential participants, each had been recommended to me by more than one of the other individuals on the list. Based on the roles these six had played in the shared governance process during the budget crisis, they held the collective knowledge and individual perspective that could offer significant and meaningful insight into the decision-making processes behind the 1300 budget data. In the end, I felt confident that successful interviews with the majority of these individuals would provide the fundamental answers to my research questions.

Five of the six individuals agreed to meet with me for the interviews. The sixth was traveling and unable to meet, but offered to meet when he returned if I still desired his input. Due to my own deadlines, it seemed unlikely that we would be able to schedule the interview on time to be included in the study, but I thanked him for his offer and told him I would contact him again if time allowed. I scheduled time to meet each of the other five. Of those who agreed to an interview, two offered to meet

with me in their offices, two asked to meet me in my office and one asked to meet at a coffee shop off campus in order to accommodate other activities in her schedule. All but one of the participants arrived promptly. The one who did not arrive on time failed to show up entirely. I learned later that in addition to underestimating her schedule, she felt that she did not have the questions far enough in advance of the agreed upon meeting time. In the end, I was able to conduct four successful interviews with willing participants who were both highly engaged and eminently knowledgeable about the Bay City College response to the reductions in state appropriations during fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 and the reduction strategies that were employed.

### **A Note on Participant Confidentiality**

Although the results of this study seem innocuous enough, significant resistance was presented by one of the colleges in the original proposal and reluctance to the interviews was evident in some of the leaders from Bay City College. Because of these factors and other environmental considerations, confidentiality for the college and interview participants was offered and agreed upon as a condition of the study. A few simple methods were used in order to protect the identities of the faculty members and administrators who agreed to be interviewed for this study as well as other members of the faculty and staff who work at Bay City College and who continue to face the challenges of an ongoing budget crisis. All identifying information is removed from the reported text and data or obscured through the use of aliases or alternate position titles in accordance with the guidelines of the American

Psychological Association (2009, p. 17). The four individuals who agreed to be interviewed, two of whom openly expressed concern that their identity be protected at different points in the interviews, are identified in the text as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3 and Participant 4 when their responses are discussed individually. When identifying information might be gleaned from their individual responses, it is included only in aggregate form.

### **Environmental Factors in the Interviews**

It was apparent early in the recruitment process that all of the administrative and faculty leaders at Bay City College shared a common sense of pressure on their time. The interview that was held off campus and the challenge that scheduling a time and place to meet presented exemplifies the time constraints placed on the Bay City College leadership. When I first approached her to request an interview, I offered to come to her office at anytime during the normal working hours of the week. Because her work schedule was so full, she suggested instead that we meet on a Friday morning when the college was officially closed for summer hours. I agreed and offered to meet her on campus or a location of her choice. She asked me to call her the morning we planned to meet to arrange a time. The final arrangements took two more phone calls, including one that interrupted her dog's visit to the veterinarian. The final meeting took place immediately following that appointment when she suggested meeting at a café midway between our locations.

In spite of the hectic ambience that permeated the scheduling of this interview and the others, once the meeting time arrived all the participants were able to switch gears and give their full attention to the interview. Caught between tasks, each of the

college leaders had palpable sense of urgency about their activity, often holding simultaneous conversations with two or three people while checking email and moving from one meeting to the next. Although perhaps not eminently efficient in all situations, these administrators and faculty members appear to have refined the habit of multitasking to an art form.

The café in which this interview was held was in a shopping center a few miles from College A. The meeting time was 11:00 a.m., and I arrived a few minutes early and waited at the entrance. The participant arrived on time and we quickly purchased a couple of cups of coffee and sat in curved booth. Because of the late morning time, the café was not crowded and the booth provided a quiet and comfortable space. I had my laptop and iPad with me and took both out of my computer bag. I opened my laptop, an Apple MacBook Air, and opened a new Microsoft Word document for my notes. I repeated the informed consent procedures and shared hard copies of the informed consent agreement and a brief description of my study and its purpose with the participant. With the signed documents, I confirmed again that the participant was willing to be recorded before opening Evernote on my iPad and pressing the record button. The interview lasted slightly less than one hour, during which time the café grew busier as the lunch crowd arrived. The booth, however, provided a sufficient acoustic barrier that, combined with the proximity of the participant to the I-pad, allowed for both privacy and a clear recording.

Two other locations were used for the remaining interviews. As I indicated earlier, one location proposed by participants was my office and the other was one of

their own offices. The environment selected in each of these cases may reveal additional insight into the socio-political environment of College A.

The two interviews in my office were with the two participants who at the time of the interviews held full-time faculty positions at College A. Although neither of the two participants stated overtly that they chose my office location for privacy, both had expressed their interest either before or during the interview of remaining anonymous, and a combination of factors made my office location particularly private at the time of the interviews. The interviews took place during the summer break when there were no staff members other than me in the office. Because of construction at the time of the interview, the building that houses my office was surrounded by chain link fencing covered in green mesh privacy screening more than ten feet in height that blocked anyone passing by from seeing into the office windows or doors. The coincidental timing of the interviews afforded an additional level of protection of privacy than other locations or times would have. With the exception of one participant, who overtly expressed her lack of concern with anonymity or privacy, assuring me that she was not revealing anything in the interview that she would not be willing to state publically, the three other participants, whether consciously or not, chose interview locations that offered heightened privacy.

### **Interview Results: Participant Background**

Following the completion of the four interviews I immersed myself in the interview data, looking for ways to organize and understand the results; in essence, I began informally coding the interviews. Charmaz describes this as “the pivotal first

analytic step that moves the researcher from description toward conceptualization of that description” (2003, p. 318). I did not set out to quantify the interview data with structured codes; instead, I relied on my own sensitivity to the responses and the interests of the research purpose. This approach to coding by researchers is what Charmaz refers to as “the prism of their disciplinary assumptions and theoretical perspectives “ (2003, p. 319).

Although a number of the interview questions provided the participants the opportunity to share information about themselves, the first three questions were specifically designed to learn about their present position and the path that led them there. Some of the background information that would be provided in response to these questions was already known in advance of the interview and in fact was among the reasons they were recruited as participants; however, by providing them the opportunity to share something of their own history, I hoped to encourage them to encourage a feeling of comfort and openness at the beginning. This approach of hoping that the “stories tumble out” of a relaxed participant follows the recommendations of Charmaz (2003, p. 315).

Of the four individuals interviewed, two held administrative positions in Bay City College at the time of the interview and two were full-time faculty. All four presently or had previously served as president or vice-president of the faculty senate and all had begun their employment at Bay City College among the ranks of the faculty. Of the two who were in faculty roles at the time of the interview, one had previously held two separate interim positions in the administration of Bay City

College. Table 4.5 below shows the aggregated experience and education levels of the four interview participants.

**Table 4.6**

**Aggregate Participant Experience and Education**

	<b>FT Faculty</b>	<b>PT Faculty</b>	<b>Basic Skills Faculty</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Senior Administration</b>	<b>Master's Degree</b>	<b>Doctoral Degree</b>	<b>President or VP of Faculty Senate</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

In addition to the breadth of experience represented in the four participants, they also have significant institutional knowledge through their length of service. A total of eight years have been spent in interim or permanent administrative positions by three of the four, while all of them combined have spent more than fifty years in Bay City College classrooms. The four participants range in total individual years of Bay City College employment of any kind from just under ten to almost twenty-five years; combined they have approximately sixty years of service as faculty members or administrators at Bay City College.

It is not only the length of time they have given to Bay City College that reveals that the work they do means more to them than just a job. They are equally dedicated to the students they serve at Bay City College as they are to the institution itself. Throughout the interviews, each of them spoke of their work passionately and

expressed a strong connection between their jobs and some vision of social justice. And while the participants were clearly proud of things that had been achieved at Bay City College, they appeared modest when speaking about their own efforts.

The engagement by the four participants in the internal clockwork of the college is also matched by their commitment to their profession outside of the college. All four have served on organizations at the state level such as the statewide Academic Senate and other discipline specific organizations. They each have have many years of service on state and national groups, including a variety of task forces and ad hoc committees related to community college topics, notably legislative issues related to the basic skills, college access, student success, and transfer curriculum.

One other characteristic the four interview participants share in common is that they feel that some part of their career path was accidental. For instance, while two of them expressed the belief that they expected to go into teaching from a very early age, they had never expected to enter administrative roles and still viewed that as something temporary. Similarly, while all four were committed to community colleges and Bay City College in particular, none of them, not even the one who planned to go into teaching or the one who planned to be a professor, had community college teaching as their original goal. Community college work was a serendipitous discovery for each of them.

Leadership roles also appear to have come to the majority of them by accident as well. There was a common pattern of having taken on progressively larger or broader additional responsibilities within their department or division, they found themselves serving in college-wide roles or accepting an administrative role on an



interim basis. Some of them appeared to have accepted the additional responsibility willingly, such as in running for an elected position in the faculty senate, but in other cases they were not eager to step into the leadership role but did so out of a sense of obligation.

### **Interview Results: Participant Perspectives on Process**

All four of the participants were intimately familiar with the budget and planning process, although each had a slightly different perspective. In response to questions about their role in the process, the participant responses varied significantly, in part due to their different roles. Each of the participants was asked to describe the college's decision-making procedures to someone outside of the college. The intent of the question was to encourage the participants to reflect on the procedures from an outsider's viewpoint as well as to create the expectation of layperson's terminology. Two key themes were immediately apparent in the responses to this question, transparency and shared governance. The attention given to these two themes by the participants and the emphasis it is given in the findings reflects a culture of shared accountability at Bay City College. I also had the sense that there was a need on the part of these leaders to reassure themselves that they alone were not responsible for the difficult decisions that had been and were being made at Bay City College.

Participant 1 addressed the topic of transparency at two points in the interview. The first time she brought the idea of transparency up was in an

explanation of how things had been done before she became involved in the planning process.

