



Teasing Out the Complex Relationship Between Part-Time Faculty and Quality: A Qualitative Case Study Comparing Departments at a Large, Public University

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Teasing Out the Complex Relationship Between Part-time Faculty and Quality:
A Qualitative Case Study Comparing Departments at a Large, Public University

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of the Graduate School of Education of Harvard University
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Dedication

For my parents, Sue Weill, Luke Lundemo, Charlotte Lundemo, and Gary Durr,
who taught me to be curious about this world and who have encouraged
and supported me, in every way, to always continue learning;

for my brother, Tao Weilundemo,
whose accomplishments—and humility—could not make me more proud;

for my grandmother, Lois Lundemo,
who is my hero, the person I most aspire to be like;

for my dear friends, Adela Soliz, Amanda Arnold, and Marc Johnson,
who fill my world with sunshine and fresh air;

and for my phenomenal husband, Chris Ott,
who gives me plenty of reasons to daydream
and always reminds me to take things “bird by bird.”

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Finally, I would like to thank the two former chairs who participated in pilot interviews for this project, as well as the provost and department chairs at "Cardinal State University" who generously welcomed me onto their campus to conduct this research. I am deeply grateful that they were willing to make time in their busy lives to talk to me about their experiences. This project would have been impossible without them.

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Abstract

During the last 40 years, institutions of higher education in the United States have dramatically increased their reliance on part-time faculty. Today, fully half of all faculty members hold part-time appointments. How, if at all, has the rise of part-time faculty affected the quality of higher education?

This qualitative case study explores variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at “Cardinal State University,” a large, public institution. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 academic department chairs, the study examines how these chairs make sense of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, given their experience supervising part-time faculty in their departments. This study also analyzes institutional and departmental documents to understand how chairs’ perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality interact with their unique departmental contexts and the broader institutional context of Cardinal State.

This study finds that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across Cardinal State’s departments, and identifies three department-level variables that account for this variation: departments’ levels of reliance on part-time faculty, academic disciplines, and levels of responsibility to Cardinal State’s general education curriculum. These department-level variables matter because they influence chairs’ quality control practices, including their practices for hiring part-time faculty, for evaluating their performance, and for making decisions about whether to renew their contracts. Chairs leading arts and sciences departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum described a

constellation of challenges that interfere with their ability to implement quality control practices effectively.

The patterns described by this study may be specific to Cardinal State, but its broader conclusion—that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is mediated by important contextual factors—warrants further research.

Chapter 1:

Background and Rationale

Introduction

In the United States today, fully *half* of all faculty members working in institutions of higher education hold part-time, tenure-ineligible appointments—up from only 22% in 1970 (Snyder & Dillow, 2015)—and scholars studying trends in the academic workforce predict that the proportion of part-time faculty will continue to grow (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008). The term *part-time faculty* describes faculty employed less than full-time in tenure-ineligible positions (Gappa & Leslie, 1993). In practice, faculty holding this type of appointment are referred to using dozens of different terms and titles, including adjuncts, lecturers, instructors, and contingent faculty (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011). However, because these terms do not consistently refer to faculty who hold part-time appointments, I prefer the less ambiguous term, *part-time faculty*.

Since the 1970s, the rising tide of part-time faculty has been the subject of “extensive analysis and criticism” within the field of higher education, and a persistent theme in this discourse has been the question of whether institutions’ increasing reliance on part-time faculty has affected the quality of higher education (Doe et al., 2011, p. 428). These concerns have persisted for more than 30 years (Antony & Hayden, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Thedwall, 2008), reflecting the widespread and abiding belief that educational quality “*should* be central” to decision-making in higher education (Schuster, 2003, p. 16, emphasis in original) and, accordingly, that decisions related to the role of

part-time faculty should “ultimately” depend on how they affect the quality of higher education (Conley & Leslie, 2002, p. 27).

Although researchers have studied the relationship between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education for more than 30 years (Friedlander, 1980; Thedwall, 2008), we still understand “remarkably little” about this relationship (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011, p. 11). The body of research examining the relationship between part-time faculty and quality has been described as “a confused landscape” (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 8) that is riddled with apparent “contradictions” (Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010, p. 143). While many studies have found a negative relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Bettinger & Long, 2006; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011; Umbach, 2007), other studies have found a neutral or even positive relationship (Landrum, 2009; Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Ronco & Cahill, 2004). As policymakers and institutional leaders weigh decisions regarding part-time faculty, how should they interpret these seemingly incompatible findings? And, moving forward, how can researchers get beyond the confusion and contradictions to build a more coherent understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education?

Problem Statement

According to many scholars, a fundamental problem with existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is its tendency to oversimplify this relationship. Existing research has typically treated part-time faculty as “a monolithic category” in order to generalize about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Antony & Hayden, 2011, p. 701). However, many critics have pointed out that

part-time faculty are a diverse group of professionals whose working conditions vary widely. An important hypothesis in the field—but one that remains largely untested—is that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may vary in systematic ways, reflecting differences amongst part-time faculty members or variation in their working conditions (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Eagan, 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Maisto & Street, 2011). Critics speculate that unaccounted-for variables may partly explain why existing studies have reached inconsistent conclusions about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Kezar & Sam, 2011; Schuetz, 2002), and they argue that, as long as researchers continue to focus on generalizing about all part-time faculty members, “valuable insights” about variables that mediate the relationship between part-time faculty and quality will remain “concealed by averages” (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003, p. 50). Furthermore, this approach to research overlooks a critical question faced by institutional leaders: how can researchers’ conclusions about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality *in general* meaningfully inform their understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in the *specific* contexts of their home institutions (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Cross & Goldenberg, 2011; Kezar & Sam, 2011)?

To address this important and persistent gap in the literature, scholars have called for future studies that “tease out sources of variation” in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, with the goal of developing a more nuanced understanding of this relationship (Antony & Hayden, 2011, p. 701). Studies exploring variation in this relationship may help explain why existing research has reached inconsistent conclusions, by identifying specific sources of variation that have not previously been

accounted for, but that merit further study. Ultimately, exploring variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality could contribute to the development of a more robust and coherent body of research that provides institutional leaders and policymakers with a clearer—and more “fine-grained”—sense of how their decisions regarding part-time faculty affect the quality of higher education (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 108).

Literature Review

Studies investigating the relationship between part-time faculty and quality have typically analyzed large, quantitative datasets, most often collected from statewide systems of higher education (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Jaeger & Eagan, 2008; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011) or through nationwide surveys (Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2005; Benjamin, 2003; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006; Schuetz, 2002). With samples that span multiple institutions of higher education, these studies have been designed to support inferences about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in “higher education as a whole” (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003, p. 50), but many scholars question the validity of these generalizations, arguing that they fail to account for variables that might systematically shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Eagan, 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Leslie & Gappa, 2002; Maisto & Street, 2011). The literature suggests three possible sources of variation in this relationship, and each is regarded as an important area for future research: the varying institutional and departmental contexts in which part-time faculty work, the heterogeneity

of part-time faculty as a group of professionals, and the diverse definitions of quality against which part-time faculty are evaluated.

Part-time faculty work in diverse institutional and departmental contexts.

The working conditions of part-time faculty vary considerably. Institutions of higher education have different practices for recruiting, hiring, and evaluating part-time faculty; offer different levels of compensation, benefits, and job security; have different policies regarding the allocation of resources, such as office space; provide different opportunities for professional development and advancement; and have different professional cultures in terms of how part-time faculty are included in or excluded from faculty life (Anderson, 2002; Coalition on the Academic Workforce [CAW], 2012; Conley & Leslie, 2002; Hollenshead et al., 2007; Street, Maisto, Merves, & Rhoades, 2012; Wilson, 2009). In addition to varying across institutions, the working conditions of part-time faculty also vary *within* institutions, at the department level (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Sam, 2010a). Within institutions, decision-making about part-time faculty is often highly decentralized, with little central oversight or coordination (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011). As a result, policies and practices that affect part-time faculty are “almost universally” determined at the department level (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 143), and department chairs “have the most impact” on the working conditions of part-time faculty; they are more influential than presidents, chief academic officers, or deans (Kezar & Sam, 2010b, p. 101).

Higher education researchers—and part-time faculty activists and advocates—have hypothesized that differences in institutional and departmental contexts may influence the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Bilia, Dean, Hebb,

Jacobe, & Sweet, 2011; Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Curtis & Jacobe, 2006; Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Maisto & Street, 2011). However, because existing studies have so rarely accounted for variation in context (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003; Kezar & Sam, 2010b), we currently “understand very little” about how context influences the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 67). The few studies that have accounted for contextual variables provide support for the hypothesis that context matters. Several studies have found that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality depends on the proportion of an institution’s faculty who hold part-time appointments, with the relationship being more negative in institutions with higher proportions of part-time faculty (Bailey et al., 2005; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). Other studies that disaggregated part-time faculty by academic field found that part-time faculty in professional studies tend to have a more positive relationship with quality than do those in the arts and sciences (Benjamin, 1998; Bettinger & Long, 2010; Levin, 2007; Wagoner, 2007). Although these studies provide evidence that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality depends on the institutional and disciplinary context, much remains unknown about how, if at all, other contextual variables matter. A long-standing hypothesis in the field is that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may depend on “how institutions choose to deal with them and how institutions support their work” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, pp. 218-219), but existing research has not explored whether differences in institutional or departmental policies or practices shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 59).

Part-time faculty are a diverse group of professionals. Part-time faculty are “extraordinarily diverse” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 10). They have widely varying professional backgrounds, levels of educational attainment, and years of teaching experience; their motivations vary, with some specifically seeking out part-time positions, while others would prefer full-time faculty appointments; they play diverse roles within institutions, teaching different numbers and types of courses, and often taking on other, non-teaching duties; and they lead diverse professional lives, including some who hold part-time faculty appointments at multiple institutions and some who hold full-time positions inside or outside of higher education (Anderson, 2002; Antony & Hayden, 2011; CAW, 2012; Conley & Leslie, 2002; Gappa, 2000).

Existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality does not account for these dimensions of diversity and has been criticized for making “generalizations across vastly different faculty” (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 11). Some scholars regard this as a major gap in the literature and argue that future research should explore how, if at all, the varying characteristics of part-time faculty shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Eagan, 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Maisto & Street, 2011).

Part-time faculty are evaluated against diverse definitions of quality. Quality is an abstract concept, and the field of higher education has not reached a consensus about how to define or measure it (Conley & Leslie, 2002; Kezar & Sam, 2011). Quality has generally been conceptualized as a function of the *purpose* of higher education, and institutions do not have a uniform sense of purpose (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Houston, Robertson, & Prebble, 2008; Weilundemo, 2014). Instead, institutions have diverse

values and goals that inform “locally-meaningful” definitions of quality (Houston, Robertson, & Prebble, 2008, p. 223). For example, some institutions define quality in terms of the coherence and rigor of their academic programs (Alfred, 2011; Boris, 2004; Tolbert, 2008), while others define quality in terms of their ability to meet their communities’ evolving educational demands (Smith, 2007). Definitions of quality can also vary within institutions, reflecting the heterogeneity of values espoused by academic departments (Lee, 2004).

Some scholars argue that our current understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is limited by researchers’ focus on a “relatively narrow set” of operational definitions of quality (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011, p. 93) that does not adequately capture its diverse conceptual meanings (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Wagoner, Metcalfe, & Olaore, 2004; Weilundemo, 2014). Because studies examining this relationship have typically analyzed data collected from multiple institutions, researchers have operationally defined quality using measures that can be applied consistently, across institutional boundaries, such as students’ persistence in college (Jaeger & Eagan, 2008; Jaeger & Eagan, 2011; Ronco & Cahill, 2004) or institutional graduation rates (Bailey et al., 2005; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). Critics argue that these measures represent an “oversimplification” of quality as a concept and that our understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality would be enriched by future research that accounts for complexity and variation in the meaning of quality (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011, p. 98).

A further problem with existing research is that it has often assumed that part-time faculty and full-time faculty can be meaningfully judged against the same definition

of quality. Some studies have operationally defined quality in terms of faculty members' characteristics—such as their professional backgrounds or teaching practices—and have drawn conclusions about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality by comparing the characteristics of part-time faculty and full-time faculty (Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Leslie & Gappa, 2003; Schuetz, 2002). Although some institutional leaders may feel it is appropriate to hold all faculty to the same standards regardless of their status, it is “equally possible” for an institution to use “the idea of excellence and difference, rather than similarity, as its overriding ethos” (Tierney, 1997, p. 14). In many institutions, part-time faculty are actually valued *because* they are different from their colleagues in full-time positions: they “enrich the mix of backgrounds, interests, experience, teaching styles, enthusiasm, and breadth of expertise available in the faculty as a whole” (Gappa & Leslie, 1993, p. 128). For institutional leaders whose conceptualizations of quality include difference or diversity, studies that evaluate the relationship between part-time faculty and quality based on comparisons to full-time faculty may seem misguided and inappropriate (Eagan, 2007; Kezar & Sam, 2011; Leslie & Gappa, 2003).

Purpose of the Study

In contrast to existing studies that have used quantitative research methods to draw conclusions about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in general, this study used qualitative research methods to explore variation in this relationship in the specific context of a single institution of higher education. The purpose of this in-depth case study of “Cardinal State University”¹ was to develop a nuanced and contextualized

¹ “Cardinal State University” is a pseudonym.

understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality by exploring how, if at all, this relationship is influenced by aspects of institutional and departmental context, characteristics of part-time faculty members, and “locally-meaningful” definitions of quality (Yin, 2009). This exploratory study aimed not only to identify specific variables that are meaningful sources of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, but also to develop an understanding of how and why those variables matter.

By taking an in-depth look at one university, this study was able to explore the relationship between part-time faculty and quality not only in the complex institutional context of Cardinal State but also within the varying contexts of Cardinal State’s diverse academic departments. In addition to being the sites of meaningful variation in the working conditions of part-time faculty, departments are also the context in which the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is most closely monitored, because department chairs are typically responsible for hiring, supervising, and evaluating part-time faculty members in their departments (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Kezar & Sam, 2010b). However, existing research about this relationship has rarely focused on the department as a unit of analysis (Kezar & Sam, 2010b). A major goal of this study was to understand how and why the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across departments. With that goal in mind, this study particularly focused on exploring, through interviews, how department chairs make sense of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. By asking chairs to reflect on their experiences working with part-time faculty and to explain how they interpret those experiences in terms of quality, this

study developed an understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality that is grounded in rich, detailed evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Limiting the scope of this study to one institution enabled me to capitalize on the strengths of qualitative research methods by building an understanding of each chair's perspective on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality that is sensitive to their context as well as their unique interpretation of the meaning of quality (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005). This study also capitalized on another strength of qualitative research methods by exploring variation in chairs' perspectives, with the goal of understanding how chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality interact with their unique departmental contexts and the broader institutional context of Cardinal State.

Research Questions

This exploratory study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What does the concept of *quality* in higher education mean to the chairs of academic departments at Cardinal State University?
2. Do chairs believe there is a relationship between part-time faculty and the quality of their home departments? If so, how do they describe and explain that relationship? If not, why not?
3. Do chairs believe the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across part-time faculty members? If so, how do they describe and explain that variation? If not, why not?
4. Do chairs believe the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across departments within Cardinal State University or across institutions of

higher education? If so, how do they describe and explain that variation? If not, why not?

5. What policies or practices regarding part-time faculty do chairs identify as strategies for improving quality?
6. How, if at all, do chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality vary?

Significance of the Study

Existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education paints a confusing picture made up of seemingly contradictory findings. According to some scholars, a major problem with this body of research is its tendency to generalize about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality; they have argued that unaccounted-for sources of variation in this relationship may partly explain why existing studies have reached inconsistent conclusions. The purpose of this study was to explore variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, with the goal of contributing to a more nuanced and coherent understanding of this relationship.

This qualitative case study of Cardinal State University provides evidence that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is very complex. Part of that complexity comes from the diverse ways in which quality is conceptualized, even within a single university. The chairs of Cardinal State's academic departments who participated in interviews for this study defined quality in context-specific terms: as a function of Cardinal State's identity as an institution and as a function of how Cardinal State can most effectively meet the needs of its students. Chairs' sense of what Cardinal State's

identity is—or should be—provided them with a framework for defining what a quality college education looks like and how part-time faculty fit into that type of educational experience. Their ideas about how the university can most effectively support its students framed their understandings of how Cardinal State’s reliance on part-time faculty weakens or enhances its capacity to meet those needs. Chairs’ thoughtful analysis of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State revealed their diverse values both as a group and as individuals. Chairs see this relationship from multiple perspectives and, as a result, their understanding of this relationship is both nuanced and ambiguous.

This study also sheds light on how and why the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across departments. This study identified three department-level variables that shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality: their levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their academic disciplines, and their levels of responsibility to Cardinal State’s general education curriculum. This study also identified a mechanism that explains why these three department-level variables matter: they influence chairs’ quality control practices, including their practices for hiring part-time faculty, for evaluating their performance, and for making decisions about whether to renew their contracts. In addition to finding that each of these three department-level variables shapes chairs’ quality control practices in a unique way, this study also found that these variables are inter-related, such that Cardinal State’s departments cluster into two types of departments, each with a distinct set of conditions that shape chairs’ quality control practices in very different ways. The first type has high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and

focuses on academic disciplines in the arts and sciences. The second type has low levels of reliance on part-time faculty and low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and has connections to professional fields. This study provides a comparison of the conditions within each type of department and explains how those conditions set in motion a cascade of effects that influence chairs' practices for hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty.

This study represents a departure from existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, which has focused on generalizing about this relationship and which has reached mixed conclusions. By exploring this relationship in-depth using qualitative research methods, this study discovered meaningful patterns of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State. These patterns suggest that institutional and departmental context shape the practices through which department chairs monitor and control the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. The patterns described by this study may be specific to Cardinal State, but the broader conclusion of this study—that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies in meaningful ways, even within one institution—warrants further research. This study identifies sources of variation in this relationship that have not been accounted for by existing research, but that merit consideration in the design of future studies. Furthermore, researchers interested in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality should feel encouraged to explore other sources of variation in this relationship, using a variety of research methods, drawing on diverse sources of evidence, and studying different contexts.

Additionally, the chairs who participated in this study offered their perspectives on key challenges—and best practices—related to hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty. Their insights about effective quality control practices may be helpful to chairs at other institutions who are interested in rethinking how they work with part-time faculty. At the same time, some chairs at Cardinal State—specifically, those leading departments in the arts and sciences with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum—described having less capacity to engage with best practices and said that their practices were further constrained by a variety of pressures related to the needs of their departments and the needs of their part-time faculty members. An important message for institutional leaders, then, is that the work of managing part-time faculty looks different in every department, and chairs often need support in order to do this work effectively. This is an important issue to bear in mind when developing institutional policies regarding the hiring, evaluation, and retention of part-time faculty members; these policies have to be implemented in departments that vary in meaningful ways, and blanket policies may unintentionally constrain quality control practices if they do not account for relevant differences across departments.

Finally, anyone in the field of higher education who is concerned about how institutions' increasing reliance on part-time faculty affects quality may find Cardinal State to be a particularly instructive case. Cardinal State relies quite heavily on part-time faculty but, as the result of a recent dispute with its faculty union, the university is being compelled to significantly reduce its reliance on part-time faculty. This situation has raised questions about how and why Cardinal State came to rely so heavily on part-time

faculty in the first place and also how reducing its reliance on part-time faculty might affect the quality of education available to its students. This study provides a window on the complex issues that one institution is grappling with as it struggles to substantially reduce its reliance on part-time faculty and to understand what these changes will mean for quality—a dilemma facing many colleges and universities today.

Chapter 2:

Research Design and Methods

To explore variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State University, this study drew on the case study tradition. This study was conceptualized and designed as an embedded case study, with the phenomenon of interest—department chairs’ perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality—being embedded in two nested layers of context: the unique contexts of their home departments and the broader institutional context of Cardinal State (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This study used qualitative methods to explore Cardinal State and its landscape of academic departments and to investigate how, if at all, chairs’ perspectives interact with those layers of context.

Research Site

Cardinal State University—a large, public institution—was selected as the site for this study based on four criteria: its policies regarding the role of department chairs in supervising part-time faculty, the diversity of its academic departments, its typicality as an institution, and its leadership’s support of the study.

First, chairs at Cardinal State are expected to work closely with part-time faculty, in a supervisory role. According to the faculty’s collective bargaining agreement, chairs are responsible for recruiting, supervising, and evaluating part-time faculty, and they are specifically required to prepare written evaluations based on classroom observations, student evaluations, and teaching materials. This expectation that chairs work closely with part-time faculty suggested that their perspectives on the relationship between part-

time faculty and quality would be grounded in personal experience and specific evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Second, because of its comprehensive educational mission, Cardinal State is home to 30 academic departments that span the arts and sciences, as well as professional studies. In addition to this range of academic disciplines, the departments also vary widely in their reliance on part-time faculty: the percent of course sections departments assign to part-time faculty ranges from less than 10% to nearly 70%. These dimensions of variation provided a rich opportunity to explore how, if at all, chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality vary across diverse departmental contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2009).

Third, Cardinal State is, in some ways, a typical institution of higher education. Public, four-year institutions like Cardinal State enroll the largest share of college students (39%) and employ the largest share of college faculty (38%; Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Cardinal State employs about half of its faculty members in part-time positions, which is on par with the national average (Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Although this case study was designed to build a contextualized understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality that is specific to Cardinal State (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005), my intention was to select a case that may speak to the experiences of other institutions. I hope that my findings will resonate elsewhere and serve to raise questions for other institutions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2009).

Finally, Cardinal State's leadership was supportive of the study. The provost responded very quickly when I requested permission to conduct this research. The provost met with me to discuss my plans for the study, expressed interest in the topic, and

provided a letter of support that I included with my applications to the institutional review boards of both Harvard University and Cardinal State.

To conceal Cardinal State's identity and preserve confidentiality, some details in my descriptions of the university have been altered.

Research Participants

The chairs of 20 of Cardinal State's 30 academic departments participated in interviews for this study. They were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy that was intended to maximize the diversity of perspectives and departmental contexts included in the study (King & Horrocks, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2009). After Cardinal State's provost sent an introductory email to deans and chairs to inform them about the study, I sent a recruitment email to each chair that provided further details about the study, outlined the rights of participants, and asked them to participate in one 45-minute interview, to be scheduled at their convenience in an on-campus location of their choosing (see Appendix A for recruitment email). Twenty chairs responded positively to my initial recruitment email, including 15 chairs who responded within 24 hours. Of those respondents, 19 participated in interviews. Although those 19 chairs lead a diverse set of departments, my analysis revealed a possible bias: the sample did not include any chairs of professional studies departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty. To address that limitation, I identified two professional studies departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and made targeted efforts to recruit the chairs of those departments (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2009). One chair responded positively to my targeted outreach and participated in an interview.

The 20 chairs who participated in this study expressed a diverse set of perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, and they lead a diverse set of departments. To protect their identities, I describe this study's participants as an aggregate and report general rather than specific attributes of chairs and their departments.

The chairs who participated in this study represent a spectrum in terms of their years of experience as chairs—and in terms of their plans to continue serving as chairs in the future. According to the collective bargaining agreement for Cardinal State's faculty, chairs are elected by their departments' full-time faculty members to serve three-year terms. Chairs must be tenured faculty members and members of the faculty union. At the time of the study, nine participants were serving their first term as chair. The other 11 participants were more experienced, having already completed at least one full term as chair. Some were serving their second or third consecutive term, and some had previously served as chair at some point in the past. Some participants planned to seek re-election, some had decided against serving another term, and others expressed uncertainty about whether they wanted to serve as chair beyond their current term.

During their interviews, seven participants disclosed that they had personal experience serving as non-tenure-track faculty members. Some described holding part-time appointments while they were graduate students. Some described holding full-time, non-tenure-track appointments at other institutions before they were hired on the tenure-track at Cardinal State. Others described part-time faculty appointments as stepping stones that helped them decide to transition away from non-academic careers and into the professoriate.

In addition to their diverse experiences as chairs and as former non-tenure-track faculty members, these 20 chairs lead departments that vary in meaningful ways: they represent a rich mix of academic disciplines and range widely in their reliance on part-time faculty. This sample of 20 departments reflects the composition and characteristics of all 30 academic departments at Cardinal State (see Table 1 for a comparison of the sample to all departments at Cardinal State).

The sample includes departments that reflect a spectrum of academic disciplines: arts and humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, and an eclectic mix of professional fields. At Cardinal State, departments are organized into colleges. Approximately 70% of departments belong to colleges of arts and sciences, and the other 30% belong to colleges of professional studies. Departments in the colleges of arts and sciences are slightly over-represented in this study's sample.

These departments also vary a great deal in terms of their reliance on part-time faculty, but capturing that variation is somewhat complex because reliance on part-time faculty can be conceptualized and measured in different ways. The number of part-time faculty members in a department, calculated in terms of full-time equivalent faculty,² provides a sense of the scale of the department's reliance on part-time faculty. At Cardinal State, the scale of departments' reliance on part-time faculty varies widely, with the number of part-time faculty members ranging from less than one full-time equivalent

² The number of part-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent faculty is based on the total number of course sections assigned to a department's part-time faculty, divided by the workload of a full-time faculty member. For the purposes of this calculation, Cardinal State considers the workload of a full-time faculty member to be equivalent to teaching five course sections per semester.

to more than 20. On average, part-time faculty make up about seven full-time equivalent faculty members in the departments included in the sample.

Table 1

Selected Characteristics of Departments in Sample (N=20), Compared to all Departments at Cardinal State University

	Departments in Sample	All Departments at Cardinal State
Number of departments	20	30
Percentage of departments in colleges of arts and sciences	80%	75%
Percentage of departments in colleges of professional studies	20%	25%
Average number of part-time faculty, as full-time equivalent faculty ^a	7	6
Average number of full-time faculty	10	10
Average percentage of full-time equivalent faculty who are part-time	40%	40%
Average number of general education sections offered	40	40
Average percentage of sections offered that serve the general education curriculum	40%	40%

Notes. To preserve confidentiality, values reported in this table are approximate.

^a The number of part-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent faculty is based on the total number of course sections assigned to a department's part-time faculty, divided by the workload of a full-time faculty member. For the purposes of this calculation, Cardinal State considers the workload of a full-time faculty member to be equivalent to teaching five course sections per semester.

Reliance on part-time faculty can also be conceptualized and measured in relative, rather than absolute, terms: what proportion of a department's faculty are part-time?

Calculating departments' relative reliance on part-time faculty helps account for variation in the number of full-time faculty. At Cardinal State, the number of full-time faculty varies a great deal across departments, ranging from fewer than five full-time faculty members to more than 20. The percentage of departments' full-time equivalent faculty who are part-time ranges widely at Cardinal State, from 0% to more than 60%. On

average, departments included in the sample have about 10 full-time faculty members, and about 40% of their full-time equivalent faculty are part-time.

This study's original sampling plan was organized around these two criteria—departments' academic disciplines and their levels of reliance on part-time faculty—because previous research suggested that these variables influence the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. However, because this was an exploratory study, I remained open to the emergence of additional sampling criteria and, indeed, another variable did surface as salient to my understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality: departments' levels of responsibility to Cardinal State's general education curriculum. Responsibility for courses that meet requirements of Cardinal State's general education curriculum is distributed across departments, but that distribution is uneven: the number of sections of general education courses offered by departments ranges from less than five to well over 100, and the percentage of departments' course sections that serve the general education curriculum ranges from 0% to nearly 100%. On average, departments included in the sample offer about 40 sections of general education courses, and about 40% of the sections they offer serve the general education curriculum.

Data Collection

Reflecting this study's embedded case study design, my approach to data collection was organized around two goals: exploring the institutional context and departmental landscape at Cardinal State, and exploring chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. I pursued each of these data collection goals using a different set of methods and data sources (see Appendix B for summary of

data collection methods and data sources). To explore the institutional and departmental contexts of Cardinal State, I collected an extensive library of documents from a variety of sources (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). To explore chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, I conducted semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Although I pursued my two data collection goals in distinct ways, the ultimate goal of this case study was not just to explore two separate phenomena—chairs' perspectives, on one hand, and their contexts, on the other—but to discover and explore possible relationships between chairs' perspectives and their contexts (Fontana & Frey, 2005; King & Horrocks, 2010; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). With that ultimate goal in mind, data collection for this study advanced in iterative and overlapping waves, as I developed and tested tentative understandings of the relationship between chairs' perspectives and contexts: document analysis informed my approach to interviews and interviews suggested new directions for document collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Document analysis. My exploration of Cardinal State's institutional and departmental contexts was organized into three waves of document collection: the first wave preceded my interviews with chairs; the second wave was informed by themes that emerged from those interviews; and the third wave was informed by patterns that emerged later, during data analysis. All of the documents collected for this study were publicly accessible through organizational websites (see Appendix B for summary of data sources).

The first wave of document collection, which was designed to help me prepare for interviews with chairs, was limited in scope. I focused on collecting documents that could

inform my initial understanding of each chair's professional background and departmental context, so that I would be better prepared to build rapport with them and to explore issues they raised during the interviews in greater depth (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For each of Cardinal State's 30 departments, I assembled a set of documents from a variety of sources. These included institutional and departmental documents describing the department's faculty, academic programs, and other activities; documents from professional or accrediting organizations in the department's discipline, including accreditation standards or other statements about program quality, and statements or reports about the academic labor market in the discipline; and the chair's curriculum vitae. I gathered documents for all 30 departments, rather than just those in the study's sample, so that I could develop a more complete sense of the similarities and differences across Cardinal State's departments and evaluate whether the sample adequately reflected their diversity.

The second wave of document collection, which was informed by themes that emerged from my interviews with chairs, was a much more thorough and comprehensive effort. In this wave, I collected documents describing diverse aspects of Cardinal State: its mission and history; its academic programs and policies; its leaders, faculty, students, and alumni; its outreach efforts and partnerships; and its major events and everyday activities. All of the documents I collected were publicly available through Cardinal State's website.

During this second wave, I also collected documents from organizations outside of Cardinal State that emerged as salient during my interviews with department chairs. Cardinal State is part of a statewide system of public universities, and from its website I

gathered documents related to its mission and history, organization and leadership, and ongoing initiatives. I also collected documents describing the union that represents Cardinal State's faculty, as well as that union's affiliated state and national unions. These documents included the collective bargaining agreement for Cardinal State's faculty; statements about the unions' positions on higher education issues, including the role of part-time faculty; and documents related to a recent dispute between the faculty union and the leaders of the statewide public university system. Finally, I collected documents describing the course evaluation instrument used by Cardinal State, including reports describing the instrument's development, its intended uses, and its validity; I gathered these documents from the website of the private organization that developed the course evaluation instrument.

The third wave of document collection was a focused effort aimed at further exploring themes that emerged during data analysis. To facilitate in-depth analysis of Cardinal State's curriculum and course offerings, I collected documents describing the university's course offerings for the fall semester of 2015. These documents were publicly available through Cardinal State's website.

Over the course of this study, I collected over 20,000 pages of documents. During data collection, I skimmed the documents and noted content that seemed especially relevant to my research questions or emerging themes. I maintained an up-to-date inventory to keep track of documents' contents and sources. During data analysis, I frequently searched this library of documents for data that could help me more fully understand emerging themes. To protect the identities of Cardinal State and participating chairs, this study does not include direct quotations from publically available documents.

Interviews. Guided by Rubin and Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing model, I used a semi-structured interview protocol to facilitate in-depth exploration of chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (see Appendix C for interview protocol). The protocol was anchored by a small number of main questions that addressed this study's research questions: they explored chairs' perceptions of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, their perceptions of variation in this relationship, and their interpretations of the meaning of *quality*. These broadly framed questions were intended to invite chairs to talk about these topics in whichever ways were most meaningful and authentic to them as individuals, rather than being limited by narrower questions that reflected my assumptions or biases (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Borrowing techniques from the responsive interviewing model, I asked follow-up questions that prompted interviewees to elaborate on the particular ideas and themes they raised and I probed for greater detail and clarity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Using these techniques, I sought to draw out nuance in chairs' perspectives and to explore the evidence that informed their perceptions, by asking them to share specific, illustrative examples from their experience working with part-time faculty.

I piloted the interview protocol with two former chairs, one who previously had served as chair of a department in the arts and sciences at Cardinal State and the other as chair of a professional studies department at another institution. These pilot interviews provided an extremely valuable opportunity to test the protocol questions and also to practice responsive interviewing techniques.

For the study, I conducted one in-person interview with each of the 20 department chairs. Most of the interviews took place in the chairs' offices on the Cardinal State

campus. In response to requests from participants, one interview was conducted in a quiet common area on campus, and another was conducted in a café just off campus. At the beginning of each interview meeting, I asked whether the participant felt comfortable with the privacy of the location. In many cases, chairs agreed to close their office doors to improve privacy, but a few said they felt comfortable leaving their office doors open. It is worth noting that most interviews were scheduled during the summer, when very few people were on campus. At the beginning of each interview, I orally reviewed participants' rights and offered each participant a physical copy of the recruitment email that provided a more detailed description of their rights (see Appendix D for oral consent script). I also asked each participant for consent to audio-record our conversation.

On average, interviews lasted one hour, but the length of the interviews varied, ranging from 35 minutes to just over two hours. During each interview, I recorded notes about issues and themes raised by the participant, as reminders to revisit them with follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Immediately after each interview, I wrote a brief memo to capture my impressions of the quality of the interview data as well as to note any themes that emerged during the conversation (Creswell, 2009; King & Horrocks, 2010).

I audio-recorded every interview and transcribed the recordings verbatim. After checking the accuracy of each transcript, I deleted the audio-recording. To preserve confidentiality, I carefully reviewed each transcript and removed any data that might identify the participant, their department, or Cardinal State (King & Horrocks, 2010; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Because this is a case study, some data that could identify participants—such as the names of their departments or disciplines, institutional or

departmental characteristics, or background information about participants—was potentially valuable to my analysis. To preserve that information, I assigned each department a randomly generated identification number and created a password-protected file in which I stored potentially identifying information associated with each department. Using this system, I was able to thoroughly de-identify transcripts while still keeping a record of information relevant to my analysis. In addition to removing potentially identifying information, I also removed data that was particularly sensitive. In some cases, participants spoke very candidly about personnel matters or other sensitive issues that they deal with as chairs. A few asked that I keep specific comments “off the record” or asked me to “be careful” in my reporting about specific issues, and so I removed all of that sensitive data from the transcripts. Although I transcribed the interviews verbatim, some direct quotations reported in this study have been edited for the sake of clarity; specifically, some distracting filler words and repeated language have been edited out.

Data Analysis

My approach to data analysis was organized around the goal of developing a contextualized understanding of chairs’ perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Fontana & Frey, 2005; King & Horrocks, 2010; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I began with in-depth analysis of this study’s phenomenon of interest—chairs’ perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality—and then worked to contextualize that analysis by exploring how, if at all, chairs’ perspectives interact with their unique departmental contexts and the broader institutional context of Cardinal State. My

approach to data analysis included frequent memo writing, an inductive approach to coding, and the development of analytic matrices.

Memos. Beginning in the earliest stages of data collection, I wrote frequent, informal memos to record my research process and my emerging understandings of the data (Creswell, 2009; King & Horrocks, 2010; Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). These memos served many different purposes: I used them to plan and document my approach to data collection and analysis; to describe and analyze the sample of chairs and departments included in the study; to record themes that emerged from each interview and from documents related to each department; to describe apparent patterns of data from different sources—and to question those patterns; to document issues related to data quality and sensitivity; and to reflect on my pre-existing assumptions and how they might be influencing my approach to the study.

Writing memos not only created a valuable record of my research process, it also deepened my critical engagement with data analysis by making my emerging interpretations of the data explicit and by reminding me to question their validity. In addition to scrutinizing how well my interpretations fit the available evidence, I deliberately sought out additional data that might disconfirm—or at least complicate—my understanding (King & Horrocks, 2010; Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). In this way, writing memos helped me resist unduly parsimonious interpretations of the data and challenged me to develop a nuanced, empirically grounded understanding (Stake, 1995).

Coding. The coding scheme for this study evolved through six rounds of coding and analysis (see Appendix E for summary of coding scheme development). Prior to data

collection, I developed a preliminary coding scheme that I planned to use to identify data related to each of this study's research questions, as a strategy for bringing evidence from different sources into conversation around those questions (see Appendix E for coding scheme; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). However, when I tested that coding scheme on actual data, I found the codes to be too abstract to meaningfully describe the data. I also worried that using a coding scheme derived from this study's initial research questions might blind me from discovering unexpected interpretations of the data that could enrich my understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality.

Abandoning that preliminary coding scheme, I moved forward with an inductive approach to coding scheme development. I reviewed my memos about each data source, looking for major themes that cut across the sources. My goal was to develop a coding scheme that would allow me to identify data related to major themes or topics, without imposing much interpretation (see Appendix E for coding scheme; King & Horrocks, 2010; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). I tested this new coding scheme and found it to be an effective tool for organizing the data into broad topics for further, in-depth analysis. Using the qualitative analysis software ATLAS.ti, I coded each interview transcript. My work with the interview data helped me identify institutional and departmental characteristics that chairs described as important context for understanding the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. To explore those institutional and departmental characteristics, I selected relevant documents from my inventory and coded them using the same scheme.