Participant 1: I came in [to a leadership role] when [the budgeting process] had gone through a cycle, and I wasn't involved in it, that was very transparent. Everyone that was involved with it felt that it was a lot of work and emotion and the outcome was what was best for the college.... I think that basically, it's a process that's just evolving. You know you've got a new administrator in there in 2008-2009, so that's when this transparent process first started and it's evolving along with the program review process and it's trying to kind of combine the [student learning outcomes] theory or whatever it is—philosophy—that you get as many people from the ground-level giving you their opinion and then someone's going give a recommendation to the president based on, you know, filtering out all the different factors.

From her perspective, the process has changed, but continues to be transparent.

Clearly, Participant 1 sees the process as constructive, evolving, and participatory.

Her reference to the newness of an administrator shows that she is willing to allow room for error and growth. The use of the phrase “you get as many people from the ground-level” suggests a sort of grass roots vision of the decision-making process.

Nonetheless, she recognizes that the committee is only a recommending body to the president.

The next participant describes a form of representative democracy:

Participant 2: We have constituents on all of those that represent administration,

faculty and classified, and they, I think, okay, so those members are supposed to be bringing the concerns of their constituents to the planning committees so we have a college-wide view.

She recognizes that the committee is made of members who represent constituencies. Her response suggests not only that it is the responsibility of those representatives to communicate out the information and process of the committee to their constituencies, but it also implies, through the phrase, “supposed to,” that they do not always live up to that responsibility.

The third participant offered a statement that very directly stated the goal of shared governance and transparency. Her response reveals that like Participant 1, she sees the process as being in a developmental stage:

Participant 3: I think how I would describe it, is we are practicing, and you

know, we’re trying to practice, shared governance and transparency in both the information about the budget and also the decision-making.... Yeah, it’s ever since [new college president] has been president in terms of the community collaboration and the campus engagement along with the rest of the senior staff. We really value that shared process, and having people really engaged in it.

The use of the word, “practice,” twice in the space of a few seconds implies that they are trying but haven’t reached the target level of transparency yet. She sees a turning point that happened when a new administration came in, and sees progress. She also expresses clearly that this administration sees the shared-governance process as an important value.

The fourth participant was the most confident in her belief that the decision-making process was transparent. She used the question as a jumping off point to counter the opinions of those faculty members who “complain” but don’t participate:

Participant 4: Our shared governance practice is extremely participatory, and very transparent. I mean from what I can see it’s much more so than at other campuses, even our sister college within the district. I do think that if people really are genuinely interested and want to get involved, and want to have input into what is going on, they can. You know, I know there’s some people who complain about administration and complain about the decisions that are made, but honestly, you know the more that I get involved [...], the more that I think that if you really want to get involved in it, you really can, but it is a big time suck and a lot of [people] don’t have that kind of time. I understand, but there’s no barriers other than that. We have the website where various groups post their information. Um, there’s representation on all the core advisory groups or core decision-making teams. Yeah, I mean, sometimes the timing I think is what often makes it challenging. Sometimes, I mean, there’s a lot of... these discussions are held but they take place at a very inconvenient time. That’s not necessarily a problem that was created to thwart participation.

She expresses awareness of the challenges presented by the participatory aspects of the decision-making process at Bay City College, but she doesn’t see those difficulties as a reason to not participate.

That the four participants all felt the budgeting and decision-making at Bay City College was transparent and part of a shared-governance process might seem natural to someone from the outside. A casual observer might think it obvious that the participants believed the process was transparent and participatory. Taking into consideration that the four participants were among the leadership involved, any other answer would have been surprising and potentially raise questions about accountability. All four of the participants were integral to the process they described, as well as tied to the eventual outcomes, making their objectivity questionable. In fact, Participant 4 wondered aloud at one point during the interview if her involvement in the process might have affected her objectivity.

Yet while these four leaders clearly have subjective points of view about the decision-making process in their college, many details in their responses reveal ways that they have reflected on how the procedures at Bay City College differ from the norm. The participants are aware that in many instances managers at other colleges are perceived to make budget decisions with little or no input from faculty. Participant 1, for instance, noted that she felt fortunate to be in an institution with an open and transparent process that permitted input from all constituencies, and she compared that experience to what she knew of the experiences of people at other colleges from involvement in state organizations:

Participant 1: Um, but there's, you know, in the State Academic Senate, you go into these—they have these different little workshops that you go to and every single time I've gone there's one where you can sit there and talk about what's happening at other colleges relative to program discontinuance. And, um, the

faculty just go, “oh man, I can’t believe it, what do we do? I mean they just walk in the door and say this program’s gone—no discussion, no data search, no nothing—they just like, boom, it’s gone and like, it’s a viable program!”

I’m like, well, the administrator made the decision and you guys don’t want to participate in making these decisions.

This anecdote shows clearly that she prefers the transparency of the shared governance process of her own college to what she perceived was happening at other institutions; however, she recognizes that there are pros and cons to both approaches:

Participant 1: So you either go through this long [shared governance] process, you know, in getting everybody involved and giving it a chance and then still the President has to make a decision and it’s only a recommendation that you get to do. But is that better in a way versus somebody saying, “This is best for the college, and we know the whole college, and we’re talking to deans—we trust what our deans say”? So things happen in what, you know, the faculty say are closed rooms, you know.

But I think, um, that this particular concept is what I think [the Instructional Planning Committee] wants us to do, is to have open transparency and everybody having the opportunity to actually show that what’s happening in the classroom makes a difference and we should spend money for those programs.

In her answer, she speaks to two different approaches to decision-making regarding budgets in a college, either the administration makes the decisions quickly with little or no input, or a slower transparent shared-governance process is used. In either case,

she is careful to note, the actual decision resides with the college president [in this case] and shared-governance committees are recommending bodies only. There is a continued sense throughout the interviews that while each of these leaders has strong opinions about how the reductions should be managed, they are also wary of being perceived as having acted autocratically or in secret. Transparency during times of budget reductions takes on a greater importance than it may have in times of growth.

Although all four leaders described the budget decision-making process as transparent and inclusive, each of them also saw aspects that they felt could be improved. The most common concern that the participants raised in their discussions of the budget and planning procedures was related to time. Participant 1 considered the time commitment a factor in whether people would choose to be part of the process: “It’s a good practice but it’s also time consuming, and lot of people don’t have the time or energy to spend to do stuff like that.” Two of the participants expressed specific concern about people being given enough time to participate, and they noted that timelines in the budgeting process could be improved. One participant also expressed concern about future budget cuts and how much time there would be for people to be part of the conversation.

Another common concern that arose to greater or lesser degree in each interview was communication. Participant 3, for instance, saw a need for greater consistency across the different area planning committees and for clarifications of different parts of the planning process. She also felt that more or better information could be disseminated from the planning committees to the “different levels of our campus communities.” Participant 2 expressed the same concern about how

information was disseminated from the representatives on the planning committees to their constituencies, describing it as a breakdown. People, she felt, didn't know how a budget worked.

All the candidates expressed some concern over the difficulties shared governance presents in terms of people's willingness to do the work needed, especially when that work entailed budget cuts or elimination of positions or programs. When Participant 1 described the concerns she'd heard from faculty at other colleges, that the administration simply eliminated programs without any discussion, she pointed out that part of the problem is that the faculty at those institutions didn't want to participate in those difficult decisions. While closed meetings or the perception of secrecy on the part of a college administration can be frustrating and make people feel angry, Participant 1 pointed out that shared governance can also leave people "feeling angry from going around and around year after year because of this process." Others also expressed sympathy for those who are reluctant to join the process because of the work involved:

Participant 3: We really value that shared process, and having people really engaged in it. But if people don't want to engage because it's too hard, or it's not in their pay scale, then they can choose to withdraw. But we do want to think of the institution to be a place as where we can practice, you know, democracy.

Her comments refer to some individuals who don't engage in the process from the beginning, but sometimes people who have been involved burn out, creating a different kind of disengagement.



Fatigue from facing the difficulty of evaluating programs for possible reduction or elimination is one challenge that comes with shared governance. Fatigue can result in individuals dropping out of the process or as Participant 2 explained, it can result in a form of passive resistance:

Participant 2: Another basic problem was faculty don't want to cut themselves. They don't want to do that. They're not willing to do that. So I saw too often people saying I'm not going to make a decision. "Hell no, we won't go!" You can't do that. The bottom line is you have to make a decision. And there was a mistrust, "No, they're just saying we have to cut."

She also noted that educating the constituencies about the realities of the budget and how it works can reduce some of the resistance. Participation in planning committees by faculty and staff works well in times of abundance, but shared governance can become stalled by a failure to reach consensus or mired in procedural technicalities in difficult economic times. Periods of budget reduction increase the need for shared governance leadership to ensure that information about the budget and the process is communicated out to the various constituencies regularly and that those constituencies have been educated to understand the information. Based on the common perspectives about transparency and engagement, as well as the sense that it is a dynamic process that continues to improve, it is clear that the participants had a positive outlook on the process overall.

**Interview Results: Outcomes and Expectations**

Because of the different backgrounds and knowledge of the participants, the way I presented the questions varied. The use of specific examples of how a particular discipline's 1300 line changed over a three-year period proved beneficial in terms of helping to clarify the different degrees of understanding that each of the participants had regarding the college budget, but also gave me the opportunity to study the detail of the report more closely. Not all of the participants had backgrounds in the basic skills, and it was through the alternate lens of one of them, a lens trained on particular transfer programs, that the changes in budgets of the creative arts and physical education were brought into sharp focus. This section looks at how the participants felt regarding the outcomes of the decision-making processes at Bay City College and what they expect for the future of the college and basic skills.

As I reviewed the transcripts and audio files of the interviews for clues that would indicate how the participants viewed the outcomes of the budget reduction efforts, I noticed that while there were common themes, the responses about outcomes had the greatest variation of opinion. Two divergent and seemingly paradoxical themes emerged regarding the decisions that had been made and what direction they were headed: 1) A sense of fatalism about what has happened and what is yet to come and 2) A sense of optimism, that everything will work out for the best.