Subsequent rounds of coding scheme development were also inductive. They focused on elaborating and refining the coding scheme to capture patterns of meaning that emerged from the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To facilitate in-depth analysis and to document multiple iterations of coding, I exported the interview data from ATLAS.ti into Microsoft Excel, creating a spreadsheet of quotations, annotated with their sources and with the codes from the second round. For each subsequent round of coding, I added new columns to the spreadsheet, where I assigned new codes to each quotation. Working in Excel allowed me to document how my coding—and interpretation—of each quotation evolved over time, and also allowed me to sort quotations by source and by code, enabling me to engage in coding and analysis of this data in a dynamic way.

The third round of coding scheme development involved in-depth analysis of all of the interview data. I sorted the quotations into groups based on the codes that I had assigned in the second round. This enabled me to take a close look at all of the quotations related to each major topic or theme and identify narrower sub-codes that captured the meaning of those quotations in greater detail (see Appendix E for coding scheme).

During the third round of coding, I noticed an unexpected pattern across the interviews that changed my interpretation of three major topics. I realized that chairs had described their practices related to part-time faculty hiring, evaluation, and retention as mechanisms for quality control. I also noticed variation in how they described their quality control practices, as well as a complex set of factors that they described as shaping those practices. I further explored those patterns in a fourth round of coding, which focused on quotations related to these three topics: part-time faculty hiring, evaluation, and retention (see Appendix E for coding scheme).

The fourth round of coding suggested a further pattern in the data. I noticed that many of the factors chairs described as shaping their quality control practices seemed to be related to specific characteristics of their departments: their levels of reliance on part-time faculty, the types of courses they offered, the types of courses they tended to assign to part-time faculty, and the structure of their degree programs. To further explore these aspects of departmental contexts, I conducted a fifth round of coding that focused on quotations related to these topics: the number and percent of part-time and full-time faculty, the types of courses assigned to part-time and full-time faculty, and curriculum (see Appendix E for coding scheme).

To enrich my understanding of these aspects of departmental context, I triangulated chairs' descriptions of their departments against data from relevant documents. I conducted an in-depth analysis of Cardinal State's curriculum, including its general education curriculum, its degree programs, and its course offerings. Using the academic catalog and documents describing Cardinal State's course offerings for the fall semester of 2015, I created a spreadsheet in Excel that captured characteristics of each course offered, including the number of sections offered, the number of sections assigned to part-time faculty, and whether the course met a requirement of the general education curriculum. In keeping with the exploratory nature of this study, I also added other course-level attributes available in these documents—such as how many sections were offered online or in the evening—to consider whether these other variables could add further dimensions to my analysis. I then aggregated this data at the department and institution levels, which enabled me to look at variation in departments' course offerings and reliance on part-time faculty.

Based on patterns that emerged from the interview data, I was also interested in variation in the structure of degree programs offered at Cardinal State; specifically, I noticed that some departments offered programs that required a prescribed set of courses and often in a specific sequence, while other departments offered programs with fewer prescribed requirements and more room for students to choose their courses. Using Cardinal State's academic catalog, I created another spreadsheet in Excel that captured characteristics of each degree program offered, including the number of total credits and the number of credits that must be fulfilled by specific required courses, as opposed to courses that fulfill distribution requirements or elective courses. I then calculated the percent of credits in each program that must be fulfilled by required courses and, again, aggregated this data at the department and institution levels.

The lessons I learned from this quasi-quantitative coding of Cardinal State's curriculum informed the sixth—and final—round of qualitative coding. In the final stage of coding scheme development, I worked to integrate my understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State, drawing on insights from memos, previous rounds of coding, and the analytic matrices described below (see Appendix E for coding scheme). In this last iteration, I coded all of the interview data, seizing the opportunity to reconsider the meaning of the data in light of my emerging understanding and to look for data that might complicate or disconfirm that understanding.

Analytic matrices. I used analytic matrices as a structured framework for exploring variation in the characteristics of Cardinal State's departments and as a tool for testing hypotheses about how, if at all, that variation in departmental contexts might shed

light on chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). Working in Excel, I built a password-protected matrix that compared the characteristics of each of Cardinal State's academic departments, using data drawn from documents (Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). The matrix included a diverse set of departmental characteristics related to their academic disciplines, their faculty, their degree program offerings, enrollment in their degree programs, and their course offerings (see Appendix F for summary of departmental characteristics included in analytic matrices). Throughout the course of this exploratory study, I continued to add departmental characteristics to the matrix whenever I thought they might enrich my understanding of variation across departments or improve my ability to contextualize chairs' perspectives.

Then, building on insights from memos and coding, I focused on three departmental characteristics that emerged as most salient to my understanding of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State: departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and their academic disciplines. To explore how, if at all, variation in these departmental characteristics could shed light on chairs' perspectives, I organized the departments into clusters based on their levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and their academic disciplines (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I categorized departments as having high or low levels of reliance on part-time faculty based on several criteria: the number of part-time faculty members in the department, calculated in terms of full-time equivalent faculty; the percentage of the department's course sections that are assigned to part-time

faculty; and, drawing from the interview data, the chair's qualitative description of the department's reliance on part-time faculty. To categorize departments as having high or low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, I again considered several criteria: the number of sections of general education courses offered by the department; the percentage of the departments' sections that serve the general education curriculum; and, again drawing from the interview data, the chair's description of the department's level of responsibility to the general education curriculum (see Table 2 for key characteristics of each cluster of departments). I categorized departments into academic disciplines—arts and sciences or professional studies—based on their college affiliations, but I also found that the distinction between arts and sciences and professional studies can be ambiguous in some cases. I identified four departments in the arts and sciences as having “hybrid” disciplines because, although they are grounded in arts and sciences disciplines, these departments offer programs that focus on specific professional applications of their disciplines³ (see Table 3 for key characteristics of departments included in the sample).

To explore my hypotheses that these three departmental characteristics might shed light on chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, I compared the interview data for chairs within each cluster, looking for patterns of similarity and difference in their perspectives (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). During this analysis, I was not only interested in discovering patterns; I was also interested in data that did not fit with emerging patterns, because taking a closer look

³ For example, if Cardinal State had a Department of Statistics, it would likely be affiliated with the colleges of the arts and sciences. However, if the department offered a degree program in Actuarial Science—a specific professional application that is grounded in statistics—then I would describe this department as a disciplinary “hybrid.”

at that data deepened my understanding of the complex relationship between chairs' perspectives and their departmental contexts (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013; Yin, 2009). By using matrices to support systematic comparisons of the nuanced perspectives and multidimensional departmental contexts of 20 chairs, this study developed a contextualized understanding of variation in chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State.

Table 2

Selected Characteristics of Departments in the Sample (N=20), by Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty and Level of Responsibility to Cardinal State's General Education Curriculum

	Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty		Level of Responsibility to the General Education Curriculum	
	High	Low	High	Low
	Number of departments	11	9	11
Average number of part-time faculty, as full-time equivalent faculty ^a	12	3		
Average number of full-time faculty	10	10		
Average percentage of sections assigned to part-time faculty	60%	30%		
Average number of general education sections offered			60	15
Average percentage of sections offered that serve the general education curriculum			65%	15%

Notes. To preserve confidentiality, averages reported in this table are approximate values.

^a The number of part-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent faculty is based on the total number of course sections assigned to a department's part-time faculty, divided by the workload of a full-time faculty member. For the purposes of this calculation, Cardinal State considers the workload of a full-time faculty member to be equivalent to teaching five course sections per semester.

Table 3

Key Characteristics of Departments in the Sample (N=20)

Pseudonym ^a	Sampling Criteria		
	Academic Discipline, by College Affiliation	Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty	Level of Responsibility to the General Education Curriculum
Department 2	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 3	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 5	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 8	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 10	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 22	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 23	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 24	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 27	Arts and Sciences	High	High
Department 21	Arts and Sciences	High	Low
Department 12	Professional Studies	High	Low
Department 6	Arts and Sciences	Low	High
Department 15	Arts and Sciences	Low	High
Department 4	Arts and Sciences (Hybrid) ^b	Low	Low
Department 13	Arts and Sciences (Hybrid)	Low	Low
Department 17	Arts and Sciences (Hybrid)	Low	Low
Department 20	Arts and Sciences (Hybrid)	Low	Low
Department 11	Professional Studies	Low	Low
Department 14	Professional Studies	Low	Low
Department 30	Professional Studies	Low	Low

Notes. ^a To preserve confidentiality, departments were assigned randomly generated identification numbers that serve as their pseudonyms in this study.

^b Four departments affiliated with the colleges of arts and sciences are described as having “hybrid” disciplines because they offer programs that focus on specific professional applications of their disciplines.

Chapter 3:

The Rise of Part-time Faculty at Cardinal State University

Cardinal State's Mission and Students

Cardinal State University is a large, public university, with about 10,000 students enrolled in its degree programs. It belongs to a statewide system of public universities and, as a regional campus, is focused on serving nearby communities. Chairs said that, in their region of the state, “There’s a huge portion of people who are underemployed or unemployed, and they are that way because they don’t have the education.” For many young people in the region, their “mom and dad are laborers,” but “there’s no more good jobs like that. They’re all gone.” According to chairs, Cardinal State’s mission is to address this issue, not only by providing individuals with opportunities for socioeconomic mobility but, in doing so, to contribute to the economic development of the region. As one chair said, “We’re going to make them productive taxpayers.... That’s what we do.” At the same time, chairs said that Cardinal State is not solely focused on economic development; the university also contributes to the region’s civic and cultural vibrancy. “We’re preparing students to enter a world as thoughtful citizens, able to engage critically in ideas,” one chair said, which is why Cardinal State is “very committed to the liberal arts.” These two threads in the mission—economic development and civic and cultural development—are reflected in Cardinal State’s comprehensive educational mission and its diverse program offerings. About half of its students are enrolled in degree programs in the arts and sciences, and about half are enrolled in degree programs in professional studies.

Chairs described Cardinal State's students—about 80% of whom are undergraduates—as “good kids” who are “hard-working” but who are often dealing with a variety of issues—academic, financial, and personal—that can become obstacles to completing their college education. Reflecting the demographics of the region, the majority of the university's undergraduate students are first-generation college students, and many come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds. Chairs described the student population at Cardinal State as, to some extent, consistent with national trends. “Higher ed is different than it was 40 years ago,” one chair said, when “the only people who went to college were people whose parents went to college.” Even so, chairs said that Cardinal State has “a disproportionate number of students from remarkably tough environments,” and offered examples of struggling but resilient students, like this one:

“I had a student who missed two classes, because she had to take care of her 12-year-old sister, because her mother was in the hospital again. She was a drug addict.... Here's a 19-year-old girl who's in this situation that is really difficult, but yet she's still trying to continue on to go to school.”

Chairs said that their students' academic preparation varies widely—from “the most talented people I've ever met” to students with “the worst possible set of preparations to come to a university”—but framed this as a reflection of Cardinal State's public service mission. “The number one thing is that we have the opportunity there for everybody who truly wants it,” one chair said, later adding, “We're just letting people in who we think have a shot at achieving higher education.”

Improving Educational Quality Through Institutional Change

According to many chairs, Cardinal State's students have an impressive track record of achievement, and institutional documents show that the university's six-year graduation rate has steadily increased in recent years. Chairs said that a particular point of pride is "a significant gain" in the graduation rate of the university's first-generation college students. However, chairs argued that the university's impact is only partially captured by quantitative measures like graduation rates; they said that the most powerful evidence for them, as educators, is seeing how the lives of students are transformed by their experiences at Cardinal State. One chair put it this way:

"The mission of the institution being about opportunity, I didn't get it in my first few years here. And I get it now. Because I have seen it too many times, where I have a student who, whether it's a guy or a girl, sits in the back of the classroom with their hat on backwards. And they actually live in housing projects. They really have no money. Their parents are drug addicts. Like, literally drug addicts. 'I'm sorry. I couldn't come to class yesterday because I was in the hospital with my mom. She was detoxing again.' Okay? Alright. And then, by the time they're seniors, they're whole intellectually flourishing human beings that are going to do things in the world that they never, ever had dreamed of doing before they got here. That's the best. That's really what it's about. So I really do believe in that. And many of the people here do."

Many chairs argued that Cardinal State's successes as an institution have been made possible by the constructive collaborative relationship between the university's faculty and its leadership, who share a common "mission to serve first-[generation]

college students, students of color, students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.” Chairs said that the leadership has worked productively with the faculty to reshape Cardinal State as an institution so that it could more effectively serve its students. Chairs highlighted three major changes in the university’s academic policies and culture that, in their view, dramatically improved the quality of their students’ educational experiences and outcomes.

First, the university adopted a policy that reduced class sizes across the institution, so Cardinal State no longer has “any classes where freshmen are jammed into a room” with 100 or more other students. Before the new class size policy was implemented, chairs recalled teaching some “super-sections” with 150 students. As one chair said, “I couldn’t pick one of those kids out of a line-up.” In smaller classes, faculty get to know their students and can provide them with more individual attention. According to many chairs, reducing class size has yielded powerful results, as “retention rates have skyrocketed” and faculty feel more strongly connected to their students:

“Now I know every student, and we all know every one of our students. And so watching graduation, with all of the faculty cheering on all of the people that they know, and the students waving to the faculty—it’s wonderful.”

A second change in academic policy that chairs credited with improving quality at Cardinal State was the implementation of a new general education curriculum, which aims to develop students’ core academic skills and expose them to the arts and sciences. Chairs described the design of the new curriculum as “really well thought out” and based on “well-known best practice”; it involves “a lot of writing-intensive classes,” including “topically oriented” seminars “that get students into the gist of being in a university.”

Chairs cited evidence that the curriculum is effective: students are “getting better at writing” and “graduating at a better rate.”

Finally, chairs described an ongoing shift in Cardinal State’s academic culture that many see as contributing to improved educational quality. Historically, Cardinal State has been a teaching-focused institution, but chairs said that, in recent years, they have noticed an emerging emphasis on research. “I’ve seen the changes,” one chair said, explaining that Cardinal State’s identity as an institution seems to be undergoing a period of transition:

“We do focus more on research. I mean, there’s more of a chance of a professor not getting a promotion if they don’t do research than ever before.... We’re definitely a teaching institution first, but I can see that intertwining now with research.... We’re definitely changing.”

Many chairs said that this change in Cardinal State’s academic culture has enriched the educational experiences available to its students, because “undergraduate research has just become this huge thing.” Each year, hundreds of undergraduates work with faculty mentors on research projects, and chairs view these learning experiences as especially meaningful because “that’s where a lot of students really excel, is when they get to do something deeply.” Cardinal State has also provided students with opportunities to present their research—“something that they helped to create”—which chairs described as “an amazing experience for them.” Chairs said that these new opportunities to engage in research have helped students “make a connection to this institution in a really powerful way.”

According to many chairs, these three changes in Cardinal State's academic policies and culture improved the quality of education available to its students, but they also had another implication in common: they created demand for additional faculty. Reducing class size drove up the number of course sections and, by extension, created the need for faculty to staff those sections. The new general education curriculum had a similar effect: it introduced several new courses that all students were required to take, which necessitated a rapid expansion in the size of Cardinal State's faculty. Notably, this expansion affected some departments more than others, as responsibility for general education courses was primarily assigned to departments in the arts and sciences, rather than to those in professional studies. The university's increased emphasis on research also created demand for additional faculty because it redefined the role of tenure-stream faculty: rather than focusing on teaching full-time, they are now expected to actively pursue research. Many faculty members have been released from teaching some of their courses in order to work on grant-funded research or to supervise students' research experiences, creating the need for additional faculty to step in and cover those courses.

Building the Faculty During a Recession

These changes in Cardinal State's academic policies and culture happened to coincide with the recent economic recession, a time when the university experienced both "a tremendous influx of students" and a "drastic cutback in state funds." According to chairs, enrollment "exploded" during the recession, and the rapid, dramatic increase in enrollment further intensified demand for additional faculty. At the same time, the recession brought deep cuts in state appropriations for higher education—a critical source of revenue for Cardinal State, as a public university. "The state has largely walked away

from its responsibility to public education,” one chair said, “as has happened in almost every state. All we see are declines, declines, declines, declines.” Documents published by the statewide system of public universities suggest that, although state support for higher education declined nationwide during the recession, cuts were particularly severe in this state. Declining state appropriations, combined with the dramatic increase in enrollment, meant that funding per student dropped substantially, raising concerns about how Cardinal State could afford to provide a high-quality education without increasing tuition to the point that “it no longer serves the public because nobody can afford it.” Chairs said that, although recent declines in state appropriations were troubling, they also reflect an enduring reality of public higher education: “We’re always asked to do more with less.”

During the recession, Cardinal State confronted a challenging set of circumstances: despite staggering declines in state appropriations, the university needed to significantly expand the size of its faculty—not only to accommodate swelling enrollment, but also to implement changes in its academic policies and culture that would improve the quality of education available to its students. The university also had a limited set of options in terms of how it could build its faculty. In the statewide system of public universities that includes Cardinal State, all faculty members are represented by a union, and the collective bargaining agreement negotiated between system leadership and the union describes three types of appointments that faculty members can hold: full-time, tenure-stream; full-time, non-tenure-track; and part-time. Chairs explained that, as Cardinal State tackled the challenge of rapidly and significantly expanding its faculty, it

was not operating “in a perfect world” or “in a vacuum,” but rather was making difficult decisions about how to deploy its limited options and limited resources.

Chairs readily acknowledged that tenure-stream faculty are “very, very expensive. They’re million-dollar investments per line.” Even so—and despite declining state support—Cardinal State added many new tenure-stream positions in recent years. “All the years that other four-year institutions across the country were cutting back on full-time faculty,” one chair said, “we were hiring them like mad.” Chairs explained that Cardinal State was able to invest in so many new tenure lines because the leadership “had money squirreled away” for this purpose. They said that building the ranks of tenure-stream faculty during a period of declining funds had a profound impact on the mindset of faculty members at Cardinal State: “That creates a camaraderie and a campus atmosphere that says, ‘We can do this, because the [leadership has] got our back. [They’re] not going to let us slide backwards.’ And [they] didn’t.” Although Cardinal State has been “very good at hiring full-time faculty,” several chairs noted that the rate of hiring has not kept pace with growth in enrollment. Many chairs expressed a belief that Cardinal State’s leadership would have hired more tenure-stream faculty if that had been possible financially.

Cardinal State currently employs about 300 full-time faculty members, and the vast majority of them hold tenure-stream appointments. The collective bargaining agreement also allows for full-time, non-tenure-track appointments, but Cardinal State’s use of this type of appointment has been exceedingly rare.⁴ Although one chair described

⁴ Because the vast majority of Cardinal State’s full-time faculty hold tenure-stream appointments, I use the term “full-time faculty” to refer to full-time, tenure-stream faculty, unless otherwise specified.

it as “odd” that Cardinal State has not appointed more faculty to full-time, non-tenure-track positions, other chairs said that this institutional practice has a simple, financial explanation: full-time faculty members, even if they hold non-tenure-track appointments, are expensive. “You have the salaries, and then you have the benefits,” chairs explained, and the university would also have to invest in “infrastructure,” such as building additional offices to accommodate the increasing ranks of full-time faculty.

Compared to the costs associated with hiring additional full-time faculty, part-time faculty represented a much less expensive alternative. Under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, part-time faculty are compensated approximately 4000 dollars per course section they teach, and they can be assigned up to three sections per semester, which is only one section shy of the full-time teaching load. Part-time faculty members who hold appointments for several consecutive semesters become eligible to join the faculty union, but they are not entitled to benefits. Faced with limited resources and urgent demand for additional faculty, Cardinal State hired “a ton” of part-time faculty members. Today, Cardinal State’s part-time faculty outnumber its full-time faculty, and they teach about half of its course sections. Many chairs described Cardinal State’s use of part-time faculty as typical: “We’re just, across the country, becoming so heavily reliant on part-time faculty.”

A Future With Fewer Part-time Faculty

Although chairs described Cardinal State’s heavy reliance on part-time faculty as typical, they also said that the university has reached a unique inflection point in its history of using part-time faculty. The statewide system of public universities has been involved in a dispute with the faculty union, revolving around the universities’ use of

part-time faculty. Several universities in the system have been operating in violation of a provision of the collective bargaining agreement that limits the percentage of course sections that departments can assign to part-time faculty. The dispute was recently resolved, and now the universities are being compelled to come into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. At Cardinal State, that will mean reducing the number of sections assigned to part-time faculty by over a hundred sections. One chair described this as “the most pressing issue that this university has faced in probably at least 20 years.”

Chairs said that this situation “has a specific ramification for chairs,” because the collective bargaining agreement limits reliance on part-time faculty at the department level, and chairs are responsible for bringing their departments into compliance. This is affecting some chairs profoundly and others almost not at all because, at Cardinal State, departments’ reliance on part-time faculty varies widely: the percentage of sections they assign to part-time faculty ranges from less than 10% to almost 70%. Departments on the low end of that range are, in many cases, already in compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. Chairs of these departments described feeling “safe,” because “we’re in a unique situation where we have, really, enough [full-time] faculty.” In other cases, chairs said that their departments “use so few” part-time faculty that they were able to bring their departments into compliance by “[cutting] back a little on part-timers,” which one chair described as “only a little bit of dancing.” In contrast, chairs of departments that rely heavily on part-time faculty said that their departments are “in gross violation” of the collective bargaining agreement and that coming into compliance is “going to be a nightmare for us.” They said that Cardinal State has not identified “a clear

or immediate solution” that will enable them to dramatically reduce the percentage of sections they assign to part-time faculty. As one chair said, “There isn’t a plan. Yeah, no. None whatsoever.”

Part-time Faculty in Two Types of Departments

At Cardinal State, chairs’ responsibilities with regard to part-time faculty extend well beyond the urgent matter of how to bring their departments into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. They are also responsible for the more routine tasks of hiring part-time faculty members into their departments, evaluating their performance, and making decisions about whether or not to renew their contracts. However, the contrast in chairs’ accounts of how they are dealing with this unusual situation provides a striking example that illustrates a broader theme: chairs at Cardinal State lead two different types of departments—those with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and those with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty—and how a chair engages in the work of managing their part-time faculty is shaped by the type of department they lead.

Under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, chairs are solely responsible for managing all of the part-time faculty members in their departments, regardless of the number, which means that chairs’ workloads vary substantially. According to documents from the dispute between the system and the union, one of the reasons that the collective bargaining agreement limits departments’ reliance on part-time faculty is to protect the workloads of department chairs. The chairs’ role—which includes many other responsibilities, in addition to managing part-time faculty—was designed based on the assumption that departments would have a limited number of part-time

faculty, but many departments at Cardinal State have violated that assumption. On average, chairs of departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty manage almost four times as many part-time faculty members as chairs of departments with low levels of reliance do (see Table 4). Several chairs described feeling overextended by the responsibilities associated with managing large numbers of part-time faculty, and their candid descriptions of their practices for hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty differed in meaningful ways from chairs' who are managing relatively few. These differences matter because—as chairs explained—hiring, evaluation, and retention practices are the mechanisms they use to regulate the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in their departments; in other words, these practices are their quality control mechanisms.

Although the collective bargaining agreement outlines policies regarding the hiring, evaluation, and retention of part-time faculty, chairs said that there are “ambiguities” in those policies that allow for variation in practice. Part-time faculty members are required to hold master’s degrees but, as long as that requirement is satisfied, the decision about which candidate to hire is at the chair’s sole discretion. Chairs are expected to evaluate each part-time faculty member’s performance—based on observing one class session and reviewing student evaluations, which include ratings of teaching effectiveness but no open-ended feedback—during the first semester they hold an appointment and periodically thereafter, at intervals that depend on their teaching loads. At the end of a part-time faculty member’s term of appointment, the chair can choose not to renew that contract without going through any formal process.

Chairs' descriptions of how they put these policies into practice reveal patterns of variation that shed light on how differences in their departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty shape their quality control practices. However, these patterns of variation cannot be fully explained by differences in departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty; instead, they point to differences in two other departmental characteristics that also influence chairs' practices: their levels of responsibility to Cardinal State's general education curriculum and their academic disciplines. The intersections of these three departmental characteristics define two types of departments at Cardinal State, each with a distinct set of conditions that shape chairs' quality control practices in very different ways.

At Cardinal State, departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty tend to have high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum. On average, these departments offer more than three times as many sections of general education courses as departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty do, and general education courses account for almost 60% of the sections they offer (see Table 4). As chairs explained, the implementation of the new general education curriculum required a rapid expansion of the faculty—but that expansion was concentrated in departments that were assigned high levels of responsibility for delivering general education courses. Chairs said that “an overreliance” on these departments to deliver the general education curriculum put a “major strain” on their faculty resources; and given the budgetary constraints facing Cardinal State, these departments increased their reliance on part-time faculty, a trend that intensified as the university's enrollment grew. These

factors led to a concentration of Cardinal State’s part-time faculty in departments with high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum.

Table 4

Selected Characteristics of Departments in the Sample (N=20), by Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty

	Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty	
	High	Low
Number of departments	11	9
Average number of part-time faculty, as FTE faculty ^a	12	3
Average percentage of sections assigned to part-time faculty	60%	30%
Average number of full-time faculty	10	10
Average number of general education sections offered	60	20
Average percentage of sections offered that serve the general education curriculum	60%	25%
Number of departments in colleges of arts and sciences	10	6
Number of departments in colleges of professional studies	1	3

Notes. To preserve confidentiality, averages reported in this table are approximate values.

^a The number of part-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent faculty is based on the total number of course sections assigned to a department’s part-time faculty, divided by the workload of a full-time faculty member. For the purposes of this calculation, Cardinal State considers the workload of a full-time faculty member to be equivalent to teaching five course sections per semester.

Differences in departments’ levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum matter, not only because they help explain the uneven distribution of part-time faculty across departments, but also because they help explain a meaningful difference between the two types of departments at Cardinal State: they tend to assign part-time faculty to teach different types of courses. In departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, they are typically assigned to teach general education courses. In contrast, departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty—which tend to offer relatively few sections of general education courses—often assign part-time

faculty to teach courses in their departments' degree programs. As chairs' descriptions revealed, their quality control practices are shaped by the type of courses they assign to part-time faculty.

Since the general education curriculum was designed to expose students to the arts and sciences, all of the departments at Cardinal State with high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum are affiliated with the university's colleges of arts and sciences (see Table 4). Most of the departments with low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum are affiliated with the colleges of professional studies. A few, however, are affiliated with the colleges of arts and sciences, and these departments represent interesting exceptions in that they each offer at least one degree program that has an applied, professional focus. In a sense, these departments are hybrids: they are grounded in arts and sciences disciplines, but they also have a programmatic focus on preparing students for careers in specific professional fields.

Departments' academic disciplines—whether they are focused on disciplines in the arts and sciences or are connected to professional fields—shape chairs' quality control practices for two major reasons. First, the degree programs offered by departments with connections to professional fields are, in nearly all cases, subject to accreditation by organizations in their respective fields, and that added accountability influences chairs' quality control practices. Second, chairs of departments with connections to professional fields said that their part-time faculty members have access to rich professional opportunities in their fields, and many are employed full-time in their professional areas while teaching part-time. Chairs of departments that are focused on arts and sciences disciplines, however, said that their part-time faculty have limited

opportunities for work in their fields and are typically dependent on their part-time teaching to make a living. These perceptions also seem to shape chairs' quality control practices.

Taken together, patterns in these three departmental characteristics define two types of departments at Cardinal State. One type has high levels of reliance on part-time faculty and high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and focuses on academic disciplines in the arts and sciences. The other type has low levels of reliance on part-time faculty and low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and has connections to professional fields. Nine of the departments included in this study's sample fit the first profile, and seven fit the second (see Table 5). Comparing chairs' descriptions of their quality control practices revealed striking differences that reflect the distinctive set of conditions within each type of department.

Four departments in this study's sample cannot be neatly categorized into either type. These exceptions provide evidence that understanding variation in chairs' quality control practices requires looking beyond their levels of reliance on part-time faculty; in all four cases, the departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty seem to have less influence on chairs' quality control practices than their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum or their academic disciplines do.

The first two exceptions are departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty that deviate from the pattern because they have low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum and are connected to professional fields; one of these departments is affiliated with the colleges of arts and sciences but offers programs with an applied, professional focus. Their departments' low levels of responsibility to the

general education curriculum seem to be particularly important in these two cases, as the chairs' descriptions of their quality control practices shared many features in common with other chairs' whose part-time faculty members typically teach courses in their departments' degree programs.

Table 5

Departments in the Sample (N=20), Grouped by Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty, Level of Responsibility to the General Education Curriculum, and College Affiliation

Level of Reliance on Part-time Faculty	Level of Responsibility to the General Education Curriculum	
	High (n=11)	Low (n=9)
High (n=11)	Arts and Sciences 2	Arts and Sciences 21
	Arts and Sciences 3	Professional Studies 12
	Arts and Sciences 5	
	Arts and Sciences 8	
	Arts and Sciences 10	
	Arts and Sciences 22	
	Arts and Sciences 23	
	Arts and Sciences 24	
Low (n=9)	Arts and Sciences 6	Hybrid 4 ^a
	Arts and Sciences 15	Hybrid 13
		Hybrid 17
		Hybrid 20
		Professional Studies 11
		Professional Studies 14
		Professional Studies 30

Notes. To preserve confidentiality, departments were assigned randomly generated identification numbers that serve as their pseudonyms in this study.

^a Four departments affiliated with the colleges of arts and sciences are described as having "hybrid" disciplines because each of these departments offers at least one degree program that focuses on a specific professional application of its discipline.

Two other departments deviated from the pattern in a different way: despite having low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, both have high levels of responsibility

to the general education curriculum and are focused on disciplines in the arts and sciences. In these cases, their departments' focus on disciplines in the arts and sciences seem to be particularly important, because chairs' descriptions of their quality control practices shared many features in common with chairs' who expressed concern about the professional opportunities available to part-time faculty in the arts and sciences. Again, these exceptions shed light on the importance of building an understanding of variation in chairs' quality control practices that is sensitive to the interplay between all three departmental characteristics.

The next two chapters describe in greater depth and detail how differences in these three departmental characteristics—their levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and their academic disciplines—play out in each type of department at Cardinal State. These chapters describe the distinctive pattern of conditions that characterizes each type of department and explain how these conditions set in motion a cascade of effects that influence chairs' practices for hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty.

Chapter 4:

Departments With High Levels of Reliance on Part-time Faculty

Chairs' candid descriptions of their experiences with hiring part-time faculty members into their departments, evaluating their performance, and making decisions about whether or not to renew their contracts revealed variation in their experiences with these quality control practices. Patterns in that variation suggest that chairs of departments with three characteristics—high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, high levels of responsibility to Cardinal State's general education curriculum, and a disciplinary focus on the arts and sciences—routinely encounter a set of challenges that can interfere with their ability to implement quality control practices as effectively as they would like. This chapter describes how these three departmental characteristics shape the conditions within departments and, in turn, create a complex set of challenges that chairs must navigate as they work to ensure a positive relationship between part-time faculty and quality in their departments.

Departmental Conditions

Patterns in chairs' descriptions of their quality control practices suggest that their practices are shaped in somewhat systematic ways by the departmental conditions in which they undertake this work. This study found that, at Cardinal State, three departmental characteristics—high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and a disciplinary focus on the arts and sciences—create particularly challenging conditions for quality control. Chairs of departments with these characteristics reported feeling overextended by their professional responsibilities, described a set of challenges associated with assigning part-time faculty

members to teach general education courses, and expressed concerns about the nature of the part-time faculty workforce in arts and sciences disciplines. These departmental conditions have important implications for chairs' quality control practices.

Part-time faculty meet demand for general education courses. To complete their degree programs, all undergraduates at Cardinal State must fulfill the requirements of the general education curriculum. As a result, general education courses are in high demand, and chairs reported feeling pressure from both students and university leaders to meet that demand. As one chair explained, the university is under "pressure to graduate kids in four years," and students get "behind in their degree programs" if departments do not offer enough sections of general education courses. One chair described making "a concerted effort to offer as many sections as possible," because "I didn't want to hear complaints from students anymore about, 'I couldn't get this class' or 'I can't graduate.'" In another department, sections of general education courses are scheduled "literally back to back to back to back, all day and all night, every day" in order to meet demand. Chairs said that staffing general education courses requires "an army of people." As one chair explained, "The bottom line is that, if we did not have part-time faculty members doing what they were doing, we as a department cannot function."

In keeping with the collective bargaining agreement, full-time faculty members "get first pick" in terms of the courses they teach, and chairs said they typically prefer to "serve our majors" by teaching courses in their departments' degree programs, especially upper-level courses. As a result, chairs "primarily" rely on part-time faculty to "serve the university" by teaching general education courses.

Part-time faculty members' livelihoods are fragile. Most of the departments that rely heavily on part-time faculty are in the arts and sciences, fields which chairs described as “flooded” with people seeking faculty appointments and “getting more and more competitive.” According to chairs, part-time faculty members in these departments often professionally identify as college teachers—and, in many cases, aspire to become full-time faculty members—but “the job market’s terrible” and so “people are doing part-time work because they have to.”

Chairs described part-time faculty members in these departments as an eclectic group made up primarily of “full-time” part-time faculty who hold “a patchwork quilt” of concurrent part-time teaching appointments at multiple institutions, dissertation-stage doctoral students, and retirees. What their part-time faculty members have in common, according to chairs, is that their part-time teaching appointments represent “their livelihood.” As one chair said, “There’s not really a profile. That’s what’s interesting about it. There’s not really a profile, but everybody needs the money.” For part-time faculty members in these departments, teaching part-time “is about income, not just about trying to, you know, have fun with a course here and there.” Chairs expressed a great deal of sensitivity to the financial plight—the “struggle”—of their part-time faculty members, whom they described as “constantly worried” about their precarious financial situations. “The fact is,” one chair said, part-time faculty “never [know] from one semester to the next” whether they can count on their income from Cardinal State.

Demand for courses is unpredictable. Chairs of departments that rely heavily on part-time faculty described managing their departments’ course schedules as a challenging and complex aspect of their role as chairs. Scheduling the large number of

sections assigned to their part-time faculty members is like piecing together a puzzle because many of them are “patching together different things” to make a living and, as a consequence, have “very specific schedule needs.” Managing the schedule is further complicated because demand for their departments’ courses is relatively unpredictable, so chairs frequently deal with disruptive, last-minute changes. For this reason, one chair described the schedule as “like a beehive” that is always “sort of moving.”

Demand for general education courses depends on Cardinal State’s overall enrollment, as well other factors beyond departments’ control—such as students’ preferences for or placement into specific courses. As one chair explained, departments that serve the general education curriculum are “just chasing wherever the university’s going,” which often means that “literally, in the eleventh hour, [university administrators are] like, ‘There won’t be enough sections of courses for our transfer students. We need to add one or two more.’ So that’s our reality.” This unpredictability means that chairs often have to deal with unanticipated gaps in coverage for general education courses.

Furthermore, the degree programs offered by these departments are often loosely structured, meaning that students can choose from a variety of courses to fulfill their degree requirements. Because demand for these advanced courses depends on student interest, enrollment in these courses is somewhat unpredictable, and it is not uncommon for them to be under-enrolled. Cardinal State is “being very strict” about cancelling under-enrolled courses, which means chairs frequently have to accommodate last-minute changes in faculty and student schedules. For all of these reasons, chairs said that managing their departments’ schedules involves “lots of juggling.”

Chairs feel overextended. Managing their departments' ever-changing course schedules is just one of the professional responsibilities assigned to chairs. At Cardinal State, they are also solely responsible for overseeing all of the part-time faculty members in their departments, regardless of the number. Although chairs are granted additional course release based on the number of full-time equivalent faculty members in their department, it is worth noting that each additional full-time equivalent faculty member could translate into two to five part-time faculty members, depending on their teaching loads. Many chairs who are managing large numbers of part-time faculty described feeling overextended. Several said that, to keep up with their responsibilities, they "do a lot of gratis," meaning that they spend much more time working than the collective bargaining agreement requires. One chair explained:

"You know, contractually I only have to work ten days over the summer. What a joke! I'm here 90 days over the summer. I'm here every day, five days a week, all summer.... Because I have to be.... I need to stay on top of things."

Managing a large staff of part-time faculty, while challenging in its own right, is only one component of chairs' complex role. "They're a piece of it," one chair said, "but they're certainly far from the whole."

General education courses are held to a different standard of quality.

Although chairs said that their departments are committed to offering high-quality general education courses, several also acknowledged that they feel less accountable for the quality of these courses than they do for courses in their departments' degree programs. They said that students seem to be less concerned about the quality of general education courses, because they often have little or no relationship to students' degree

programs or interests. These chairs said that students' lack of engagement with general education courses can make them "really hard to teach."

A few chairs candidly admitted that, compared to courses in their departments' degree programs, they are less concerned about the quality of general education courses. "Because it does not affect our majors," one chair said, "I'm not as much concerned about the quality of teaching." Another said, "Our department is first about the [department's] majors" and described the general education courses as "okay" but added, "I would not want to be in that course myself." A few chairs expressed concern that lower expectations for the quality of general education courses make Cardinal State's general education curriculum seem "a bit like window dressing at times." As one chair said,

"If we're going to say that all students need to have a [course that meets a specific general education requirement] because we believe it is beneficial to them, that it broadens their understanding, opens their mind, creates a more well-rounded liberal arts student, then we need to care about what's going on in there."