The participants also seemed aware of this paradox and saw it in different places. For instance, whether the decisions about the budget were made with full awareness of the potential consequences is a question for which the participants had different perspectives; sometimes participants offered conflicting beliefs in their own

answers, as was the case for the third participant. When asked whether she felt the decisions regarding budget reductions had been made deliberately, the third participant presented an excellent example of the complex way intentionality is viewed by all the participants:

Participant 3: I think my answer is both [laugh]. Okay, there was some intentionality, in the sense that, at the institution level there is both a recognition of the demand for basic skills and making sure that we hire the faculty that have the ability to teach at those levels—that they have the skill set, that they have the pedagogy, that they have the background. Part of it, too, is if we are not able to meet the 50/50. I'm mean, sorry, the 75/25, for full-time/part-time ratio; we have never been close. So it's intentional in terms of recognizing that need. That there is high demand. Then, the curious thing about it is that there also has been intentionality in limiting the growth. Because it actually could grow more in terms of 1300 dollars being spent those areas, in those departments. And you know why we can't grow significantly—because there has to be a balance of the productivity, maintaining productivity, and the seat counts are lower.

There are multiple paradoxes that are connected to the concepts in her response. The first is the paradox of the actions of the leadership being both intentional and unintentional. Second is the circumstance of needing growth to meet enrollment targets but resisting the cost of the additional instruction that growth requires. Third is the recognition of the demand for basic skills education, while large numbers of the faculty would prefer not to have basic skills students in their courses.

Paradoxes were visible in the responses of other participants as well. The second participant, in considering the general disposition of her colleagues in Bay City College and across the State toward the basic skills:

Participant 2: It's a paradox or oxymoronic. There's both a higher recognition of the needs of basic skills students, and at the same time I think there's pressure to make all of our community colleges JC's. It's like, "You know what, these students aren't going to make it anyway, so let's just give money to the people who are going to do well anyway."

The question of whether basic skills education is as valuable as transfer is raised in this response. But it comes up in the responses of other participants as well.

Participant 1 suggested that basic skills might be something extra that could feel the threat of elimination.

Participant 1: Budget wise, it's kind of like when we delete a program in physical education. Do you offer more of the core, or do you continue offering the extra things that make us very special and our students more successful?

But her response also reflected divergent thinking as she continued considering the idea that basic skills could be considered an extra:

Participant 1: I think it's a possibility just based on what everybody else does.

They've got great success rates and the whole thing works, but it's one of those, it's like an honor's program, it's special and we might not be able to support it anymore. At the same time, if more money comes down the pipeline, especially for basic skills, maybe some of that money would be

considered to be pushed toward reading because it falls into the developmental area. Maybe, I don't know, I'm not the boss.

This line of thinking, that basic skills is an extra, a perk that is not as central or vital to the college as transfer came up in the interview with the fourth participant when I asked what she thought about the disposition toward basic skills:

Participant 4: When I first got involved in the BSI, we drafted, vetted, and released a statement about what basic skills are and that they are not competing directly with transfer. We were addressing the fact that some people were grumbling about basic skills taking resources away from transfer. I guess at some level you can't deny that's the case. You know, if you have limited dollars for instruction and you open up sections for basic skills, those are sections that potentially could have been non-basic skills. We drew up a two-page memo that talked about why we need basic skills why students have a need for basic skills courses. And I think that more people see the value of that.

The need to educate the general college community about the value of basic skills appears in a number of responses, and there are other suggestions, like that made here, that without continued and effective education, the college community might be less willing to protect basic skills education when dollars are limited.

Here are a few additional responses that point to the need to keep the torch lit for basic skills, the first :

Participant 2: It's been on a roller coaster. I think there was awareness about it

about three years ago, and I think now it's just about numbers. Yeah, just about numbers. That's why math developmental classes are able to add more and we are not. Language Arts, English, Reading and ESL are not. Although when we're chasing WSCH, maybe so. You can bet if we were not chasing WSCH we wouldn't be able to grow.

WSCH, or weekly student contact hours, is a fundamental factor in the calculation of California Community College apportionment (College of San Mateo, 2008; Mullen, 2011). What Participant 2 is emphasizing when she refers to, "chasing WSCH," is the temporary need for Bay City College to increase enrollment in order to avoid additional apportionment losses.

Participant 3: Within the institution I think that there continues to be a lack of education around basic skill students outside of the [math and English] divisions so that somehow those two divisions have to do all the work and be the expert.

Participant 4: A lot more awareness of what basic skills are and, um, I'd like to think that, I don't know, I feel like there are a lot of people I don't get to talk to and I don't know what they think of basic skills.

Participant 4: I think to the state's credit the BSI, the basic skills initiative, has been done in such a way that the local campuses have so much more local involvement in the allocation of those resources and in deciding what to do, and the BSI is a statewide network, you know all the coordinators on a common network, so we tell each other what we're doing on our campuses

and the RP Group sponsors these training meetings every spring and fall

where they talk about what they're seeing, so I think that was good.

But it was in a few short sentences that Participant 2 captured the essence of the complicated cost/benefit equation that can be a side effect of an informed college- and state-wide population. Recognizing that physical education and the arts had both recently seen the State pass new regulations that limited the resources available to students in those programs, she noted that they had not been as organized and didn't fight back as hard as has been the case with basic skills educators:

Participant 2: Every single college has basic skills students, but not every college has a bunch of PE courses or Creative Arts, so they don't care about those as much.... That's why basic skills is so strong, because there was an attack on it.

The forces that can affect the disposition toward the basic skills can come from within the colleges and from without, as can be seen in these discussions of broader issues facing basic skills instruction and community colleges. Here there was more of the same divergent thought, representing the mixed messages that abound in so many public arenas. The responses reflect a perception that some forces seem to be working in favor of basic skills and community college education while others are working against them:

Participant 3: Externally there is recognition of the basic skills needs across the system, and that's why the state had set aside the basic skills initiative for colleges to work on interventions, institutional interventions, not just classroom interventions. So but then again; ok we've got this basic skills

initiative, and we have this new student success task force. You know I still think that some of the other ideas are good in terms of the valuing of the basic skills, you need to put more resources there, but the state is just not in shape to do it. Because if you put more resources into these areas that means less resources for other areas.

Participant 2: I think we need fewer community colleges. I mean if some of these community colleges could be combined. I guess I can say that because I'm at [Bay City College]. Our college would not be one of the one's that would be eliminated. When people are driving past three or four colleges to get to ours, it makes no sense to have all of those colleges along the way.

Participant 1: We're in a weird budget cycle. This is according to everyone that I've seen, and I've been in this district going on 25 years. We've had one reduction every four or five years, where we had to slow down and not do this and not do that, but its never gone to this level of year after year after year after year...

One additional point which first came up in the 1300 data analysis was the effects of using staff reductions to protect instruction in order to retain critical enrollment based apportionment dollars. Participant 3 revealed an underlying fear of the consequences of poorly planned staff reductions in instructional and student support services:

Participant 3: One thing that troubles me is that the years that I have been involved in the budget planning process is that I feel like we really haven't focused holistically on the entire institution. It's especially in regards to the



support staff. And of course there are limitations on where the targeted reductions are and we're bound by state limitations and what have you, but I think that if we could review—we don't spend enough time on what we do really well for the students that are really in need.

While she expresses an understanding that the need for apportionment influences or determines, “limitations on where the targeted reductions,” can be taken, she is also concerned about the consequences of repeated cuts to non-instructional support programs and staff:

And so I think we—in terms of the reduction that's been happening—we haven't really looked at that in realistically way. Whereas it's easy to cut non-instructional area, but what are the non-instructional areas doing to keep students here, and they contribute to the student's pathway to transfer. And the same thing with the counselors, program coordinators or even the value of release time or incentives for faculty.... So I think that probably has troubled me over the years. You know because we say, “oh, we'll cut this and that is going to go away. All that work is going to go away. But the reality is that the duties just shift either to the managers or other program coordinators or chairs or other classified.

Eventually, cuts to staff impact the quality of instruction or overburden the remaining staff members and administrators. As the budget reductions are expected to continue, she would prefer that the college and state find a different approach to prioritization:

I would then want us to focus on, “How can we provide adequate resources so that we can improve that area?” Instead of just saying, “You

too have to undergo another cut.” I think that institutional practices, in terms of supporting basic skills, still needs a lot of growth.

## **Summary of the Findings**

“I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.” –John Dewey (1897, p. 16)

What I discovered over the course of conducting this research project can be divided into two categories. The first category comprises the findings that were revealed by the process itself. Foremost among them was my early encounter with the reticence and reluctance of one college and the resistance of another. A subsequent revelation of the process was the opacity of the budget and document data; while the amount of data collected by and about California community colleges is too vast for description, its usefulness in its various raw forms is of questionable value. In sharp contrast to the reticence, reluctance, and resistance I encountered earlier, the process of recruiting candidates for interviews revealed a community eager to be of help, interested in the purpose of my research, and deeply committed to the work they do. A last lesson was revealed by the process of conducting this study; persistence and patience are fundamental qualities for doctoral candidates and community college administrators alike.

Contained in the second category of findings from the study are those that lay in the data collected and its analysis. The data contained in the 1300 report in combination with supplemental contextual information such as the hiring or retirement of a full-time faculty member or the knowledge that a full-time faculty

member in a discipline has gone on sabbatical can be an effective indicator of changes in a college's disposition toward a particular program. The strength of the 1300 data as an indicator is limited to that of an alarm unless further research into the processes underlying the data changes is also done. This additional research, what DeVault and McCoy (2003) label institutional ethnography, can reveal, as it did in my study, some of the complex forces and actors that influence program investment. The interviews revealed a college community and larger statewide environment swimming in paradoxes and competing interests. It simultaneously revealed aspirations for better basic skills programming and increased student success in community colleges while painting a picture of greater reductions, more disenfranchisement of under-prepared students, and increasingly limited access to quality education.

The competing interests and polarized visions for the future that were revealed in the interviews, the sources of inspiration and desperation that engendered and nourish them, and the means of cultivating the brighter of the two options, are considered in the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This report shows the self-inflicted damage to California's economy by our failure to properly fund higher education. We have two choices: reverse this trend by restoring access and affordability to higher education, or suffer the consequences of failing to educate the workforce that this state's economy demands. Increased outsourcing of college education to other states is not a sustainable alternative. Unfortunately, many of these students will not return. California needs to produce more college-educated workers who contribute to our economy, not export them.

-California Community College Chancellor Jack Scott (May 9, 2012)

### **Structure of the Chapter**

I begin this chapter by restating the research questions I sought to answer when I began this study. After the short review, I discuss the findings introduced in Chapter 4 in further detail in three thematic sections. The first of these sections considers the question of the status of basic skills education, the second section reviews what the findings reveal in response to the question of shifting priorities among the three-fold mission of the colleges, and the third section analyzes the findings for evidence of a plan for basic skills programming. The emergent conclusions from the discussion are next and lead into a fresh consideration of the study's significance. Finally, the chapter closes with a list of recommendations for further study.

## Research Questions

In completing this mixed methods sequential design study, I hoped to answer the following research questions:

- What do the annual budgets reveal about the status of basic skills programs?
- What, if any, shift in priorities is apparent in the balance of investment among the three missions designated by the State?
  - What does the balance of investment among the three priorities reveal about changes in disposition (favorable, unfavorable, or unchanged) toward basic skills education?
  - How does ESL programming, which often serves a different fundamental purpose and population than that of other basic skills education, fare when compared to instruction in remedial math, reading and writing?
  - Do any patterns emerge over the three-year period? Has there been a consistent shift toward or away from basic skills education at one or both institutions? Was there a movement in one direction one year followed by a correction the next?
- Considering any changes or patterns observed, to what degree do the budgets represent a plan that re-imagines the mission of the college?

## Discussion of the Findings

“Hence! You are an alchemist, make gold of that.

Out, rascal dogs!” *Timon of Athens*, (line 2385)

--William Shakespeare

In the summary of the findings in Chapter 4, I began to discuss two categories of findings, those related to the research process and those related to the research data. The findings in both of those categories are sometimes well-defined and sometimes ambiguous. I might have used a different pair of categories, expected findings and unexpected findings, and it seems to me in many ways that the more mundane of the two are the results I might have easily predicted from the beginning, such as the eventual and partial success of the 1300 data as a useful measure of investment or the differing opinions about what lies ahead for basic skills education. Yet as mundane as these expected findings may seem, they are still significant, especially at those places where they intersect with the unexpected findings. In retrospect, the unexpected findings and bumps along the way seem almost predictable, even the resistance of Middlesize College that dragged the study to a near halt or the opacity of the budget data without supporting documents.

In addition to the type of results, a few central ideas are manifest throughout the findings. These ideas or threads are evident in varying degrees in the majority of the findings, regardless of whether they are process/outcome related or expected/unexpected. These threads, if they could be extricated from the tangled political, social and economic tapestry of the California Community Colleges, might weave a clearer picture of the broad disposition toward the basic skills in light of the budget crisis. Unfortunately, the environmental factors are not so readily removed. Rather than attempting to unravel the tapestry and become tangled in thread, I will treat these ideas thematically and trace them throughout the different parts of the

study. In the remainder of the discussion of the findings will address the most significant of these themes insofar as they lead to a set of conclusions.

### **What is the status of basic skills education?**

The first theme pervades the community colleges and government of California and is evident in every report or conversation I encountered. Throughout the study I repeatedly encountered both direct and indirect assertions that the status quo of basic skills education and of the community colleges themselves is in need of overhaul, often with little or no evidence to support the claim. Much of the literature deals directly with the idea of reform, yet there is indirect evidence in the data from the interviews that also suggests reform is needed. The literature is brimming with continual efforts at improvement, constant attempts to define or redefine success, and incessant calls for accountability. The same is true of the political rhetoric. The interviews also reveal that even in the college's internal dialogue, the rhetoric of change lurks in program reviews and shows up in classroom after classroom through rubrics, standardization and instructional design.

It is not surprising that faculty might grumble about basic skills if they would rather be teaching transfer-level courses. Although the question that immediately follows in that line of thinking is, "Why would faculty want to teach at a community college if they don't want to teach basic skills?" The dialogue is so common it has become a nearly automatic response. But it's not only faculty who question the place of basic skills education in college. Students are also now raising questions about where the resources are being directed. One of the interview participants commented

on this apparent change in student attitudes. She observed, “There is a shift in the population of who is coming to community college, and the more savvy students are trying to push out the other ones.”

An editorial piece in Bay City College’s student newspaper the previous year described basic skills students as couch potatoes who should have tried harder in high school. The editorial bemoaned cuts to courses that were keeping students from getting the classes they needed to transfer and suggested that a better place to cut would be in the basic skills. The editorial drew rapid response letters from the college president, a vice-president, the Academic Senate president and the chair of the committee overseeing basic skills investment, all intending to educate the student editors about the importance of basic skills. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that basic skills education is under attack and its providers are in a defensive posture, and the interview data leads me to the same conclusion. The argument over the need for and validity of basic skills education in community colleges is becoming part of the social fabric in California, no longer confined to professional journals and conferences. The status of basic skills education is almost certainly dependent upon the outcome of that argument. At the moment, basic skills education retains as much or more security than other parts of the community college mission, but the challenges will continue.

**Is there evidence of a shift in priorities regarding the balance of the three primary missions of California community colleges?**



The public, through casting a vote for or against Proposition 30 in November, will ultimately be weighing in on the question of educational priorities. Recent poll numbers on the ballot measure, which would raise sales tax and income taxes on the highest earning category, show a close race. A recent survey by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE, 2012), speaks to the challenge ahead for the initiative:

The poll found about 55 percent of Californians are in support of Proposition 30, and 36 percent oppose it, making it one of several statewide surveys that show support for the initiative is perilously close to the 50 percent threshold needed for passage.

Without passage, the state will be forced to enact spending cuts of about \$6 billion to the 2012-2013 budget primarily K-12 and community college education. In a report on EdSource.org, Fensterwald describes the perilous position of education tied to the passage of Proposition 30, “Brown has written Prop 30 so that K-12 schools and higher education would take the full \$6 billion hit if the initiative fails, essentially holding education for ransom.” The situation is in many ways an ongoing effect of Proposition 13 more than thirty years ago, which changes the State Constitution to require a two-thirds majority vote of the legislature to raise taxes. Since coming into office, Brown has not been able to find any support among the Republican Party in the State Assembly and Democrats do not hold a two-thirds majority, so he turned to the public referendum instead. The Republicans would prefer to balance the state budget through cuts to spending. A larger percentage of the population feels the need to cut government waste than to stand against any more cuts, as can be seen from the PACE poll results:

When arguments for and against Proposition 30 were compared, Californians were far more likely to agree with the initiative's opponents.

About 49 percent agreed with the statement that politicians should focus on wasteful spending before raising taxes, compared to 35 percent who agreed that voters should "take a stand against further cuts to schools and public safety, make the wealthy pay their fair share and help balance the budget."

The question of whether there is a fair return on investment when taxes pay for education seems easy to answer for me. And most people who live and work in communities that have better schools and a more educated population would agree. Yet when that education is viewed as a "second chance" opportunity that is abused and wasteful with low rates of completion, the answer is not so easy.

But that's one of the things that community colleges do, they give people second and third and more chances at education and careers and they are not always successful. But sometimes they succeed brilliantly. The overall effect of a more educated population contributed to the enormous successes of California in the past; it's difficult to imagine Silicon Valley without an educated population.

But the findings and the larger debate clearly basic skills education at the center of an ongoing and long-standing debate about its value. The question is often as blunt as what is the return on investment? In a system that uses productivity as a key measure, the question does not seem out of place. Gone, it seems, or severely diminished, are the noble ideas of the value of a liberal education and needing time to discover one's self in college. In their place are bottom line numbers and completion.

Whether this bust cycle will lead to another boom cycle remains to be seen, but the immediate future does not hold great promise.

There has been so much dire news about the budget in California that numbers which would have seemed unimaginable only four or five years ago barely get noticed. Yet early on some voices were trying to draw attention to the problem. The California Budget Project (April 2010) came to the following conclusion less than an year into the crisis:

The state's ongoing budget crisis has seriously threatened the [Adult Education Programs] and community college basic skills programs both through direct funding cuts and by allowing funding to be shifted from basic skills to other programs. Over the next several years, school districts and community colleges will make difficult decisions about reducing enrollment, courses, and support services as they to respond to their new funding constraints. However, as the budget crunch forces changes across the state, it also presents an opportunity to consider reforms that could increase efficiency and improve student outcomes.

According to a press release from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (August 2012), "Funding for community colleges has been cut \$809 million, or 12 percent, over the past three years." And what went away when the money did? In that same period, "from 2008-09 to 2011-12, course sections (classes) have declined nearly 24 percent system-wide." Almost one quarter of instruction is gone. Although the reduction to instruction at Bay City College in the first two years of the crisis were not as drastic as the rest of the state system, it was only

accomplished through spending down its reserves and cuts to staff positions and other non-instructional areas.

I return to the quotes from two of the interview participants when asked about the disposition toward basic skills from outside the institution:

Participant 3: Externally there is recognition of the basic skills needs across the system, and that's why the state had set aside the basic skills initiative for colleges to work on interventions, institutional interventions, not just classroom interventions. So but then again; ok we've got this basic skills initiative, and we have this new student success task force. You know I still think that some of the other ideas are good in terms of the valuing of the basic skills, you need to put more resources there, but the state is just not in shape to do it. Because if you put more resources into these areas that means less resources for other areas.

This is a thoughtful response; she sees multiple perspectives and is aware of some specific actions that came out of those different perspectives. But it also shows some of the fatalism I referred to in the discussion of the findings. The answer reveals an acceptance that something else must be cut if an investment in basic skills happens. But the answer also admits her belief that priorities across the state and in the college are at least temporarily changed.

The next quote shows even more of the fatalism. She describes one of the more unusual qualities of Bay City College, that students feel strongly enough about attending there that they commute long distances, passing other community colleges

along the way. This participant feels the students are willing to endure the longer commutes because of the higher quality of Bay City College. Her response is direct:

Participant 2: I think we need fewer community colleges. I mean if some of these community colleges could be combined. I guess I can say that because I'm at [Bay City College]. Our college would not be one of the one's that would be eliminated. When people are driving past three or four colleges to get to ours, it makes no sense to have all of those colleges along the way.