Implications for Chairs' Quality Control Practices

Chairs' descriptions of their experiences working with part-time faculty members provide many examples that illustrate how conditions in their departments shape their quality control practices. Chairs who described feeling overextended, who assign part-time faculty members to teach general education courses, and who are concerned about the livelihoods of their part-time faculty members said that these conditions interfere with their quality control practices in a variety of ways. Among other examples, chairs working under these conditions said that they too often must resort to hiring new part-

time faculty members at the last minute, that they struggle to manage the responsibilities associated with supervising a large staff of part-time faculty, and that their decisions about whether to renew part-time faculty members' contracts are often complicated by concerns about the needs of their departments and the needs of their part-time faculty members.

Part-time faculty are treated as continuous employees. To keep up with demand for general education courses, chairs said that they often assign part-time faculty members the maximum possible teaching load—typically three sections per semester—and count on them to renew their contracts every semester. Chairs expressed gratitude for long-serving part-time faculty members who return “year after year after year” and provide some “consistency” for their departments. Chairs described these part-time faculty members as “loyal to us” and said, in turn, “We’re very loyal to our part-time faculty.” They described renewing the contracts of part-time faculty members and assigning them maximum teaching loads as ways that they can express their gratitude and loyalty. At the same time, chairs described these practices as ways that they can bolster the livelihoods of their part-time faculty members, by maximizing their income from Cardinal State and providing them with some financial security. “I try to give everybody three classes,” one chair explained, “because I know that they’re patching together a living.”

These practices—and, in particular, the repeated renewal of part-time faculty members' contracts—effectively change the nature of part-time faculty appointments in these departments. Although the collective bargaining agreement explicitly defines these appointments as temporary, these departments tend to treat part-time faculty members as

effectively continuous employees. As one chair explained, “It’s semester-by-semester, and semester-by-semester, and then all of a sudden you’re here for 15 years.”

Nonrenewal of part-time faculty members’ contracts is complicated.

Although most chairs said that they feel satisfied with the quality of their part-time faculty members’ teaching overall, nearly every chair also said that they have encountered a few problems with quality. When problems are serious, chairs said, they feel relatively comfortable deciding not to renew part-time faculty members’ contracts. However, chairs said that, in borderline cases, deciding whether or not to renew part-time faculty members’ contracts can be complicated, because chairs have to consider a complex set of concerns—not only about quality, but also about the needs of their departments and the needs of their part-time faculty members. A few chairs admitted that they have occasionally renewed part-time faculty members’ contracts, despite their concerns about quality, because these other issues weighed so heavily on their decisions.

Many of the same pressures that motivate chairs to continuously renew the contracts of part-time faculty members also introduce complications that can cloud their nonrenewal decisions. Chairs said that letting go of part-time faculty members creates gaps in coverage for general education courses, and those gaps are especially challenging to cover because part-time faculty members are typically assigned to multiple sections. For chairs, deciding not to renew the contract of a part-time faculty member often means having to hire someone new—and that new hire may not be any more effective than the person being replaced. One chair described how concerns about coverage can influence decisions about nonrenewal of part-time faculty members’ contracts:

“I got down to opening day and I’m still interviewing to find people.... So at that point, it was really difficult to say, ‘I’m still not bringing that person back, because I need—it’s not good for our students. And if I have to pick up another course, or a full-time faculty member has to pick up another course, that’s a better option than bringing this person back.’ So it’s been—it was tough.”

On top of these concerns about how nonrenewal of part-time faculty members’ contracts affect chairs’ ability to meet demand for their departments’ general education courses, chairs also expressed sensitivity to the impact of nonrenewal on part-time faculty members themselves. Many chairs said that, for most of their part-time faculty members, losing their appointments at Cardinal State—particularly if they have counted on income from teaching multiple sections—would be financially devastating. They “need the job,” chairs said, and “if they lose this job, it’s going to affect their whole lives.” One chair described how concerns about the financial plight of part-time faculty play into chairs’ decisions about nonrenewal:

“I just want people to be able to make a living, you know? Seriously, when I have to cut someone and I get their story about how their—I mean, I’ve had people that their husband is dying of cancer and, I mean, you get every nightmare story that—it makes you not want to do this job, because you don’t want to know what’s happening out there. Ignorance is—like, I just want to assume everything’s fine, but then you realize people, like, can’t pay their mortgages. You know? So, it’s bleak.”

In addition to worrying about the immediate impact of nonrenewal—the loss of critical income—chairs also expressed concerns about the job prospects of part-time

faculty members who lose their appointments at Cardinal State. As one chair said, “Where are they going to go? The job market’s so terrible.” Chairs described their fields as glutted with prospective part-time faculty; as a result, if they decided not to renew a part-time faculty member’s contract, they would have “ten people lined up to take that job in two minutes.” Even so, as one chair explained, concerns about part-time faculty members’ livelihoods can weigh heavily on nonrenewal decisions: “I fear that some people who teach for us couldn’t do anything else,” so if they “are more or less doing their jobs,” then “I leave them alone.” The chair added, “It’d be much easier to be ruthless, just cold about it, you know? But I think few chairs are. Very few are, you know? We’re all very, very sympathetic.”

A few chairs also expressed concerns about nonrenewal decisions becoming contentious. They said that part-time faculty members who have had their contracts renewed repeatedly, every semester, expect that their contracts will continue to be renewed. A chair’s nonrenewal decision would interrupt that expectation and would likely necessitate an uncomfortable conversation with the part-time faculty member about their performance. Based on problems they have noticed with the quality of some long-serving part-time faculty members in their departments, a few chairs said they suspect that their predecessors knew about those issues but “just let it ride” rather than deal with “the uncomfortable situation of not inviting somebody back.”

A few chairs also expressed concern that a nonrenewal decision might open the door for a dispute with the faculty union. Because part-time faculty members in these departments often serve for multiple consecutive semesters, they are relatively likely to qualify for union membership. Furthermore, because their livelihoods often depend on

their income from Cardinal State, they may be especially motivated to challenge nonrenewal and to ask the union to advocate on their behalf. As one chair said, “I want to and think I should be able to fire bad part-time faculty,” but when those part-time faculty members appeal to the union for support, the union will “defend [their] ineptitude.” The prospect of a confrontation with a part-time faculty member or with the union can affect chairs’ nonrenewal decisions, as one chair explained: “We’ve had a lot of part-time faculty members that haven’t been doing a great job for a long time, but they’ve been getting away with it, because nobody really has the courage to let them go.”

Chairs described dealing with nonrenewal of part-time faculty members’ contracts as “the worst part about the job,” but also expressed an understanding that this is a critical part of their role as chairs. In these departments, part-time faculty members tend to teach multiple sections, so any unaddressed problems with quality affect students on a relatively large scale. One chair remembered thinking, “I’ve got to do something” about a former part-time faculty member, because “I can’t sacrifice... 40 or 60 students a semester to your bad teaching.” Even so, the chair described feeling distressed by the experience of not renewing that part-time faculty member’s contract:

“Having to tell a part-time faculty member that the only work that they have, or have had, for 15 years, is over, and now, at 50, they’ve got to go find something to do—I’m not cut out for that. I *have* to do it, but that doesn’t make me feel good.”

A few chairs said that, because these decisions can be so fraught, previous chairs of their departments seemed to have inappropriately high thresholds for nonrenewal. In these few cases, chairs said that their predecessors would not “let anybody go” unless

they “were out of control.” As a result, these chairs inherited some problematic part-time faculty members when they became chairs, and it became their responsibility to finally let them go, in the interest of quality. “I sort of weeded that out,” one chair said, but “it was hard to do.”

Skillful part-time faculty leave to advance their teaching careers. In addition to their concerns about letting go of problematic part-time faculty members, chairs also expressed concerns about retaining their best part-time faculty. Chairs described some part-time faculty members as satisfied with their part-time appointments at Cardinal State. “We’ve had people here 15 years, teaching part-time, 20 years, teaching part-time,” one chair said, “but that’s okay, because they’ve chosen that.” However, not all part-time faculty are satisfied with the status quo. Chairs said that many would like opportunities to advance in their careers as college teachers, but there are few opportunities for part-time faculty to advance at Cardinal State. “Some of them would rather have a full-time job,” one chair said, “but we don’t have one for them.” Many chairs said that they would like to promote their best part-time faculty members into full-time positions, but Cardinal State has not traditionally employed faculty in full-time positions off the tenure track, and few chairs see their part-time faculty members as competitive applicants for tenure-stream positions. In many cases, part-time faculty members have not earned terminal degrees or they are not active researchers. One chair explained that the department’s part-time faculty would not be compelling candidates for tenure-stream positions because they are “trapped in” teaching courses at multiple institutions and have not had time to pursue research:

“Would any of them, you know, be candidates I would put in the top of the list? And probably not. Because what I’d want is someone at the top of the list that has demonstrated doing outside-of-the-class things with students, and it’s very hard for them to do that. And so that kind of predisposes us to look at people that have that luxury.”

Chairs said that part-time faculty members who become frustrated by the lack of opportunity for professional advancement at Cardinal State often decide to leave, accepting full-time teaching appointments at other institutions or pursuing doctoral studies as a next step in that direction. Chairs expressed mixed feelings about part-time faculty members who leave for this reason. On one hand, many chairs reported that they held part-time faculty appointments early in their careers and expressed sympathy for part-time faculty members’ desire to pursue professional development and financial security. One chair described it as “great” when part-time faculty members find full-time positions: they “absolutely have to go” and pursue those opportunities. Some chairs even said that they actively encourage their best part-time faculty members to move on. One chair said that working as a part-time faculty member is “just not a career” and should not be treated as “a permanent trajectory.” The chair said, “If you’re 23 or 24 or 25 and you have a master’s degree,” then “you need to start thinking about your future.”

On the other hand, chairs described it as a loss for their departments when part-time faculty members leave in order to advance their careers, particularly when they are excellent part-time faculty members. “I have always written good recommendations for people,” one chair said, “even though that’s taking away a resource from us. They are so impressive that they really deserve full-time positions.” Another chair recalled the

department's loss of a "wonderful" part-time faculty member who "had been teaching here for a long time":

"Every year, she would apply different places, and I was just like, 'Oh, please, God, don't get a job.' But at the same time, you know, that's what we want: we want health benefits and we want, you know, a tenure-track job. So, she got a job... and she said to me, 'You know how much they're paying me?' ... It was just a ridiculous difference."

Monotonous teaching assignments lead to fatigue. Because opportunities for professional advancement are so limited for part-time faculty at Cardinal State, chairs described doing whatever else they can to retain their best part-time faculty members: they continuously renew their contracts and they assign them the maximum teaching load. However, "rewarding" their best part-time faculty members in this way often means that they teach multiple sections of the *same* general education course for many semesters in a row. According to chairs, faculty can become "fatigued" from all that repetition, leading to declining quality. One chair said, "I've seen it even in myself": after teaching the same course many times, the chair was "out of ideas" and could not "formulate a new game plan and get excited about it." The chair finally broke out of that pattern and taught a different course, and described that change as "a huge relief." The chair recalled having a conversation with a part-time faculty member who was experiencing those same feelings of fatigue, unbeknownst to the chair:

"I can remember one faculty member, just, 'God, do you have to put me in [a specific course] again?' And I'm like, 'Well, I had no idea. I thought you loved

it.’ ‘Yeah, I love it, I’m just getting really sick of it. I’d rather go teach [another course] for a while.’ ‘Okay! Well, let’s do that.’”

For some part-time faculty members, being assigned to a variety of courses would be an attractive form of professional development. However, chairs who feel overextended may not be aware that their part-time faculty members would like more variety in their teaching assignments.

Even chairs who know that their part-time faculty members would appreciate “a little bit of a break” from the monotony of teaching multiple sections of the same general education course every semester may not be able to assign them to anything else, because their departments’ other courses—those in the degree programs—are consistently assigned to full-time faculty members, whose teaching preferences take priority. One chair said that, for part-time faculty, teaching assignments that include courses in the department’s degree programs are very unusual and are “seen as rewards” for those “who’ve been teaching with us a long time.” The chair described a part-time faculty member “who was starting to grumble about what other people were getting” in terms of their teaching assignments:

“And I said, ‘Listen, you haven’t been here that long. I’m not going to give you a [break from teaching this general education course] when you’ve been here three years, when these people have been here five, six, seven, eight years.’”

To put that part-time faculty member’s request for a break into perspective, a part-time faculty member carrying the maximum teaching load for three years would have taught the same general education course 18 times.

Chairs resort to hiring part-time faculty at the last minute. When part-time faculty members decide to leave Cardinal State, chairs are often notified at the last minute—“like, a day before school.” Chairs described being “dropped in a lurch” by part-time faculty members who contact them in August to say, “I got a full-time job somewhere, so I have to drop my classes.” Because part-time faculty often carry the maximum teaching load, their departures create intimidating gaps in coverage. Between part-time faculty members leaving suddenly and unpredictable changes in demand for general education courses, chairs said that they regularly find themselves scrambling to find coverage in the weeks—and sometimes days—before classes begin.

To address these unexpected gaps, chairs said that they frequently resort to hiring new part-time faculty members at the last minute, which typically means choosing from a diminished pool of candidates and having limited time to vet them. “There is a different level of quality in terms of finding these folks,” one chair said, explaining, “Sometimes we’re not given the opportunity to sort of interview people to the depth and the breadth that it sometimes requires.... I’m just hoping they can teach.” In the face of somewhat desperate circumstances, chairs described settling for “the only person that was available” because they “just need a name behind that course.”

Part-time faculty members’ teaching loads get reduced unexpectedly. Chairs said that they work very hard to accommodate part-time faculty members’ schedules and described these efforts as expressions of their gratitude for and loyalty to part-time faculty. Chairs said that they aim to avoid saying these words to part-time faculty members: “This is the only thing available, so take it or leave it.”

Despite their efforts to create a schedule that works for everyone, chairs said they often deal with disruptive changes in the schedule when they have to cancel advanced courses in their departments' degree programs due to under-enrollment. Those courses are typically assigned to full-time faculty members; when one of these courses get cancelled, the chair must re-assign that faculty member to a different course, to ensure they carry a full-time teaching load. The only real option is to re-assign that full-time faculty member to a course that had been assigned to a part-time faculty member, which means reducing the part-time faculty member's teaching load. Chairs said that part-time faculty members "get bumped every time" and "are always the ones who end up feeling the brunt" of disruptions in the schedule. Chairs identified this as a source of "discontent" among their part-time faculty members, and it seems to be a source of discontent for chairs, as well. One recalled waking up "at 3 a.m., thinking about the schedule," and said that managing the schedule is "the worst part of this job. It's the nightmare."

According to chairs, decisions about which part-time faculty members will lose courses are usually based on full-time faculty members' preferences. One chair described this process:

"I have to just look at the schedule and say, 'Well, [this full-time faculty member] needs a class.' So I look at [the] part-time schedule—sometimes I do it with my full-time faculty—and say, 'Well, what do you want?' Basically, 'Pick a class and it's yours.' And then I have to email the part-time faculty member and say, 'By the way, that 4000 dollars that you're counting on and budgeting for, it's now gone and it's gone to a full-timer.' And I—there's nothing I can do about that."

The chair went on to describe making efforts to preserve the schedules of part-time faculty members whose financial situations are particularly precarious. The chair remembered reasoning with a full-time faculty member: “Don’t take this person’s 9:30 class; take this [other] person’s 9:30. Because this person is a retired schoolteacher who can afford” to lose the income.

As one chair pointed out, these last-minute changes in the schedule are not only problematic because they disrupt the livelihoods of part-time faculty members; these changes can also have a negative impact on quality. “We can talk about the quality of part-timers until we’re sick and tired,” the chair said, “but we also have to talk about the quality of the full-timers.” The chair explained that under-enrollment of a course often says something about the quality of the full-time faculty member’s teaching:

“You know, they’re not publishing, they’re not participating in [professional development], they’re not participating in lectures around campus, they’re certainly not going up for promotion, they’re not going for sabbaticals.... and you’re phoning it in in classes, and then your classes get cancelled.”

The chair said that last-minute changes to the schedule too often mean “I have to take the class away from a part-timer who’s excellent” and give it to “a full-timer who was not that great.” The chair said that having to make that type of decision “breaks my heart.”

Chairs feel tenuously connected to part-time faculty. Chairs said that an important aspect of their work with part-time faculty is “getting to know them and their needs and being there to support whatever it is that they need.” One chair explained why this aspect of their role is so important:

“A full-time faculty member is their own advocate, you know? And, for example, if they go in and there’s something wrong with the classroom in which they’re teaching, they know who to call and they get respect because they’ve been here for 15, 20 years, whatever. [A part-time] faculty member calls, and they’re like, ‘Yeah, we’ll put that on the bottom of the pile,’ and nothing happens. And then me, as department chair, has to intercede. So a lot of times they don’t get what they need.”

Many chairs expressed concern that, because they are overextended by their professional responsibilities, they are not able to spend enough time getting to know their part-time faculty and what they need in terms of support from the chair. “When they stop by and talk to me,” one chair said, “I’m happy to stop and talk with them. But I don’t have much time to get out and interact with them, to hear how things are going.” Chairs said that part-time faculty members’ busy schedules create an additional obstacle to building relationships with them. Many part-time faculty members “leave after they teach,” because they have other professional or personal responsibilities, such as teaching courses at other institutions. As one chair said, “It just comes down to the people who happen to be around when I have my office hours.” Another said, “Really, I hardly ever see them, to be honest.”

These issues, combined with the fact that chairs are managing large numbers of part-time faculty, contribute to an uncomfortable reality for chairs: they lose touch with some part-time faculty members. As one chair said, “If they come into the office, I can’t remember their names, because I hired them [several] years ago and I don’t see them.” Chairs described feeling troubled by their lack of connection to part-time faculty, because

“to really be effective in leadership, you need to know all of these people. And so you become spread so thin that your effectiveness is diminished.” Because they lose touch with part-time faculty, chairs said that they may not be aware that part-time faculty members need support until their needs become quite serious. One chair explained:

“Unless I see them here in the office or I see them in the department or around campus, I can’t really interact with them to know that we’re meeting their needs. And it isn’t until a problem comes to a head that they come to the door with, ‘What do I do now?’”

Chairs feel overwhelmed by the demands of evaluating part-time faculty.

Chairs described feeling overwhelmed by the work involved in formally evaluating large numbers of part-time faculty. One chair described this work as “very difficult to manage, just because of the amount of time it takes to do it right”:

“In the past, the chairs would spend 10 minutes observing a class, so it’s no wonder they didn’t say a lot. What are you going to see in 10 minutes? But I’m behind on the evaluations from last year.... I’m still finishing them now [in the summer], because it’s finally quieted down and I can do some of that.... I’m here all of the time... it’s not for a lack of trying or a lack of caring.”

Whereas this chair expressed a willingness to work unpaid overtime in order to keep up with the demands of evaluating part-time faculty and “to do it right,” a few other chairs said that they find it impossible to keep up with these demands, particularly given their many other professional responsibilities. One chair described the workload associated with formally evaluating a large number of part-time faculty as “too much for me,” and

another explained, “I still have to do all my full-time observations for tenure, promotion, reappointment, on top of that, you know?”

In addition to conducting periodic formal evaluations of part-time faculty members, chairs receive feedback from student evaluations for every section they teach. Ideally, chairs would carefully review these evaluations to see if there are “patterns developing” that indicate emerging problems with quality. However, chairs said that reviewing feedback for a large number of part-time faculty is overwhelming because of the sheer volume, and they would need to “spend a day analyzing it all.” A few chairs said that they are only able to review student evaluations retrospectively, after they hear complaints from students. “If I hear of a problem, it’s like a flag comes up,” one chair said, so “we pull them for three, four, five semesters and look at them” to see “if there’s a pattern” that stretches back in time.

Chairs acknowledged that, because they are not always able to give part-time faculty evaluations enough of their time and attention, they can lose touch with “what actually happens out there” in classrooms and may be unaware of problems. Chairs expressed frustration that they are not able to focus more on evaluating part-time faculty, but said, “We just do the best that we can.” To give this work all the time it needs, chairs said that they “would do nothing else” and “would never sleep.”

Chairs lack opportunities to assess learning in general education courses.

Several chairs mentioned that, as full-time faculty members, they often teach advanced courses in their departments’ degree programs. In those courses, they see evidence that some students are “able to get through our program” without adequately mastering foundational content or skills that they should have learned early on, in courses that are

typically assigned to part-time faculty members. Chairs hypothesized that these gaps in student learning can be blamed, at least in part, on problems with the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching. However, they also acknowledged that they often lack clear, direct evidence that specific part-time faculty members are at fault, because they rarely have timely opportunities to assess student learning in the courses that are typically assigned to part-time faculty members: general education courses.

The collective bargaining agreement for Cardinal State faculty prohibits departments from using formal assessments of student learning to evaluate faculty members. Some departments have opportunities to assess learning informally by looking for patterns in how well students are prepared for subsequent courses in their departments, but several issues may make it especially difficult—if not impossible—for departments to assess student learning in general education courses. First of all, an informal assessment would require students to enroll in a subsequent course offered by the department, but students enrolled in general education courses are relatively unlikely to enroll in further courses in the department. A small proportion of students may take subsequent courses from the department; for example, they may enroll in one of the department's degree programs. However, there are several reasons why it may still be challenging to detect any patterns in student learning that could be linked back to courses taught by specific part-time faculty members. First, these departments typically offer many sections of general education courses; because so few students enroll in subsequent courses in these departments, any patterns in student readiness may not be obvious. Second, the degree programs in these departments tend to be relatively loosely structured, giving students some freedom to choose which courses they take and in which sequence.

As a result, the small number of students who take a subsequent course from the department may be diffused across a number of different subsequent courses—as opposed to being required to take a specific next course in their program sequence—which may make more challenging to detect patterns in their readiness. Furthermore, because students’ pathways through these departments’ degree programs are somewhat idiosyncratic, faculty may expect to see variation in students’ readiness and not attribute that to the quality of a previous course.

Given this lack of opportunity to assess student learning in general education courses, one chair said that gaps in student learning are “not something that we can lay at the feet of part-time faculty,” even though they get “a lot of the blame.” The chair added that some full-time faculty “protested about [the quality of part-time faculty] a bit too much, and maybe it’s easier to blame part-time faculty for those lapses in quality rather than taking responsibility themselves.” Regardless of where the issue with quality lies, chairs expressed concerns about their inability to assess student learning in a timely way and, by extension, the possibility that problems with the quality of part-time faculty members’ teaching may sometimes go undetected.

Students may be less likely to complain about general education courses.

Given the overwhelming responsibilities associated with formally evaluating large numbers of part-time faculty and the lack of opportunities to assess student learning in general education courses, chairs said that their first indication of a problem with the quality of a part-time faculty member’s teaching is often a complaint from a student. A few chairs said that they “barely hear any complaints” about part-time faculty, that

“nothing has come to the chair,” despite the huge volume of students enrolled in their departments’ general education courses.

However, as other chairs pointed out, absence of complaints is not a reliable indicator of quality, and this may be particularly true when it comes to general education courses. Chairs described Cardinal State’s students as less engaged in general education courses, so they may be less motivated to complain to chairs about the quality of these courses. Furthermore, chairs may have fewer opportunities to interact with students enrolled in their departments’ general education courses, both because these students typically do not have any other connection to the department and because chairs of these departments are often overextended. As a result, chairs may have fewer opportunities to communicate with students about the quality of general education courses.

A few chairs described cases where serious problems with the quality of general education courses taught by part-time faculty members went unreported for weeks or even longer. “Sometimes we have people who are really bad at their jobs,” one chair said, offering this example:

“I had a part-time faculty member who cancelled every Friday class... but then sometimes wouldn’t show up on Monday or Wednesday. And of course I don’t find out about this until week 10 of a 16-week semester. So students knew they didn’t have class on Friday, but the students called when they were concerned because their teacher didn’t show up on Monday or Wednesday.”

Another chair described “a huge, huge problem” with a part-time faculty member’s treatment of students that came to light only after that faculty member had been teaching for longer than a semester. The chair likened the seriousness of the issue to coming to

class “with an AK-47” and asked, “How could somebody who’s teaching in academia even behave like that?” Chairs said that they are very troubled when they hear from students about serious issues with quality but, as one chair explained, sometimes “there’s really no way to tell” that those problems exist “unless a student comes up to me and says something.”

Quality Control in Departments With High Levels of Reliance on Part-time Faculty

Chairs’ candid descriptions of their experiences with hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty members in departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, high levels of responsibility to Cardinal State’s general education curriculum, and a disciplinary focus on the arts and sciences suggest that quality control in these departments is challenging. On one hand, chairs of these departments described feeling stretched thin because they are dealing with so many part-time faculty members, and being overextended can constrain their ability to give quality control as much time and attention as they would like. On the other hand, the challenges associated with chairs’ quality control practices in these departments are not only about the quantity of their workload, but also the quality of their workload. Chairs described facing significant, often competing pressures that weigh heavily on their quality control practices. They said that they face enormous pressure to meet demand for general education courses and expressed deep concern about their part-time faculty members’ livelihoods. Because of these competing pressures, chairs said that they often find themselves in ambiguous situations regarding quality control, because all of these competing pressures matter to them. They want to provide students with high-quality teaching, they want students to have access to general education courses, and they want to support their part-time faculty

colleagues, without whom their departments could not function. Because these pressures often come into conflict with each other, chairs have to consider the trade-offs of imperfect options.

However, this situation is not universally experienced by all chairs at Cardinal State. Instead, it is specific to and shaped by the conditions in these chairs' departments. As the next chapter describes, chairs working in different departmental conditions find themselves in a more favorable situation when it comes to quality control.

Chapter 5:

Departments With Low Levels of Reliance on Part-time Faculty

Offering a stark contrast to the experiences described in the previous chapter, chairs of departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, low levels of responsibility to Cardinal State's general education curriculum, and connections to professional fields described feeling relatively comfortable with their ability to implement quality control practices effectively. This chapter describes how these three departmental characteristics create a set of conditions within departments that not only support chairs' ability to ensure a positive relationship between part-time faculty and quality in their departments, but also put additional pressure on chairs to do this work effectively.

Departmental Conditions

This study found that, at Cardinal State, three departmental characteristics—low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and connections to professional fields—create particularly supportive conditions for quality control. Chairs of departments with these characteristics described using part-time faculty on an as-needed basis, assigning part-time faculty members to teach courses in their degree programs, and working with part-time faculty members who typically have full-time jobs in their professional fields. These departmental conditions are quite different from those described in the previous chapter, with important implications for chairs' quality control practices.

Part-time faculty cover temporary gaps, often in degree programs. Chairs of departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty said that they typically use

part-time faculty members on an as-needed basis, to meet time-limited staffing needs. For example, part-time faculty members “fill the void” when a full-time faculty member has a course release or is on sabbatical, provide temporary coverage when demand for courses “ebbs and flows,” and teach specialized courses that are offered only periodically and fall outside the expertise of their departments’ full-time faculty members.

These departments tend to have relatively low levels of responsibility to Cardinal State’s general education curriculum, so their course offerings primarily—or even exclusively—serve students enrolled in their degree programs. As a result, chairs said that they often hire part-time faculty members to teach courses in their departments’ degree programs. “We use them everywhere,” one chair said, explaining that part-time faculty teach both introductory courses and specialized, upper-level courses in the department’s degree programs. Chairs described their full-time faculty members as “pretty flexible” about their teaching assignments and said they are often willing—or even eager—to teach a variety of course types, including both introductory and upper-level courses in their departments’ degree programs and, in departments that offer them, general education courses.

Part-time faculty treat teaching as a sideline. Most of the departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty have close connections to professional fields. Of the nine departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, three are affiliated with the colleges of professional studies and six are affiliated with the colleges of arts and sciences. However, four of these six arts and sciences departments have close relationships with professional fields beyond academia; those relationships are illustrated by these departments’ program offerings, which include programs that are grounded in

arts and sciences disciplines but are programmatically focused on professional applications. Chairs said that the professional fields related to their departments have relatively healthy job markets. As one said, “If you’ve got the skills, [full-time jobs in this field] are pretty easy to get right now. Now, in other disciplines, I understand that it’s much harder to get a full-time gig if you want one.”

Chairs said that their departments’ part-time faculty members tend to hold other, often full-time positions in their fields, and teaching at Cardinal State is “something extra” that they do because “they just like teaching.” As one chair explained, “All of our part-time faculty... with one exception, are practitioners.... And they’re teaching one or two courses on the side.” Chairs said that many part-time faculty members “work during the day” and teach at Cardinal State in the evenings or online, not because they need the extra income but because “they really, really want to” teach.

Demand for courses is predictable. Chairs said that demand for courses in their departments is relatively predictable. In many cases, the degree programs offered by their departments are tightly structured, meaning that students enrolled in these programs are required to complete a prescribed set of courses and often in a particular sequence. As one chair explained, “Everybody takes the same thing.” These departments can predict demand for their courses based on the number and progress of students in their degree programs. “We run fairly tight,” one chair said, explaining that the department’s course offerings are based on “trends,” so sections “run at capacity” and “we don’t have too many low enrollment courses.” In some cases, these departments offer service courses, but they are typically not general education courses; instead, they fulfill requirements for

other, related departments' degree programs—and those degree programs are typically also tightly structured, making demand for their courses relatively predictable as well.

Accreditation increases accountability for quality of degree programs. In many cases, the degree programs offered by these departments are designed to prepare students for specific professions, and the quality of these programs is often monitored by an external body, such as an accrediting organization. These external bodies require departments to provide evidence that their programs develop specific competencies that prepare students for successful entry into their chosen professions. In many cases, these external bodies also require students to pass an exam of some kind before they can begin working in their professional fields. This accountability places pressure on students to adequately master knowledge and skills that will enable them to demonstrate their professional readiness. Serving students who have clear professional outcomes in mind and needing to demonstrate the quality of their programs to external bodies are conditions that put pressure on chairs to ensure that all of the courses in their degree programs satisfy the standards of both students and accreditors.

Implications for Chairs' Quality Control Practices

Chairs who described using part-time faculty on an as-needed basis, assigning part-time faculty members to teach courses in their degree programs, and working with part-time faculty members who have full-time jobs in their professional fields said that these conditions support their quality control practices in a variety of ways. They said that they are able to hire new part-time faculty members selectively, that they have a rich set of opportunities to learn about their part-time faculty members' teaching effectiveness, and that nonrenewal of part-time faculty members' contracts is a matter of

routine in their departments. These experiences are dramatically different from those described in the previous chapter, providing evidence that chairs' quality control practices vary across departments. In addition, patterns in chairs' descriptions of their quality control practices suggest a way of understanding why chairs' quality control practices vary: because chairs undertake this work in departmental conditions that differ in meaningful ways.

Part-time faculty are treated as temporary employees. Chairs said that they use part-time faculty on an as-needed basis; one chair described them as, essentially, "substitute teachers." Chairs recalled having conversations with newly hired part-time faculty members to ensure that they understand that their appointments are semester-long and might not continue beyond that. As one chair explained, "We only hire them when they're needed, so there's no continuing contractual obligation." Some chairs described maintaining long-term relationships with specific part-time faculty members who teach specialized courses in their departments' degree programs, but these courses are typically offered periodically, rather than every semester. For example, one chair described a part-time faculty member with specialized expertise who teaches "just one class every spring." Part-time faculty members who teach these types of courses may be less likely to assume that their contracts will be renewed every semester, without evidence of continuous demand. Chairs said that there is typically an understanding—shared by chairs and part-time faculty members—that part-time faculty appointments in these departments are truly temporary.

Nonrenewal of part-time faculty members' contracts is routine. Because they use part-time faculty on an as-needed basis, chairs described nonrenewal of part-time

faculty members' contracts as a matter of routine. They said that nonrenewal typically reflects changes in their departments' staffing needs rather than problems with the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching. Even well-regarded part-time faculty members may not have their contracts renewed, simply because their departments can meet demand for their courses without them.

Chairs also said that nonrenewal does not necessarily represent an end to the relationship between the department and the part-time faculty member; instead, several chairs described maintaining relationships with a "pool" of inactive part-time faculty members who have taught for their departments before and remain interested in future teaching opportunities. When chairs need additional coverage, these chairs often re-hire someone from their pool. As one chair said, "I keep reusing the same ones."

At the same time, chairs said that some of their nonrenewal decisions are grounded in concerns about quality and do represent an end to the relationship between the department and the part-time faculty member. As one chair said, "We have refused to hire them again." In some instances, these decisions create gaps in coverage, but chairs expressed confidence in their ability to fill those gaps. Because many part-time faculty members have full-time jobs, they often teach only one or two sections. Chairs described a couple of options they can usually count on whenever they need coverage for an additional section or two: their full-time faculty members are often "willing to teach overloads" and they have their pool of inactive part-time faculty members who may be interested in teaching again.

Chairs expressed relatively little concern about how nonrenewal might affect part-time faculty members' livelihoods; because they often have full-time jobs, losing the

income from their part-time appointments at Cardinal State may be less likely to be financially devastating for them. Chairs also seemed less concerned about the possibility that their nonrenewal decisions would necessitate uncomfortable conversations with part-time faculty members or trigger conflict with the faculty union. Because part-time faculty members understand that their appointments are temporary, they may not ask chairs to explain or defend their nonrenewal decisions; they never expected their contracts to be renewed anyway. Part-time faculty members may also be less motivated to question chairs' nonrenewal decisions, because their income from Cardinal State is not as critical for them. Furthermore, because part-time faculty members serve departments on an as-needed basis, they may be relatively unlikely to have their contracts renewed for enough consecutive semesters to qualify for membership in the union.

Chairs said that, when they have concerns about the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching, they feel relatively free to exercise their option not to renew their contracts. As one chair said, "If I don't feel like they're doing the job once they've been hired, and the evaluations don't indicate they can handle it, then I wouldn't hesitate to move on to somebody else." Another chair emphasized the importance of acting quickly and decisively when serious issues with quality arise: "I got rid of them right away, which is, I think, what you need to do," because when chairs "just ignore" problems with the quality of part-time faculty members, departments end up retaining them "forever."

Chairs are able to hire part-time faculty selectively. Chairs said that, because part-time faculty typically teach courses in their departments' degree programs, they feel pressure to make carefully considered decisions when hiring new part-time faculty members. One chair explained:

“We do invest highly in trying to make sure that we have top-quality faculty.... That also puts pressure on me to really invest a lot of time in making sure I’m getting good quality part-time faculty hires as well.... I feel a little bit more pressure to make sure that I’m vetting these faculty members and making sure that they live up to the overall department standard that we have, which is pretty high.”

In addition, several chairs said that accrediting organizations consider the qualifications of their part-time faculty members when they review program quality. That accountability puts pressure on chairs to ensure that any new part-time faculty members meet accreditors’ standards. One chair described a department that had been very intentional about its hiring practices, after receiving feedback from its accrediting organization:

“We’ve gotten tremendously diverse in terms of not just the full-time faculty but also the part-time faculty.... Just getting a diversification of perspectives in terms of part-time faculty. And when I hire part-time faculty, that’s the first thing I’m looking for, is people who are in different perspectives, different roles within the [field].”

In addition to feeling pressure to make careful hiring decisions, chairs said that they often have sufficient time to engage in rigorous hiring practices. Because demand for their departments’ courses is relatively predictable, chairs may be better able to anticipate gaps in coverage and, when necessary, begin the process of hiring new part-time faculty members well in advance. Furthermore, chairs reported hiring “very few”

part-time faculty, which allows them to dedicate more time to each hiring decision and be “a little more selective.”

Given sufficient time to invest in hiring part-time faculty, chairs said that they engage in practices that enable them to feel relatively confident about the quality of their hiring decisions. A few chairs described feeling “hesitant” to recruit part-time faculty through an “open call” on the university’s website, “because you never know who you’re going to attract in that process.” Instead, they said that their approach to recruiting part-time faculty is “all about networking.” One chair described a process of identifying candidates with “a pre-existing professional relationship” with the department, people who “I’m familiar with or someone I trust within our department is familiar with.” Another chair described contacting faculty members at nearby universities to inquire about promising doctoral students who might be interested in teaching part-time: “I asked a couple people, and the next thing you know, I had all these names” of prospective part-time faculty who “were perfectly qualified.” In addition to active recruitment, chairs described vetting candidates thoroughly. “I look into everything,” one chair said, explaining:

“I will ask [for the applicants’] permission to call wherever they came from or to see some teaching evaluations from another school.... So, you know, it’s not just a matter of, ‘Oh, my god, we have to find someone to teach Intro. Just put someone there.’ I would never do that, you know. So I check them out thoroughly. I don’t know if everybody does.”

Chairs are able to proactively supervise part-time faculty. Chairs managing small numbers of part-time faculty described engaging in relatively thorough evaluation

practices. They said that they carefully review feedback from student evaluations to look for patterns and, based on their analysis of those evaluations, they expressed confidence that “the part-timers that we’re hiring are doing the job in the classroom.” One chair reported that “most of the evaluations that I’ve seen for our part-time faculty members have been pretty close to the median university score,” so “that’s an indication that they’re not suffering in quality.” Another chair said, “Their student evaluations are very, very, very, very comparable to full-time faculty. Okay? Very, very comparable.”