Having now seen three years of cuts to the college she is so dedicated to and proud of, her suggestion is that it may be better to eliminate some colleges from the system altogether. She might, instead, have argued for improving those other colleges. Her response again reveals a fatalistic acceptance that as bad as things are, they will probably get worse before they get better.

One participant, in her thoughts about the forces affecting Bay City College, manages to simultaneously suggest a sense of hope for change while expressing a clear sense of the oppressive weight of the ongoing budget reductions:

Participant 1: We're in a weird budget cycle. This is according to everyone that I've seen, and I've been in this district going on 25 years. We've had one reduction every four or five years, where we had to slow down and not do this and not do that, but It's never gone to this level of year after year after year after year...

And the natural question that follows these revelations of doubt and weariness is, "What will happen next?"

It's clear from both the budget data and the interviews that the balance of the three core missions has so far remained unchanged. Whether further cuts will change that balance remains to be seen.

### **Do the findings reveal a plan for basic skills education at Bay City College?**

“All I can say is, ‘Wake up, California! Because you’re slowly hurting your future, because educated personnel make a difference.’”

--Jack Scott, following his retirement as Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (quoted in Baron, 2012).

At the beginning of this crisis, California Community College Chancellor, Jack Scott (CCCCO, September 2009), outlined the problem in a discussion about the skyrocketing enrollment across the system:

These new enrollment figures confirm the concerns our college presidents began voicing last academic year – the demand for a community college education is soaring at a time when there is an unparalleled divestment in higher education. This divestment will hurt California for years to come and undermine the state’s economic recovery. Our funding doesn’t match our enrollment and students will see the effects in many ways.

It is more important than ever for the colleges to protect core programs and preserve classes in the areas of career technical education, transfer and basic skills. But, even with a concentrated focus on these areas, countless students will simply not be able to get the classes they need to graduate or

transfer and it will be difficult for them to get counseling and other critical services.

What Scott did not foresee at the beginning of the crisis was that for some students and some colleges, the difficulties presented by crowding caused an enrollment decline. Students simply gave up when the courses they needed were full or not available at all. Only three years into the budget reductions, a press release from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (August 2012) quoted Scott describing the enrollment decline that stemmed from the cuts. "Over the past three years we've lost more students than are enrolled at all California State University campuses combined," Scott said. The actual numbers are even more astounding than the comparison he made. The 2011-2012 academic year enrolled half of a million fewer students than the peak of the 2008-2009.

And the numbers are expected to continue to decline. The same press release provided additional information that highlights how dismal the situation is:

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office conducted an informal survey of colleges in August 2012 to get a sense of what students can expect to experience this fall and to determine the cumulative impact of budget cuts. Here are the trends for this fall:

- Seventy (70) percent of colleges responding to the survey report they will have lower enrollment in fall 2012 compared to the fall of 2011.
- Seventy (70) percent of colleges responding to the survey report offering fewer course sections (classes) this fall compared to last fall.

- Eighty-seven (87) percent of colleges say they have reduced staffing levels over the past year to cope with budget cuts.
- Eighty (80) percent of colleges reported having waitlists for fall classes, with each college having an average of 7,252 students on its waitlists.

Although not explicit in these statements, it is not unreasonable to assume that the students most affected by the crisis are those who need extra support. They may drop out because the tutorial center that gave them the help they needed in math was shut down or because the earlier closure of the library deprived them of a safe, quiet place to study or because the counselor dedicated to their targeted population group was not replaced when she retired. The supports that they need to be successful seem reasonable in good economic times, but when the money is gone, the programs are painfully reminded of why they often have “special” somewhere in their name or history.

Winding its way around all the other discussion is the question of what the future holds for the basic skills and for Bay City College. Is there a plan? What planning is taking place in light of new regulations like those that stem from the Student Success Task Force? The official budget for the 2012-2013 year for the Bay City College District provides an indication of the general outlook. After explaining the challenge of budgeting for two different scenarios, this cautionary note is provided:



Due to the state's dire economic outlook and uncertain outcome of the November election, community colleges have been advised by the system office to plan for the worst-case scenario.

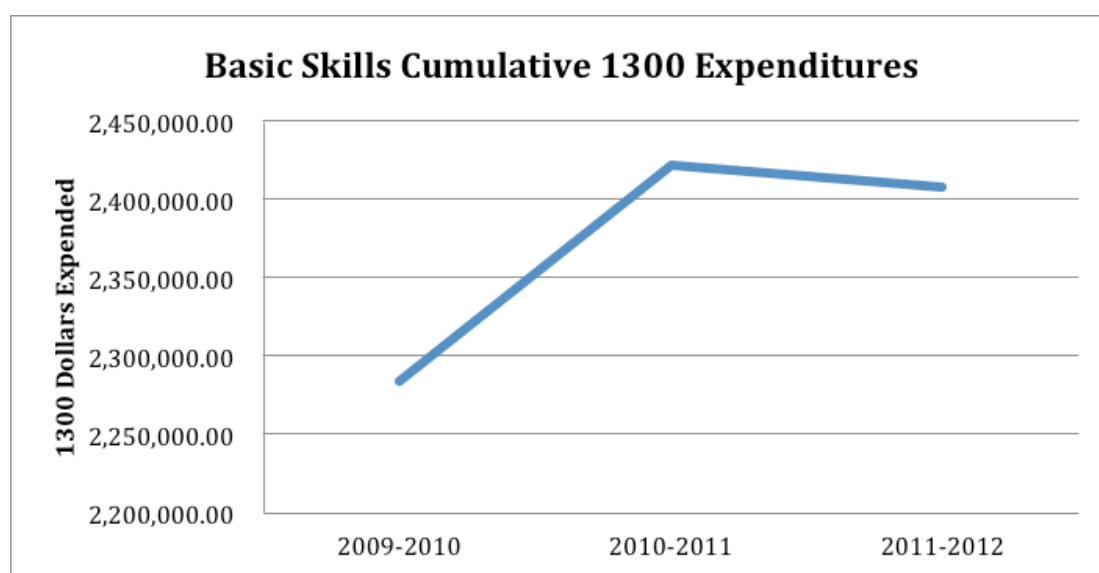
[Bay City Community College District] is building its Adopted Budget for fiscal year 2012/13 based on the worst case scenario, assuming that mid-year cuts will be implemented as a Workload Reduction of 7.3%. This may result in a reduction in funding for funding over 2,100 FTES, or \$9.8 million in apportionment funding. Our worst-case scenario reflects this reduction offset by the reduction to part-time faculty costs. If the governor's tax package passes we will adjust our revenue, FTES, and part-time faculty cost projections to reflect this positive outcome. (2012)

Clearly, the District and the California Community College System are uncertain about the outcome of the election. However, even the best-case scenario leaves the District with a six million dollar deficit after using all of their reserves allowed by law. Following three years of cuts, the impact of additional cuts, even in the best-case scenario will be likely to affect basic skills, possibly dramatically.

In terms of the level of understanding this examination was able to achieve, having a mixed methodology was beneficial. The approach of using the 1300 line data as an entry point into a conversation about the disposition toward basic skills was effective because it provided a specific starting point for the analysis. Although a simple institutional ethnography might have uncovered the same opinions and attitudes in the leadership and procedures, the 1300 data provided a measurable data set. On its own the 1300 budget data is insufficient to measure disposition, but the

interviews without the evidence of investment stability or change, would be insufficient as well.

So what do the two parts of the methodology suggest about planning for basic skills education at Bay City College? A quick glance back at one of the charts of the 1300 findings can offer some insight.



**Figure 5.1**

The trajectory of the budget line in this chart alone would not be enough to state with confidence that things will continue to decline. Many more years of data would be needed to allow the trend analysis to make that assertion. But the picture does take on greater meaning when the data from the interviews and the literature is taken into consideration. In combination, they suggest that investment will continue to slip and may slip much more rapidly if Governor Brown's tax initiative, Proposition 30, fails to win a majority. And if the downward trend continues, it may fuel the fires of those

who question the place of basic skills education in college, or it may strengthen the resolve of its supporters. As Participant 2 observed about the endurance of basic skills so far in the face of so much public and internal pressure to reduce it, “That’s why basic skills is so strong, because there was an attack on it.”

## Conclusions and Significance

“Well, whiles I am a beggar, I will rail,  
And say there is no sin but to be rich;  
And being rich, my virtue then shall be  
To say there is no vice but beggary.”

William Shakespeare, *King John*, Bastard (2.1.605)

When I began this project, my role as an advocate for basic skills education and community colleges imposed a clear bias to the research. That has been both an advantage and disadvantage. Merriam (1998) observes, “Because the primary instrument in qualitative researcher is human, all observations and analyses are filtered through that human beings worldviews, values, and perspective.” I would like to believe that unlike the character of the Bastard in Shakespeare’s *King John*, I would not forego my working class values were I to have a sudden change in fortune, but the dialectic he presents in these four lines frames the circumstance of basic skills education and community colleges in California nicely. The need for quality basic skills education is growing at a time when the State and other powerbrokers are reducing their investment.

The following is a list of conclusions to which my research has led me:

- The 1300 budget data proved to be an inadequate tool for examination of the measure of investment among the three primary missions of the college, basic skills, career technical and transfer.
- Over the period of the study, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012, the balance of investment among the three missions remained largely unchanged.
- The disposition toward basic skills education among the leadership of Bay City College is largely favorable.
- More comprehensive data about the demand for basic skills relative to the demand for other parts of the mission is needed to provide a more accurate picture of the demand versus supply.
- One key reason the 1300 line proved to be an inadequate and inaccurate measure is because it does not take into account resources devoted to basic skills.
- The perceived threat to basic skills education via budget reductions has galvanized its advocates.
- Continued reductions in state appropriations will force internal reductions at Bay City College that will be felt most by the students with the greatest need for support.