Chairs also described engaging in ongoing, proactive supervision of their part-time faculty members to identify any emerging issues with quality. They said that they frequently check-in with part-time faculty members and seek informal feedback from students. This ongoing supervision is manageable, in the context of chairs’ many other responsibilities, because of the relatively small number of part-time faculty members in their departments. Chairs explained that they “can keep tabs” on all of their departments’ part-time faculty members because they “don’t have a whole lot of oversight to do.”

Chairs have timely opportunities to informally assess learning. Chairs said that their departments are often able to informally assess student learning in courses taught by part-time faculty. Students taking courses with part-time faculty in these departments are often taking them as requirements of their degree programs, and the degree programs offered by these departments are often tightly structured, with students being required to progress through a prescribed sequence of courses. When part-time faculty are assigned to courses within that sequence, departments can informally assess student learning by looking for patterns in students’ readiness for the next course in the sequence. As one chair explained, “If we do get students in the follow-on courses, and

students coming from a particular faculty aren't up to snuff, then that's an indicator.”

Because these departments rely on relatively few part-time faculty members, patterns in student learning are readily apparent and can be traced back to specific part-time faculty members; as one chair said, “It's easy to keep track.”

Furthermore, degree programs in these departments are, in many cases, designed based on curriculum standards set by accrediting organizations, and those standards often specify course-level learning objectives that prepare students for future courses in the sequence. As one chair explained, if the department notices that students have not mastered specific learning objectives, those gaps in learning can often be traced back to problems with specific courses:

“Since the students will move on to full-time faculty, their recounting and remembrances, how well they've learned stuff previously, feeds into that, which—full-time faculty are eager to make sure that they don't have to reinvent the wheel. They should, you know, if you're doing the scaffolding correctly, as the student gets higher into the program, they should be bringing more with them to the learning table that the professor can build on. And if the professor notices that that's not there, then we have a problem.”

Students may offer more feedback about courses in their degree programs.

Because the students taking courses from part-time faculty members in these departments are typically enrolled in the departments' degree programs, they may be more likely to have relationships with the departments' full-time faculty members, including chairs. As a result, students may have more opportunities to report any issues with part-time faculty quality to full-time faculty members, improving the odds that chairs will learn about these

issues as they emerge. In addition, chairs said that they often hear good news from students about the quality of part-time faculty members. As one chair explained, casual conversations with students about the quality of part-time faculty members are both frequent and valuable:

“Students will come to me and say, ‘Mr. Smith, we didn’t learn anything. He was terrible.’ Okay? And then they’ll come to me and say, ‘Mr. Smith, he was—man, is he going to be here next year? Because I need to take all the classes that he’s teaching next year. I don’t care what they are, because he’s just great.’... That’s what happens a lot here in [this department].”

Several chairs emphasized that the informal feedback they hear from students is often very helpful because it gets at the question of whether part-time faculty members are effective teachers. As one chair explained, students complaining about courses where “they’re not learning anything because it’s too easy” sends a relatively unambiguous message about quality:

“If they’re afraid of taking the follow-on course because they’re not learning enough in this one, that’s probably the biggest indicator.... If they complain that it’s too hard, it’s one of those things where I need a lot more than one person, because there’s always some whiner about, you know, ‘I don’t really want to work.’... If they complain they don’t like somebody, there’s always someone who doesn’t like your style.... So I’m not as convinced by those arguments, but if they’re telling me [they’re] afraid that they’re not going to be able to go on, then I get worried.”

As this chair pointed out, students enrolled in these departments' degree programs are often held accountable for mastering the curriculum of each course, because it prepares them for future courses in the program; in many cases, students are also expected to demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum by passing some sort of exam at the end of their program. As a result, students taking courses from part-time faculty in these departments may be more motivated to complain about teaching quality, both while they are enrolled in those courses and when they realize that they are underprepared for subsequent courses in their degree programs.

Chairs are able to work closely with part-time faculty to improve quality.

Because many part-time faculty members in these departments teach at Cardinal State as a sideline, they may be relatively satisfied with their part-time faculty appointments and relatively unlikely to leave Cardinal State to pursue full-time faculty appointments elsewhere. At the same time, college teaching is relatively unlikely to be their primary professional competency, so chairs said that their concerns about professional development tend to focus on improving the quality of their teaching at Cardinal State. Chairs described “mentoring” part-time faculty members and communicating the message that “I want to work together with them to make their classes better.” Because chairs of these departments have a relatively rich set of opportunities to learn about issues with the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching—including through proactive supervision, informal assessments of student learning, and hearing feedback from students—they are able to provide part-time faculty with specific feedback. In addition, because they are managing relatively small numbers of part-time faculty, chairs often have the capacity to work one-on-one with them to address issues with quality.

Chairs said that, in light of their understanding of part-time faculty members' strengths and weaknesses as teachers, they sometimes make changes to their teaching assignments. For example, one chair described realizing that a part-time faculty member was struggling to teach a specific course. Although the chair worked with the part-time faculty member to try to address the issue, the faculty member continued to struggle. The chair then re-assigned the part-time faculty member to a different course, and the faculty member thrived: the course "was very good." The chair described this approach as a "benign way" to deal a struggling faculty member. Another chair described making efforts to learn about part-time faculty members' teaching interests by meeting with them individually to ask, "What do you see yourself teaching?" The chair recalled one of these conversations:

"A lot of times, you know, somebody just gets an [introductory course] and they teach that.... And then you find out that they [have expertise in a specialized area of the field]. And, 'Holy mackerel! I didn't know that!... You should be teaching [a course related to your expertise].' 'Oh, I'd love to.'"

Chairs of these departments may have more freedom to re-assign part-time faculty members to courses that better fit their strengths and interests, because their full-time faculty members may be more "flexible" about their teaching assignments. Moreover, chairs' ability to get to know their part-time faculty members' strengths and interests as teachers reflects the fact that these departments have relatively small numbers of part-time faculty. As one chair said, part-time faculty in these departments become "familiar."

Quality Control in Departments With Low Levels of Reliance on Part-time Faculty

In many ways, the conditions in departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and connections to professional fields represent a best-case scenario for quality control. Chairs of these departments said that, because they are managing relatively few part-time faculty members, they have the capacity to work closely with them, a situation that stands in contrast to the experiences of chairs leading departments with large numbers of part-time faculty. Furthermore, chairs described feeling very different sets of pressures related to quality control in these two types of departments. The previous chapter described chairs who face competing pressures that complicate their quality control decisions, including concerns about their part-time faculty members' livelihoods and pressure to meet demand for their departments' general education courses. In contrast, this chapter describes chairs who face an aligned set pressures that make their quality control practices more focused: part-time faculty members often teach courses in their departments' degree programs, and chairs feel pressure from students and external accrediting organizations to hold those courses to a high standard of quality. Chairs of these two types of departments described qualitatively different experiences with quality control, and those differences seem to be closely connected to differences in their departmental conditions.

Chapter 6:

Part-time Faculty and Quality at Cardinal State University

As noted earlier, Cardinal State University has reached a turning point in its use of part-time faculty. After many years of building an increasingly heavy reliance on them, the university is being compelled to cut back—in a substantial way—in order to come into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. This situation has prompted chairs to consider how, if at all, reducing Cardinal State’s reliance on part-time faculty might alter the quality of education it provides to its students.

Some chairs argued that reducing Cardinal State’s reliance on part-time faculty will improve quality, and several expressed a belief—an erroneous belief—that this sentiment is unanimously shared by chairs. As one chair said, “We all agree that too many part-time faculty members is not a good thing.” But chairs do not all agree on this issue. Many expressed concerns that the coming changes will negatively affect quality at Cardinal State. Several chairs described part-time faculty as “an important part of what makes us tick” and argued that, without their contributions, “we would implode” and “the whole educational construct would just collapse in on itself.”

These differences in chairs’ expectations about how scaling back on part-time faculty will affect quality hint at a broader theme: chairs’ descriptions of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State reveal a great deal of complexity in this relationship. That complexity emerges from several different sources, including variation in chairs’ interpretations of the meaning of quality, constraints imposed by quality control policies that are beyond the university’s control, and differences in departmental conditions that shape the effectiveness of chairs’ quality control practices.

Part-time Faculty and the Meaning of Quality

Chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State are diverse, in part because they interpret the meaning of quality differently. They tend to frame the concept of quality in two ways: in terms of how Cardinal State can most effectively meet the needs of its students, and in terms of the values that define Cardinal State's identity as an institution.

Part-time faculty and the needs of Cardinal State's students. Many chairs talked about quality in terms of how well Cardinal State is meeting the needs of its students. Chairs described the institution as committed—both in its mission and in its culture—to meeting the complex needs of the “multifaceted, multi-layered group [of students] that's coming in the door” and providing them with whatever support they need in order to achieve their educational goals. One chair explained:

“Ultimately, we need to bring them along, and it isn't just [that] we fail out the ones we don't want. We have to work with those students to develop them as citizens, because ultimately we want them to graduate, we want them to be taxpayers, we want them to be voters, we want them to be participants in our communities.”

Although chairs tended to share this sentiment, they expressed different ideas about how Cardinal State can most effectively support its students, and those ideas framed their understandings of how Cardinal State's reliance on part-time faculty weakens or enhances the institution's capacity to meet the needs of its students.

Many chairs described relationships with faculty members as the most important form of support for college students. As one chair said, “A big part of the experience, big

part of going to college” is forming relationships with faculty “who open doors for you and show you things.” These chairs argued that full-time faculty play an essential role in student development, because they are more likely than part-time faculty to build long-term, supportive relationships with students. According to chairs, full-time faculty are more available to students outside of class, creating more opportunity for relationship-building. Full-time faculty have their own offices and are often on campus “five days a week.” One chair explained, “Simply reliably being around is important.” In contrast, chairs described part-time faculty as less available outside of class time. Part-time faculty at Cardinal State are only required to offer one hour of office hours per week for each course section they teach, and they rarely have consistent access to an office. “The part-time faculty really just show up, and they teach courses, and then that’s kind of it,” one chair said, capturing a sentiment that was expressed by many other chairs as well. Chairs said that one reason part-time faculty are less available to students is that they “are being paid very little money and they’re probably teaching at two or three different colleges.” As a consequence, one chair argued that Cardinal State’s heavy reliance on part-time faculty undermines the goals of its policy limiting class size: “What good is it if you’re in a smaller class,” the chair asked, if the faculty member is “out the door” as soon as class ends because they are rushing off to teach at another university?

Full-time faculty are also expected to advise students enrolled in their departments’ degree programs, creating a formal context for relationship-building, whereas part-time faculty are not assigned advisees. Because of their advising role and their immersion “in the workings of the institution,” full-time faculty are better informed about resources and opportunities available to students, according to many chairs.

Cardinal State students “really need a level of mentorship that a lot of times part-time faculty aren’t ready to provide,” because “we haven’t necessarily given them the tools” to advise students effectively. Furthermore, because full-time faculty members are permanent employees of Cardinal State, their relationships with students can provide an ongoing, reliable source of support, even after a student graduates. Chairs described that kind of “continuity” as less likely with part-time faculty members because their appointments are temporary.

Several chairs said that they were troubled to learn that, because Cardinal State relies so heavily on part-time faculty, some students graduate without ever taking a course from a full-time faculty member. “That should not be happening,” one chair said, because it means that, effectively, “we’re no different than” an “institution that uses nothing but part-time faculty.” The chair continued,

“[Those students] paid for a university education and they do not have the kind of long-term relationships with a full-time faculty member, who has tenure, that they can count on to be around and in a position to guide them, to mentor them, to get them into grad school, either when they graduate or three years later.... That’s not an option for a lot of those students.”

Many chairs argued that students’ needs would be better supported if they had greater opportunity to build relationships with full-time faculty.

Other chairs offered a different perspective on how Cardinal State can most effectively support its students: they argued that part-time faculty are important partners in meeting the needs of students, for several reasons. First, they described part-time faculty members at Cardinal State as unusually committed to the students, compared to

part-time faculty at other institutions. They said that part-time faculty members are active participants in and contributors to Cardinal State's overall culture of student support.

"Our part-time faculty really like [Cardinal State] students. They say it all the time," one chair said, adding:

"Some of them that'll teach at a private school will say that the students have a sense of entitlement, whereas, you know, they consistently say that [Cardinal State] students are always polite and hard-working, which is very, very true.... They actually will make a point to say that, too, to say that they like our students. So that also is a reason why—I think it motivates them to keep coming back."

Chairs said that Cardinal State's part-time faculty "really care about our students" and often go "well above and beyond what the contractual requirements are" to support students and enrich their educational experiences. One chair said that Cardinal State tends to attract and retain part-time faculty members who see themselves as "more than just somebody who just gets a W-2," explaining:

"They see the mission of the department and the institution as being important to them, and I think that's really important to note. I mean, if we didn't have people with that level of commitment, it wouldn't work. You know, if they literally just came and went, the whole thing would fall in on itself."

Several chairs also described part-time faculty members' unusual commitment to Cardinal State as reciprocal: in other words, they described Cardinal State as unusually committed to its part-time faculty members. "Our support for part-time faculty is more extensive than probably comparable institutions," one chair said. Another chair agreed: "Institutionally, we have decided to really work with the part-timers." At Cardinal State,

part-time faculty “get to go to all the faculty development stuff” related to teaching, and the university offers awards that recognize outstanding teaching by part-time faculty members.

Many chairs also said that Cardinal State’s heavy reliance on part-time faculty enabled the university to reduce the size of its classes, despite declining appropriations from the state. Chairs said that reducing the size of classes redefined classroom dynamics, providing students with more individual attention and creating better opportunities for students to build relationships with faculty in all of their courses. In smaller classes, “you know those students, even if you’re a part-time faculty member, much more intimately,” one chair said, because “you’re talking with them one-on-one and you’re watching each of them develop in a different way.”

Chairs also said that student support at Cardinal State comes in many forms. The university has built a “robust” infrastructure of support services to meet students’ diverse needs—from academic tutoring, to financial aid, to career development, to mental health services—and “this is all costing money.” Chairs argued that relying heavily on part-time faculty has made it possible financially for Cardinal State to enrich the campus environment with an unusually well-developed suite of student support services that are critical to meeting students’ complex needs. While many chairs agreed that, in an ideal world, Cardinal State would not have to make trade-offs of this kind, they said that, in the real context of declining resources, the university is striking a balance that they described as remarkably effective in addressing the needs of its students.

Part-time faculty and Cardinal State’s identity as an institution. Chairs also talked about quality in terms of Cardinal State’s identity as an institution. Although

Cardinal State has historically been a teaching-focused institution, many chairs said that research is becoming increasingly central to its academic culture. Chairs expressed mixed feelings about this change: many said they welcome it, while a few others expressed some resistance. In either case, chairs' sense of what Cardinal State's identity is—or should be—provided a framework for defining what a quality college education looks like and how part-time faculty fit into that type of educational experience.

About a third of the chairs expressed enthusiasm for Cardinal State's emerging emphasis on research, which they described as a major cultural shift that involves redefining the role of full-time faculty—changing their balance of responsibilities to include more research activity—and also redefining the learning experiences of students—as faculty integrate their research into their classroom teaching and as students are provided with increased opportunities for research training, both in their classes and outside of class time. Several chairs described research opportunities as especially powerful learning experiences for their students.

Many chairs described part-time faculty as particularly problematic in the context of a more research-focused university, for several reasons. First of all, “a lot of part-timers don't do research,” because their responsibilities at Cardinal State focus on teaching, and they are not expected to do research. Second, the minimum qualification for part-time faculty appointments at Cardinal State is a master's degree, so many part-timers “don't have as strong of a background,” in terms of their research training, as full-time faculty, who are required to hold a terminal degree in their field. Chairs said that, compared to full-time faculty, part-time faculty are less available to engage students in research training outside of class time and are not provided with the same level of support

or incentives to become more active in research. One chair described part-time faculty as “much less willing” to work with students on research projects, “because the compensation is so low.” Another chair agreed: “I don’t think it’s worth it to them money-wise... and some of them probably just don’t have the time.” Chairs argued that these differences between part-time and full-time faculty make part-timers less likely to provide the type of educational experience that is valued in the context of a research-focused institution.

In contrast to those chairs who expressed enthusiasm regarding Cardinal State’s emerging emphasis on research, a few expressed hope that the university would retain its identity as a teaching-focused institution, in part because they value aspects of the culture that they fear would be lost with an increased focus on research. Many chairs described Cardinal State’s culture as egalitarian: everyone who works at the university—from the president to the faculty to the custodial staff—is valued and treated with respect because of their unique contributions to the shared goal of educating students. The custodial staff “are no less important than the faculty members,” one chair said, and explained: “Just because you’re a janitor doesn’t mean that you don’t do great things for the university. You do great things for the students, just like we do. We just do different things.” The chair went on:

“That’s remarkable to me: just that attitude that everybody who’s here, whether you clean the toilets, or you plant the flowers, or you shovel the walk, or you make the food, or you teach the students, or you are over in the residence halls, it doesn’t matter. We’re all working together and we all are very important to the student experience.”

Several chairs compared Cardinal State to other institutions where they had studied or worked. “It’s a special place,” one chair said, “the campus climate is extremely good here.” Several chairs described the culture as a consequence of the institution’s focus on teaching; one chair explained it this way:

“We are a teaching university, and I think that makes us a little less selfish. As research becomes more important, there is a little more of this me-ness creeping in, but for the most part teaching and serving our students is the major focus of what we do. And I think that’s probably key. If we were a research thing, we would be hip-checking everybody to get our little pot and make our name and make our little splash. And, you know, it would be one big gimme. But I think that’s a big part of the difference and I hope it never changes. I can see it: we are starting to become a little more into research and, you know, I hope we can keep that in perspective and not lose some of the goodies that come with the teaching emphasis.”

Chairs worried that Cardinal State’s increasing focus on research might lead to “dog eat dog” mentality amongst the faculty. One chair, who had previously worked at a research-focused university, referred to it as “a snake pit.”

In the context of a teaching-focused institution, chairs described feeling less concerned about part-time faculty members’ relative lack of research experience; instead, they described the research experience of full-time faculty members as part of their unique contribution to educating students, while part-time faculty contribute in other ways. For example, some part-time faculty have professional experience outside of academia and can provide students with a “real strong current perspective” on their field,

and chairs described their students as “really lucky to have that contact with people who are actually in the field that they’re aspiring to be in.” Chairs also observed that students “look at somebody who’s in the [field] on a day-to-day basis differently than they look at us.” In other cases, part-time faculty have “expertise that is so specific and so unique” that “there’s no way we could hire a full-time faculty person with just that expertise.” Although a department’s full-time faculty “might have a little corner of experience in it or a little glimmer of knowledge of it,” chairs said that students are better served by a part-time faculty member who “really is an expert.” Cardinal State also employs part-time faculty members who are current or former public school teachers from nearby communities, who have experience working with the student population that Cardinal State serves. According to these chairs, there is value in the differences between part-time and full-time faculty: that diversity enriches the learning experiences of students. “We do value all of the part-time faculty members, and the diversity that they bring, and the things that they can do for the students that we can’t,” one chair said. Another agreed with that sentiment: “I think that diversity in all its meanings helps make this a happy place to work.”