The paradox that the threat to basic skills education may be strengthening it by galvanizing its supporters strikes me now as a significant insight. Understanding how trends in investment can be used to measure disposition makes it possible to know when those trends are of vital importance. It may be that accountability

measures and the scrutiny of public watch groups will provide inspiration to community college proponents by inspiring them to look closely at their own balance of investment. It is a shame that colleges do not currently report this information in a disaggregated form that could be followed over many years. Integrating the 1300 data into program evaluation would allow colleges to link investment and results in a cyclical report. I stated in the opening chapter that there is a relationship between budget and policy and the research I have done affirms that connection. There is also a relationship between budget and values, and policy is made by the coming together of individual and collective value. The California community college students most threatened by the ongoing budget crisis deserve to know that their needs are valued, but that means the investment in them needs to be measured.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Although a simple institutional ethnography might have revealed the same opinions and beliefs that came out of this mixed methods approach, the 1300 data provided a firm measurement from which to begin investigating and examining the disposition of the college community. I strongly recommend continued study of the 1300 data from Bay City College and a broadening of the study to include financial data representing other portions of the college that have an impact on basic skills such as student services and support staff. A more detailed study taking into consideration interdependence and other tenets of resource dependence would be beneficial. Tracking broader and more detailed data using resource dependence theory over a period of many years would provide the opportunity for trend analysis and allow

administrators, faculty, and policy makers to understand how investment changes can impact student success and other program outcomes.

I also recommend replication of this study at other colleges in the California Community College System. Other researchers will be able to see more than just new data; they can provide additional ways of interpreting and using the data. It may be that a study at a larger college still than Bay City College or a study of an entire multi-college district would yield results of a different nature. A study conducted at a small single-college district would also be an opportunity to expand the ethnographic aspect of the study for a broader understanding of disposition, perhaps including staff, faculty, and students who are not active in the decision-making process and find out what insights they can offer.

Finally, given the resources, the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges should add disaggregated 1300 line data to their data collection and reporting so that larger studies could be conducted. Statewide data would yield statistically significant numbers that could be used internally within the system for improvement or externally by researchers interested in that state of investment in higher education.

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## Appendix A: Sample Bay City College 1300 Data Sets

Bay City College 1300 Data 2011-2012				
	TOPS Code	Budget	Total	
		Adjustments	Revised Budget	11/12 Expenses
Fine and Performing Arts	100100	451,102.28	451,102.28	451,102.28
	100230	23,204.04	23,204.04	23,204.04
	103000	10,463.97	10,463.97	10,463.97
	100200	14,312.52	14,312.52	14,312.52
	100800	141,614.44	141,614.44	141,614.44
	060420	276,920.24	276,920.24	276,920.24
	100400	89,668.85	89,668.85	89,668.85
	100400	35,617.58	35,617.58	35,617.58
	100400	18,425.41	18,425.41	18,425.41
	100400	23,598.80	23,598.80	23,598.80
	101100	101,703.44	101,703.44	101,703.44
		1,186,631.57	1,186,631.57	1,186,631.57
Business Technology	050600	426,175.42	426,175.42	426,175.42
	070100	303,431.13	303,431.13	303,431.13
	050200	599,829.89	599,829.89	599,829.89
	051400	139,390.76	139,390.76	139,390.76
	095300	191,723.57	191,723.57	191,723.57
	051100	61,219.43	61,219.43	61,219.43
		1,721,770.20	1,721,770.20	1,721,770.20
Culture & Language	221000	1,106,169.75	1,106,169.75	1,106,169.75
	220300	486,731.22	486,731.22	486,731.22
	220110	24,975.94	24,975.94	24,975.94
		1,617,876.91	1,617,876.91	1,617,876.91
Science and Technology	190500	528,611.35	528,611.35	528,611.35
	190200	198,902.62	198,902.62	198,902.62
	170100	2,193,935.46	2,193,935.46	2,193,935.46
	191400	45,186.21	45,186.21	45,186.21
	191100	97,404.05	97,404.05	97,404.05
	191100	61,490.12	61,490.12	61,490.12
	090100	23,541.45	23,541.45	23,541.45
		3,149,071.26	3,149,071.26	3,149,071.26

Bay City College 1300 Data 2011-2012 (Continued)				
Physical Education	083500	15,458.05	15,458.05	15,458.05
	083500	11,443.38	11,443.38	11,443.38
	083500	6,119.49	6,119.49	6,119.49
	083500	7,757.31	7,757.31	7,757.31
	083500	6,119.49	6,119.49	6,119.49
	083500	431,445.53	431,445.53	431,445.53
Medical Technology		478,343.25	478,343.25	478,343.25
	095600	159,020.20	159,020.20	159,020.20
	094800	165,992.48	165,992.48	165,992.48
	040100	565,075.88	565,075.88	565,075.88
	120800	174,973.46	174,973.46	174,973.46
	123010	196,019.66	196,019.66	196,019.66
	030200	351,068.51	351,068.51	351,068.51
	120500	43,236.57	43,236.57	43,236.57
Communication & Composition		1,655,386.76	1,655,386.76	1,655,386.76
	150100	141,930.20	141,930.20	141,930.20
	493084	921,882.07	921,882.07	296,753.98
	493085	0.00	0.00	205,871.30
	493086	0.00	0.00	92,845.91
	493087	0.00	0.00	326,410.88
	150600	633,204.57	633,204.57	633,204.57
	150100	2,132,989.21	2,132,989.21	2,132,989.21
	152000	342,671.21	342,671.21	342,671.21
	060100	17,427.90	17,427.90	17,427.90
	060700	109,613.02	109,613.02	109,613.02
Social Sciences & Humanities		4,299,718.18	4,299,718.18	4,299,718.18
	490300	360,761.91	360,761.91	360,761.91
	220500	170,163.84	170,163.84	170,163.84
	220500	290,773.48	290,773.48	290,773.48
	200100	505,092.66	505,092.66	505,092.66
	220200	373,262.33	373,262.33	373,262.33
	220800	186,741.62	186,741.62	186,741.62
	220700	253,457.38	253,457.38	253,457.38
	150900	325,030.67	325,030.67	325,030.67
	140200	190,105.27	190,105.27	190,105.27
	130500	273,698.14	273,698.14	273,698.14
	220600	75,437.98	75,437.98	75,437.98
	220400	377,145.94	377,145.94	377,145.94
	210500	202,621.16	202,621.16	202,621.16
		3,584,292.38	3,584,292.38	3,584,292.38
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,351,140.29</b>	<b>17,937,083.25</b>	<b>17,937,083.25</b>

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Document

The document below is an unsigned copy of the informed consent for demonstration purposes. To protect the confidentiality of the College that was studied and the participants, the signed copies are not published.



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

Page 1 of 2

Dear Faculty Member or Administrator,

I am conducting a study of the recent three-year period of budget reductions and any related changes in the distribution or redistribution of resources related to the basic skills. This study, "Basic Skills Education in Crisis," is being conducted for research purposes in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a doctoral program in higher education administration at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln.

For the purpose of better understanding any fluctuations in instructional expenditures during this time, I have requested an interview with you. The interview will be conducted in your office or a campus location of your choice. Your participation should take about one hour.

You do not need to prepare any written documents for this interview. All documents required for my research are available on your institution's public website or have been provided by the institutional research office.

You have been selected as a possible participant in for this interview because of your leadership role in the shared governance of your institution.

There are no known risks to you connected to your participation in this study.

All information will be handled in a strictly confidential manner, so that no one will be able to identify you when the results are recorded/reported.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. If you wish to withdraw at any time, you may simply state that you do not wish to continue the interview. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the investigators, UNL, or your institution.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have about the purpose of the study or your participation at any time before or after the interview. I can be reached by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED].

Continued on next page.

Page 2 of 2

This research study is being conducted under the supervision of a doctoral committee chaired by Dr. Miles Bryant. Professor Bryant can be contacted at:

Miles Bryant  
133 TEAC  
UNL  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0360  
[REDACTED]

A description of the research study and its purpose is attached.

For questions about the permission to conduct this research at [REDACTED] College, please contact [REDACTED], Office of Institutional Research and Planning, at [REDACTED].

Sometimes study participants have questions or concerns about their rights. In that case, you should call the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

If you consent to be interviewed for the purpose of this study, please sign in the space below:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), hereby give my permission for Thomas Ray to interview me and quote my responses in a scholarly research paper. I understand that this research is part of the dissertation requirement for a PhD program at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. I understand that I waive any claim to copyright to this material should the author ever publish it in a scholarly journal or in electronic format online. I understand that the author will maintain my anonymity as a part of this interview. I hereby give my permission in the form of my signature.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

☐ By checking this box, I indicate my agreement to audio recording of the interview.

## Appendix C: Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Study at Bay City College



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

July 8, 2012



Dear [Redacted],

I am writing to request permission to conduct interviews of select members of the college leadership for research needed to complete my dissertation for the fulfillment of my PhD from the University of Nebraska. My dissertation committee has approved my proposed study and the purpose statement and research questions from that proposal follow:

### **Purpose Statement**

This study will examine the response of two California Community Colleges, College "A" and College "B," to the reductions in state appropriations for fiscal years 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012 as it pertains to the three-fold mission of California Community Colleges. Of particular interest to the study are any changes in the distribution or redistribution of resources that might indicate a shift in the prioritization of the basic skills in relation to the other parts of the mission of California Community Colleges. By studying fluctuations in the instructional expenses in the budgets of these two colleges over the three-year period of ongoing budget reductions, the study will note shifting priorities in the balance of investment. Relying on primary institutional documents including annual budgets, board minutes, and planning committee meeting minutes this case study will provide a comparative analysis of the reduction strategies employed at each institution and what those strategies reveal about the institution's disposition toward basic skills education. A picture of the state of basics skills educational programming will be explicated through a detailed budget analysis. Distribution/redistribution of resources and reductions within the two institutions is expected provide greater understanding of the general well-being of basic skills education at the two colleges and offer insight into changing attitudes toward basic skills education.

### Research Questions

- What do the annual budgets reveal about the status of basic skills programs?
- What, if any, shift in priorities is apparent in the balance of investment among the three missions designated by the State?
  - What does the balance of investment among the three priorities reveal about changes in disposition (favorable, unfavorable, or unchanged) toward basic skills education?
  - How does ESL programming, which often serves a different fundamental purpose and population than that of other basic skills education, fare when compared to instruction in remedial math, reading and writing?
  - Do any patterns emerge over the three-year period? Has there been a consistent shift toward or away from basic skills education at one or both institutions? Was there a movement in one direction one year followed by a correction the next?
- Considering any changes or patterns observed, to what degree do the budgets represent a plan that re-imagines the mission of the college?
- 

There are three components of the research. The first is a quantitative analysis of the 1300 line in the budget, specifically measuring increased or decreased investment in part-time and full-time overload instruction in the basic skills programs of English, Reading, Math, and ESL relative to increases or decreases in other programs. The second component is a qualitative analysis of public meeting minutes of the governing committees. The purpose of this analysis is to better understand what factors may have influenced the decisions regarding basic skills funding over the three-year period of the study. I expect the analysis of these minutes to lead to meaningful questions about the reasons behind the choices made.

The questions that spring from the document analysis will lead me to the third component of my research, in which I will seek additional insights into the decisions and influencing factors from the leaders who participated in the process. I am seeking permission to conduct interviews of these key faculty and administrative leaders. It is important to note that the college will not be identified by name and all interviewees will remain anonymous. The institution will be named only as, "College A," or given a pseudonym and the individuals interviewed as, "Participant 1" or "Participant 2," etc. Please let me know if you need any additional information regarding my request. I will be happy to provide it.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Ray

## **Appendix D: Interview Questions**

1. Please tell me about your current position in the college.
2. Please tell me about the career path that led you to this position.
3. Please tell me about your educational pathway.
4. In what ways have you been involved in the decision-making regarding instructional budgeting at the college? How did you come to your role in this process?
5. How do you characterize your impact as a leader on campus?
6. How would you describe your college's decision-making procedures concerning the budget to someone from outside the college?
7. In looking at the 1300 budget report for the three years from 2009-2012, some disciplines maintained an approximate growth rate each year of 5%. Others showed no growth and others fluctuated. From your experience in the governance process, do you think these changes reflect deliberate change or reflect other unexpected factors? Please explain...
8. The basic skills have shown overall growth during this three-year period, while other areas such as Physical Education and Creative Arts have not. How would you account for these differences?
9. Please describe any aspects of the shared governance process or your role in management during this period that you consider important.
10. Considering the difficulty these budget reductions have caused for the institution, are there aspects of your own efforts you think were managed especially well?



11. Are there any aspects of the governance process or the actions taken that trouble you?
12. Please describe what you perceive to be the general disposition toward basic skills education in the college. Has it changed during the three-year period of the study?
13. Please describe what you perceive to be the general disposition toward basic skills education at the State level. Has it changed during the three-year period of the study?
14. Do you have any questions or anything you would like to add?

## Appendix E: Sample Interview Transcription

Interviewer: So tell me about your current position.

Participant 3: [Describes a number of significant administrative responsibilities].

Interviewer: Wow and that's a lot of work. Tell me what led you to this position.

Participant 3: So, the path that led me to this position is well I can trace it back to when I was a faculty member I was hired as faculty member in the [specific division]. I immediately started doing campus wide work. Especially around equity issues and multi-cultural curriculum transformation. Those were my primary areas of interest. Now we call it sort of cultural responsiveness or cultural competencies as a strategic initiative. So I acted as a faculty member and I started taking on leadership roles in a couple of the associations. I was the [...] association president for two years and on the executive committee for that a number of years. I was the [...] association president early on even before I got tenure. And then I also shared or co-shared several committees as a faculty member and I believe I even shared women's studies at one point. When it was housed in the [name of another] division. So we sort of borrowed from all these other faculty members across the district. So anyhow so I did that as a faculty member and was involved in the learning communities early on and was a faculty trainer for the length of the program early on. And then after I received tenure I was recruited to apply for the election process for department chair, which I won. And so I did four years, two rounds, of being the

department chair and worked really close to the Dean of the Division.

Then after a while as a department chair I was recruited to serve on the president's [specific] task force. Which was a task force that lasted for about a year. It did research. It looked at data. It did staff development work it produced a plan to work a [program development] on our campus. So then I was I hired to be the co-director of the founding co-director of that office during my second year of my [department chair]. So I did that. And after I did that I was asked to apply for the [administrator position] by my colleague's because we had a lot of transition happening [...]. So I applied for that position and got it and served for two years at that capacity before I applied for the position before I got it. But in the end, a lot of what motivates me is how can I be more effective in the institution. How can I be more effective as a faculty member involved in student success in a positive way? And that's why I was active campus wide. And then I feel like every position that I held has allowed me to bring my skills into a different area of the institution with the goal of being effective and enhancing what we do.

Interviewer: Would you have pictured yourself in this position back when you were in college?

Participant 3: I think back when I was in college as an undergraduate, certainly not.

As a graduate student I at that time I pictured myself as relieved being that I could do department chair. I could be a program coordinator

because I really liked curriculum development. Or if there was an interdisciplinary program that was developed, I had a lot of interest in that, but I didn't see myself becoming an [administrator] as I continued to do other positions at the administration.

Interviewer: Tell me again about your educational pathway. How did you choose the disciplines you've studied?

Participant 3: So my educational pathway, um, I think early on, in K-12, I already had an interest in the humanities. I was an active reader. I loved literature. At the age of twelve I thought that I was going to be this big time journalist, you know, and travel over the world. You know, just reporting and doing stories.

Interviewer: [laughs]

Participant 3: [laughs] We still could do it right? So I knew I had a leaning towards the humanities. And that continued through high school. And when I started college, actually, my parents encouraged me to the business field because of the [name of country] culture. They don't really value the humanities or creative arts that much because the emphasis is on having a profession that has an economic stability. And those two areas typically have this stereotype that we are going to be, you know...

Interviewer: Waiters

Participant 3: Waiters, you know, the Bohemians. And so anyhow my parents pressured me to pursue business accounting and finance. I did that for

an entire year, and while I was taking the other GE courses, I thought, I can do that, but then I love all of my humanities courses. I loved history. I loved literature. I loved creative writing. And so after that first year I switched majors. And then I said I am going to be an English major, or I am going to be a double major, or a minor in history. Because [the humanities] as a field is interdisciplinary and you have so much opportunity to do the historical research. .... That looked like the perfect major for me because I loved history and doing all that [research]. So I did that and then when I was an undergraduate, when I transferred from [Small Community College] because I ended up taking a break after high school and just ended up working in industry for about a year. So I left [Small Community College] and then transferred to [Public University] like I was supposed to. And I was a [humanities] major and my love of the discipline continued. Nothing really changed for me while finishing up at [Public University]. It was actually a couple of my professors who I did research assistant work for that introduced the idea of going into teaching, and then applying for graduate school. And so I had really good encouragement by two of my professors at [Public University], and they helped me select a couple of the grad programs. And I knew I wanted to go into a [humanities] area as a focus area, and they recommended [Public University] because they just were already having a transition of faculty, and they were recruiting from Ivy

League some of the humanities studies folks. And so that's how I ended up at [Public University] because they were very strong in those areas that I was really interested in. [Names variety of humanities programs]. And then they had a great program because in their second year you were guaranteed a at least I was guaranteed a teaching assistant position in the [humanities] department. Which had split like many of them did like years before.

Interviewer: [Responds affirmatively].

Participant 3: Anyways I got really good training the year I was a teaching assistant.

And then I had my own courses and then there was more training. And so when I landed in a community college I felt like I had some training to teach some of the basic skills to transfer level, although, I was definitely much more comfortable at transfer level.

Interviewer: Was this your first community college?

Participant 3: This was my first community college because I was just a teaching assistant at [Major Public University], and so the district I actually started at was this one. [Sister College in district] was my first community college. Then after that I thought at [Nearby Community College]. Then I started teaching at [Bay City College]. And then at the same time I was teaching the upper division ethnic literature classes at [Nearby Private College].

Interviewer: Wonderful, you got a wide array of experience.

Participant 3: Yeah, doing all that frequent driving.

Interviewer: So in what ways have you already been involved at the decision-making at the college regarding the instructional budget?

Participant 3: So I been actively involved in the decision-making around the instructional budget since 2006, I want to say. And in 2006 I was involved in the strategic planning. Which led to the institutional initiative. And so I was one of the tri-chair for the faculty tri-chair community collaborations with [senior administrator]. She was the [dean of instructional division] at that time. And then there was one classified representative. We over saw the sub-grants. You know there was a sub-grant processing state for one-time money, for interventions in those forms of initiatives. And so we did all the review for that and brought it back to senior staff and shared government for that. And then also when I was the department chair, I was involved with the dean through the division leadership team in terms of the budget planning and then of course when I became the [temporary administrative role], I was like full on involved in the budget reduction. Because I started serving on the [Instructional Planning Committee]. Then at the same time even though the positions were already passed, we were asked to do the budget reduction planning at that level, which was a change for the campus because before then it hadn't been democratized in that way.

Interviewer: What led to that change though?

Participant 3: From how I understand what led to that change has to do with [College President] coming in as a new president who has a background in community engagement within the campus and outside of the campus. And so he valued that shared-government process. So that was one thing, to have a president who values that process. And the second driver was that the last budget reduction in 2004 was such a disaster in terms of the constituency groups. The different groups were taking things as advisory through the shared government process, and then different decisions were flat out made. And so in 2004, after that, there was a deep mistrust of shared governance. Among the different units—faculty, classified—directed at administration for not taking in the feedback, engaging in the process. So I think that played a factor and also we went through the accreditation self-study again in 2006 and it always asks you to review all of those areas.

Interviewer: Ok...

Participant 3: Yeah, and I don't know if you are interviewing any of the faculty but [faculty member's name], who was one of the reps at that time, and I am not—I think he was a senate rep for [Instructional Planning Committee]. I don't think he was there as a union rep because he also had been heavily involved in [faculty union]. He was one of the faculty reps, so he can tell you what happened during some of those meetings. And at that time [former chancellor named] was our chancellor.



Interviewer: Right but people had a lot of confidence in her.

Participant 3: Yea people had a lot of confidence in her, but you know we had a different senior staff.

Interviewer: So there was a loss of confidence in the . . .

Participant 3: Yeah, a loss of trust in the shared governance process.

Interviewer: Many of you talk about this story and I hear a different story from everyone.

Participant 3: Yeah, it's ever since [new college president] has been president in terms of the community collaboration and the campus engagement along with the rest of the senior staff. We really value that shared process, and having people really engaged in it. But if people don't want to engage because it's too hard, or it's not in their pay scale, then they can choose to withdraw. But we do want to think of the institution to be a place as where we can practice, you know, democracy.

Interviewer: Well, I think you covered the next question, so we might skip number five and go to number six. How would you describe your college's decision-making procedures concerning the budget to someone from outside the college?

Participant 3: Ok, I think how I would describe it is that we are practicing, and you know, we're trying to practice, shared governance and transparency in both the information about the budget and also the decision-making. I feel that we can continue to improve. We can still improve in those areas in terms of the timeline and in terms of the information that is

provided to the different levels of our campus communities. But as I think we reflected on in our fall [accreditation] self-study when the other folks would come through our campus like our [visiting fellow], he was really studying our processes. We actually have a unique system here at the college compared to others. But definitely timelines, because we don't have the same practice as the [Specific Planning Committee] or the [Specific Planning Committee], that we could still be more consistent in that process, and be very clear about we are doing and what the expectations are. I feel like some of the folks on campus they feel like, um, there were still some things that lack clarity in terms of rolling out the information, so the divisions meet and then they plan it this way. There was confusion about the targets always moving, or the percentage of cuts and things like that.

Interviewer: That's ongoing. So then let's go back to that how would characterize your impact as a leader?

Participant 3: I think for my impact, if I could summarize it, I think both as a faculty member and an administrator—I think around the equity work and the student success and all those initiatives—I think that's where I had the most impact. Because that's where most of my energy went, whether it was in the classroom, or program work or faculty training, has been. So I'm proud to say that I played a significant role as multicultural curriculum infusion, I'm playing a major role in community engagement infusion in the campus and developing the partnerships.

And also I think the other impact that I have is just around the curriculum. Like I think I have been involved in innovative curriculum development and also innovative pedagogy with learning and communities and all of the different types of cohort manifestation we've had, interdisciplinary. I have been involved in.

Interviewer: I think you have done those things very well I think it's great. In looking at the 1300 report in 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and 2011-2012, some disciplines including English and ESL maintained an approximate 5 % growth. That's the dollar figure for that calculation—not the number of sections.

Participant 3: The dollar figure of what was spent in 1300, okay

Interviewer: Right. Other disciplines showed no growth at all or fluctuated; some people went down, some went up. Reading in the third year made up the percentage increases that ESL and English had. Can you reflect on whether those changes were deliberate with somebody guiding that change or do you think that other unexpected factors contributed to that?

Participant 3: I think my answer is both [laugh]

Interviewer: [laugh]

Participant 3: Okay, there was some intentionality, in the sense that, at the institution level there is both a recognition of the demand for basic skills and making sure that we hire the faculty that have the ability to teach at those levels—that they have the skill set, that they have the pedagogy,

that they have the background. Part of it, too, is if we are not able to meet the 50/50. I'm mean, sorry, the 75/25, for full-time/part-time ratio; we have never been close. So it's intentional in terms of recognizing that need. That there is high demand. Then, the curious thing about it is that there also has been intentionality in limiting the growth. Because it actually could grow more in terms of 1300 dollars being spent those areas, in those departments. And you know why we can't grow significantly—because there has to be a balance of the productivity, maintaining productivity, and the seat counts are lower. The other thing outside of the institution we also have had a lot of demographic shift that has happened in the student population. And so we have increasingly more under-prepared students coming into the college, you know, than probably in the last decade, than when I first started. So with the presence of that I could see why we would continue to maintain the robust offerings in spending the 1300. Now, I am not sure what's happening in terms of the other areas. The other areas that are very dependent on that influx of the students from the basic skills.

Interviewer: That last part you just touched on, I think we talked about it before. I think we are doing really well in our success rate in our targeted populations, but there is still a large percentage that there is a little bit of a decline, and we're struggling to serve them. I was wondering if it's because we are recruiting more outside the immediate area from

people who are coming from high school backgrounds that are less adequate.

Participant 3: Yeah, and actually I think the college the attraction for the other areas.

We talk a lot about in the meetings how students will bypass a couple of the other districts, so we have that. That was already happening when I got hired in '96. But even more increasingly in the last couple of years, because we recruit actively and because of the transfer rates. We began actively recruiting because of the strategic initiatives.

Interviewer: So the basic skills have showed some growth, and there are two other areas that showed some growth then became flat. How is your account for that?

Participant 3: I would probably account for it in the sense that lifelong learning—when I first got hired in '96 and after I got tenure, we still included lifelong learning in terms of the discussion of what we valued and in terms of offerings, but it hasn't been the case in the last few years. And as we know from the state level they are not really willing to support funding in those two areas. You know for student in those two areas. And so I actually can't speak necessarily for Physical Education, but I want to say there is a trend in the arts. If we look at overall numbers of students who are majoring in the arts across colleges and universities, I would be interested to know if there was a trend of a decline in the arts.

Interviewer: I think there was an age when the “me” generation was going into business and only interested in how they could make money from a course.

Participant 3: We could be or it’s just the economic downturn. I mean maybe it’s not so much the “me” generation but the economic downturn. Like, “Am I going to be actually able to find employment in this area?” Yeah, but I am not sure either.

Interviewer: Do have any aspects of the shared government process or your role in management that you consider important?

Participant 3: I think what I would like to highlight is that my role in shared government and or also just in management is that I maintain my focus very well in terms of serving students and what is working for student success in terms of the practices. And then I think related to that is that I am really able to bring the instructional lens into the senior management discussion, which I think is very important since the instruction is 79% of the budget.

Interviewer: You are one of only a few administrators who came from instructional faculty?

Participant 3: I am the only one that came in through the faculty. Right. Yeah, and I have written curriculum. I have done all of this stuff. So I think that is really important and I think that because many of the programs I’ve worked in and the programs that I oversee now really cross—they are bridge programs to the student service area. That I have that bridge

recognizing the value of the student support area and the instructional support aspect. I know how important that is. You know as really synonymous with instruction. It shouldn't be like, "That's over there. We can function fine without that."

Interviewer: So the three years of budget reductions are the worst that we have know in terms of the budget. And these are difficult times. Is there anything that you think you personally managed especially well during that time?

Participant 3: Are we talking about the four phases I have been involved in?

Interviewer: But just during the budget crisis: Is that there anything during that three-year period.

Participant 3: Okay, so I think I managed engaging with the faculty and staff because I have been involved in that crisis in two specific areas, and that it's the engagement and level of transparency across the unit that I have done very well. So I know that was very strong when I was the interim dean [specific division of the college]. And from the feedback that I have from the two division areas that has been strong, too. And they've appreciated that.

Interviewer: Is there any aspects of the shared governance process or the actions taken that trouble you?

Participant 3: I don't think I talked about this but I will now. One thing that troubles me is that the years that I have been involved in the budget planning process is that I feel like we really haven't focused holistically on the

entire institution. It's especially in regards to the support staff. And of course there are limitations on where the targeted reductions are and we're bound by state limitations and what have you, but I think that if we could review—we don't spend enough time on what we do really well for the students that are really in need. So not just the cohorts, but we've talked about it before that we've got these cohort programs that serve this amount of students, but we have thousand of more students in the basics skills that need more support as well. And so I think we—in terms of the reduction that's been happening—we haven't really looked at that in realistically way. Whereas it's easy to cut non-instructional area, but what are the non-instructional areas doing to keep students here, and they contribute to the student's pathway to transfer. And the same thing with the counselors, program coordinators or even the value of release time or incentives for faculty.

Interviewer: The release time that's being used is really needed.

Participant 3: Yeah, so the question is why can't we have consistent release time across the divisions so we don't have this competitiveness.

Interviewer: Right

Participant 3: You know, amongst each other. So I think that probably has troubled me over the years. You know because we say, "oh, we'll cut this and that is going to go away. All that work is going to go away. But the reality is that the duties just shift either to the managers or other program coordinators or chairs or other classified. But rather than just



looking at the big picture and thinking essentially that this really is a priority area so we should allocate the resources, so that it continues to do well and that it can even grow.

Interviewer: It would have potential to have a dramatic effect on success rates.

Participant 3: Yeah, so like the other one, too. Let's just go to A and R. If we have to maintain certain levels of enrollment, and we've got the assessment over there too right?

Interviewer: Right.

Participant 3: I would then want us to focus on, "How can we provide adequate resources so that we can improve that area?" Instead of just saying, "You too have to undergo another cut."

Interviewer: Across the board, um, horizontal cuts are causing problems now.

Participant 3: Yeah, they are catching up to us now.

Interviewer: Please describe what you perceive to be the general disposition toward the basic skills from within the college. And then, has it changed from outside the college.

Participant 3: I think from within the college there's a value--we value basic skills and we make it explicit. But I think that institutional practices, in terms of supporting basic skills, still needs a lot of growth. I say that because, 1) there are the enrollment challenges and we are not meeting all of the students needs in the basic skills and that includes instructional support. And then secondly within the institution I think that there continues to be a lack of education around basic skill

students and the division outside of the [specific divisions in the college] that somehow those two divisions that have to work and be the expert. You know working with under-prepared students. Everybody across the divisions...

Interviewer: Everybody has to help the students.

Participant 3: Exactly, that's what I see in terms of the institution and we actually have been fortunate because we have some grants that support basic skills, so that we have been able to maintain certain levels of support. But, for example, when we had the student success reorganization, I think that reorganization and the shutting down of college [program name] was, um, that needed more time to be successful; it needed more decision-making time than what really happened.

Interviewer: You had the Title III grant long before that decision, right?

Participant 3: Yeah, the grant had already been here for two years.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 3: Yeah. So that's within the institution and then externally there is recognition of the basic skills needs across the system, and that's why the state had set aside the basic skills initiative for colleges to work on interventions, institutional interventions, not just classroom interventions. So but then again; ok we've got this basic skills initiative, and we have this new student success task force. You know I still think that some of the other ideas are in terms of the valuing of the basic skills, you need to put more resources there, but the state is just

not in shape to do it. Because if you put more resources into these areas that means less resources for other areas.

Interviewer: I think our time is up.

Interview interrupted by someone waiting for a meeting with the Participant.