This rich variation in chairs’ understandings of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State would come as no surprise to the chairs themselves. They described their fellow chairs as “a highly disparate gang,” and said, “We’re not going to speak with one voice.” Several chairs also emphasized that they do not consider themselves spokespersons for their departments, so their perspectives should not be interpreted as somehow representative of the perspectives of their departmental colleagues. “I’m not always in agreement with the rest of the department,” one chair said,

“but that’s good, I think.” Chairs said that, even within a department, reaching a common understanding about what quality means would be challenging, because faculty members hold such diverse opinions. One chair described a department where faculty members have been engaged in an ongoing discussion “to really understand what quality ends up meaning” in their department, but “it’s something we’re still in the process of thinking about.” Some chairs also wondered or speculated about what quality means to Cardinal State’s students and how they perceive the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. For chairs, describing the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is complex, not only because they understand that their colleagues and students have diverse perspectives, but also because, on an individual level, they see this question from multiple perspectives. One chair gave voice to the kind of mixed, complex opinions that many chairs expressed: “As much as I disagree with growing part-time ranks,” the chair said, “I also have great empathy for the reasons for doing it.”

Part-time Faculty and the Mechanisms of Quality Control

Regardless of how they define quality, many chairs described the relationship between part-time faculty and quality as “highly variable,” and said they find it difficult to generalize because “across full-time and part-time faculty, the quality is different with each person.” As one chair said, “We’ve certainly seen the gamut of everything. I mean, everything from really, really bad examples to really, really great examples” of part-time faculty. They said that an important aspect of their role as chairs is regulating the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in their departments by monitoring part-time faculty members’ performance and intervening to address any problems. Chairs described three quality control mechanisms that are critical to this aspect of their work:

hiring new part-time faculty members, evaluating their performance, and making decisions about whether to renew their contracts.

Limitations of existing quality control mechanisms. In their descriptions of these quality control mechanisms, many chairs drew comparisons to the mechanisms their departments use to control the quality of their full-time faculty members. “There is a significant difference between the quality control for part-time faculty versus tenured faculty,” one chair said, “and that affects everything. It affects quality, it affects student retention, it affects recruitment, just—it affects everything.” Chairs said that the quality control mechanisms for full-time faculty are designed to ensure that “the fittest survive,” whereas the mechanisms for part-time faculty are much less rigorous. As one chair said, “By the very nature of how those jobs are managed, there are issues with quality.” Chairs’ comparisons pointed to two major differences that make quality control mechanisms for full-time faculty more effective: they are grounded in richer evidence of quality and they are managed by committees, rather than being left to the sole discretion of the chair. Chairs’ comparisons of the processes through which departments hire, evaluate, and retain full-time versus part-time faculty members reveal why these two differences result in better decision-making and more effective quality control for full-time faculty.

Chairs described the vetting process for full-time faculty positions as “really extensive.” Departments actively recruit applicants through their professional networks and then invest a great deal of time and energy in getting to know each candidate. One chair described the typical interview for a full-time faculty position this way: “We spend an entire day—from 8 in the morning until about 8 at night—with them, eat every

meal.... They're watched like hawks." Chairs said that vetting candidates for part-time faculty positions is "a totally different bag of cats." Departments typically rely on an open recruitment process that attracts many applicants who are completely unknown to the department, and then the vetting process is brief, with the chair "maybe interviewing somebody for 30 minutes." During those brief interviews, "you shoot the breeze with them," which may provide enough information to evaluate "do they smile and can they talk," but not enough to "really know for sure" whether they are prepared to teach effectively.

Chairs argued that, in addition to being "vetted much more thoroughly," candidates for full-time positions go through "a better selection process," because they are scrutinized by committees. When committees deliberate the merits of each candidate, those conversations are enriched by the different perspectives of committee members who have reviewed all of the application materials and have participated in the interviews. Chairs said that this group process helps identify if "something's a little off" with any of the candidates. In contrast, when it comes to hiring part-time faculty members, "you are sort of relying on the chair's judgment," and "there's some risk involved with that." Chairs used telling language to describe the feelings of uncertainty they associate with hiring part-time faculty members: "The whole thing is a gamble," one chair said, explaining, "You see that they're technically qualified, you see that they've stood up in front of a class before and done some teaching, you ask them some questions during the interview, and then you hope." Another chair also compared hiring part-time faculty to gambling, saying, "I'm going to have to roll the dice again and just hire someone off the street, and maybe they'll be good, maybe they won't be good."

Chairs' comparisons of the evaluation processes for full-time and part-time faculty pointed to the same underlying issues. Although departments evaluate the teaching effectiveness of all faculty members using the same methods—student evaluations and classroom observations—chairs emphasized that full-time faculty are evaluated much more frequently. They “get observed like crazy,” as one chair explained:

“I observe every full-time faculty member once or twice a semester until they get tenure, and that’s a lot of data. That’s a lot of observation, so by the time somebody goes up for tenure, I have observed their classroom teaching at least 12 times, if not 16 times.”

Chairs said that multiple observations of the same faculty member help them develop “a pretty good sense of where their strengths and weaknesses are,” but chairs “do not have that when it comes to part-time faculty,” because they observe them so infrequently. “Every five years I might pop in for 50 minutes or 75,” chairs said, but “it’s really hard to tell a lot from one visit,” especially because the chair’s presence in a classroom creates “an artificial situation.” As one chair explained, “Of course that’s going to, usually, be a great class, because they know I’m coming.” Although many chairs expressed interest in conducting more frequent observations, the collective bargaining agreement limits them to a single observation for each part-time faculty member being evaluated. “As the chair, I can only do what I am contractually allowed to do,” one chair explained, “so I can’t do surprise visits. I can’t email someone that’s not scheduled to be evaluated.... I can’t. I don’t have the authority to do it. I have to be *allowed* to do it.”

Forming an opinion of teaching effectiveness based on limited evidence is not the only challenge chairs face in evaluating part-time faculty; this task is further complicated

because evidence of teaching effectiveness is often ambiguous and open to interpretation. Chairs described evaluations of teaching as “subjective” and, as teachers themselves, expressed an understanding that “the beauty’s in the eye of the beholder” and “there’s always someone who doesn’t like your style.” For that reason, chairs said that they receive students’ feedback about teaching quality with some skepticism. “You can’t totally rely on student evals,” they said, because “when students don’t do well, or are uncomfortable, they don’t necessarily rate the professor accurately.” Likewise, chairs raised questions about how to interpret student complaints: “Does that mean their course isn’t as good, or is there something else that’s going on with that?”

In the case of a full-time faculty member, a peer evaluation committee would provide a forum for making sense of ambiguous evidence and would arrive at an interpretation of the evidence based on the multiple perspectives of the committee members. For a part-time faculty member, chairs are required to make sense of ambiguous evidence on their own. Because they have “very little opportunity” to observe part-time faculty members teaching, and because it can be “hard to tell” how they should interpret evidence of teaching quality, chairs said that they usually reserve judgment about part-time faculty members’ teaching effectiveness until they have collected enough evidence that they have a “very clear” sense of how they should interpret that evidence. One chair provided this example:

“The things that I saw [during a classroom observation] were so grossly off track that I thought, ‘When you put that together with the students’ opinions, then it’s not a freak situation or a fluke that I just happened to catch a bad day.’”

The problem with this approach to evaluating part-time faculty—which one chair described as “a discovery process”—is that it can take a long time to accumulate sufficient evidence. As a result, problems with teaching quality can go unnoticed and unaddressed for relatively long periods of time. One chair explained: “Sometimes that takes a while—for it to become apparent, to patch together a trend or a pattern. By the time that’s happened, maybe they’ve offered four or five courses.”

Because the teaching effectiveness of part-time faculty can be so challenging to evaluate, chairs said that their decisions about whether to renew part-time faculty members’ contracts are also clouded by ambiguity. One chair explained:

“It’s trying to figure out, you know, what’s best for the students? And what about the faculty member? And how do I balance that? And obviously [the balance] can tip one way or the other, but sometimes it’s very ambiguous as to what to do in those situations.”

Decisions about whether to retain full-time faculty members are deliberated by committees, which provide a forum for discussing ambiguous cases, but chairs have to resolve decisions about part-time faculty retention on their own. Chairs noted that this policy difference has important implications for the power dynamics in departments: the authority to make decisions about the retention of full-time faculty is distributed across committee members, but authority to make decisions about the retention of part-time faculty is vested solely in the chair. This policy gives chairs “an enormous amount of power,” particularly because part-time faculty have “no rights” to due process if their contracts are not renewed. One chair explained, “If, at the end of the semester, I just don’t give them any more classes, they don’t have any recourse whatsoever.” Although one

chair argued that having “a lot of discretion” over these decisions is “a good thing” because it enables chairs to choose “not to bring back [part-time faculty members] for quality reasons—and for other reasons,” many described feeling uncomfortable with the power dynamic in their relationships with part-time faculty members. A few chairs expressed concern that vesting so much authority in chairs opens the door for them to act capriciously. They worried that some chairs can be “kind of abusive” towards part-time faculty members: “firing people, cutting them loose, evaluating them on arbitrary things.”

Improving the effectiveness of quality control mechanisms. Chairs argued that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State could be improved by redesigning the quality control mechanisms that departments use to regulate this relationship. They recommended moving towards processes that more closely resemble the quality control mechanisms for full-time faculty. Specifically, they advocated for changes that would enable departments to collect richer evidence of part-time faculty members’ teaching effectiveness and that would delegate the work of hiring, evaluating, and retaining part-time faculty to committees.

Chairs said that their ability to form well-grounded judgments about part-time faculty members’ effectiveness as teachers is constrained by the collective bargaining agreement, which limits the methods and evidence they can use in their evaluations. Several chairs said they would like to see changes in the policies regarding evaluation of part-time faculty. In particular, they would like to have the authority to conduct more frequent classroom observations, in order to gain a more complete picture of part-time faculty members’ strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Although chairs said that classroom observations are “the most important” method for learning about the quality of

part-time faculty members' courses, they described informal feedback from students as another critical source of information. At the same time, chairs acknowledged that informal feedback from students is unreliable, suggesting that their ability to evaluate part-time faculty would be strengthened if chairs had a more formal process for gathering student feedback. Student evaluations, which are administered in every class every semester, are a more reliable—and equitable—source of feedback, since they provide every student with the opportunity to share their opinions. However, as it stands, the collective bargaining agreement forbids students from writing any comments on their evaluation forms. Changing this policy to allow students to provide qualitative feedback about their courses could radically change the opportunities for chairs—and faculty members themselves—to identify patterns in students' feedback and address any issues with quality in a timely and well-informed way.

These policies regarding part-time faculty evaluation are not a matter of institutional decision-making; they are terms of the collective bargaining agreement that is negotiated by the faculty union and the statewide system of public universities. Changing these policies would require that the terms of that agreement be renegotiated, which Cardinal State could advocate for. In the meantime—or in the absence of policy reform—changes in chairs' supervision practices could also help them gather additional evidence about the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching. Chairs said that, if some issue is affecting a part-time faculty member's performance, proactive supervision practices—such as frequently checking-in—create opportunities for the chair and part-time faculty member to identify and address that issue early on, “before it mushrooms into something bigger.” Chairs emphasized that supervision should not only focus on

rooting out problems; it should also be a vehicle for building relationships with part-time faculty members and discovering how chairs can support their professional development.

Many chairs also suggested that the responsibilities associated with hiring part-time faculty, evaluating their performance, and deciding whether to renew their contracts should be redistributed, because “expanding the players that are involved” in these processes could make them considerably more effective. Several chairs specifically recommended adopting committee-based management of these processes. This approach would provide a forum for debating the relative merits of candidates for part-time faculty appointments, as well as for making sense of ambiguous evidence of teaching effectiveness. Involving a committee would also shift the basis of decision-making away from the sole discretion of the chair and toward deliberations that draw on multiple perspectives. By distributing decision-making authority across committee members, this approach could relieve pressure on the relationships between chairs and part-time faculty members, which chairs described as tainted by an uncomfortable power dynamic when decision-making authority is “vested too much in the department chair.” A committee-based approach could also relieve pressure on chairs’ relationships with part-time faculty members in another way, by creating a context for part-time faculty members to build relationships with more colleagues in their departments and feel better integrated in a network of support. Working on a committee that manages part-time faculty could also be a valuable experience for prospective chairs.

Involving a committee in the evaluation of part-time faculty members or in decisions about whether to renew their contracts would violate the current terms of the collective bargaining agreement. Once again, changing these policies would require

renegotiation of that agreement. However, as it stands, a committee-based approach to hiring part-time faculty is not explicitly prohibited by the collective bargaining agreement, and a few chairs described instances in which chairs formed unofficial committees to vet candidates for part-time positions. One chair experimented with this approach by “inviting” full-time faculty colleagues to “join me” in interviewing candidates, “so it wouldn’t be just me making the decision.” The chair said, “Obviously we can’t make it as extensive as hiring full-time faculty, but we still should have a more formal procedure.” The chair credited this approach with helping the department select “the best” candidates for part-time faculty positions.

Part-time Faculty and Quality Control in Two Types of Departments

Chairs’ candid descriptions of their experiences putting existing quality control policies into practice reveal another problem with these policies: they break down under certain departmental conditions. Chairs leading departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty described feeling overwhelmed by the demands associated with managing large numbers of part-time faculty, expressed concerns that they may be unaware of problems with quality, and described pressures related to the needs of their departments and the needs of their part-time faculty members that interfere with their decision-making. “Quality control, when you have so many part-time faculty members, is very difficult,” one chair said, which can make a department feel “like the wild west.”

In contrast, chairs of departments with low levels of reliance on part-time faculty expressed a sense of confidence in the effectiveness of their quality control practices. They also expressed sympathy for the challenges facing chairs of departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty. “I think everybody’s trying to do the right thing,”

one chair said, “I don’t think that’s really the issue.” Instead, chairs expressed an understanding that chairs of departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty face a set of departmental conditions that “puts those chairs in a position” where “it’s only natural that there are going to be some questionable cases that slip through the cracks.”

This pattern of variation in the apparent effectiveness of chairs’ quality control practices sheds light on how and why the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may vary across departments at Cardinal State. It suggests that existing quality control policies are not sensitive to variation in departmental conditions that shape chairs’ ability to put these policies into practice. To be fair, these policies were designed based on the assumption that departments’ reliance on part-time faculty would not exceed the limit defined by the collective bargaining agreement. In practice, many departments have far exceeded that limit, and chairs of those departments described facing a variety of challenges that interfere with their ability to implement these policies effectively. Any changes in these policies that are intended to improve the overall effectiveness of chairs’ quality control practices—including changes that would enable departments to collect richer evidence of part-time faculty members’ teaching effectiveness or that would delegate the work of quality control to committees—are unlikely to have their intended effect unless steps are also taken to address differences in departmental conditions that make it more challenging for some chairs to implement quality control practices effectively.

Under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, chairs are assigned sole responsibility for managing all of their departments’ part-time faculty members,

regardless of the number. Many chairs described feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities associated with managing a large number of part-time faculty. Several chairs suggested that departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty should have the option of delegating the chairs' responsibilities to multiple individuals, so that it would be "easier to manage the burden of the part-time faculty responsibility." The collective bargaining agreement does not include "any provision for an assistant chair," but several chairs suggested that this policy should be changed to reflect the reality that the responsibilities associated with being chair vary substantially across departments and, in some cases, might be carried out more effectively if they were delegated to more than one person.

Another approach to redistributing the work of managing a large number of part-time faculty members would be to build on the idea of adopting a committee-based model. When full-time faculty members are evaluated at Cardinal State, their evaluations are conducted by committees; if a large number of full-time faculty in a department is up for evaluation, the department can form multiple evaluation committees. This same principle, if applied to the evaluation of part-time faculty, would distribute the responsibilities for observing large numbers of part-time faculty and reviewing their student evaluations across many more people, expanding departments' capacity to identify and address any issues with the quality of part-time faculty members' teaching. Committee members could also share responsibility for proactively supervising their departments' part-time faculty.

Providing departments with some kind of structural support that allows them to share responsibility for managing large numbers of part-time faculty—whether that

comes in the form of an assistant chair or a committee-based model—could have important benefits beyond dramatically reshaping chairs' workloads. Chairs of departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty said that concerns about meeting demand for their departments' courses and about the livelihoods of their part-time faculty members often complicate their decisions about whether to reappoint them. Any model that includes more people in that decision-making process would provide a forum for grappling with those complex issues and could improve the focus on quality as the main criterion for resolving these decisions. Involving others in this process could also provide chairs with a source of moral support when they have to deal with part-time faculty members whose contracts they have decided not to renew.

Although many of these changes would require renegotiation of the collective bargaining agreement, Cardinal State could also make changes in its institutional policies and practices that could relieve pressure on these departments and improve their ability to implement quality control mechanisms effectively. For example, many chairs expressed frustration about how frequently they have to scramble to make eleventh-hour changes in their course schedules. They said that they often confront unexpected gaps in coverage, because demand for their departments' courses is relatively unpredictable and because they are often notified at the last minute that faculty plan to leave their departments. To fill those gaps in coverage, chairs said they often resort to hiring new part-time faculty members at the last minute, meaning they choose from a diminished pool of applicants and, under time pressure, have limited opportunity to thoroughly vet them. Additionally, when they have to cancel under-enrolled sections, chairs said they are often forced to reduce the teaching loads of part-time faculty members unexpectedly, which is terrible

for morale and, furthermore, decisions about whose teaching loads to reduce are often based on full-time faculty members' teaching preferences, rather than quality. To help prevent these problems, Cardinal State should consider how it can provide departments with tools and information that enable them to more accurately predict course enrollment. The university could also review policies that define the timelines for cancelling under-enrolled courses and for faculty members—including part-time faculty members—to give notice that they plan to leave the university. In consultation with chairs, Cardinal State could work towards changing these timelines so that departments will have enough time to make satisfactory hiring decisions and to reduce teaching loads, when necessary, with quality in mind.

Changes in departmental policies and practices could also help address some of the issues that chairs identified, specifically those related to evaluating the quality of the general education courses that these departments typically assign to part-time faculty members. Chairs said that they are at a particular disadvantage when it comes to gathering a rich body of evidence about the effectiveness of their part-time faculty members' teaching, both because they are relatively unlikely to hear feedback from students who are enrolled in general education courses and because they rarely have opportunities to informally assess student learning in these courses. To address these issues, departments should consider how they can create conditions that provide students enrolled in general education courses with opportunities—and encouragement—to share their feedback about the quality of these courses. For example, departments could educate students about the importance of their feedback and about the processes through which they can communicate their feedback to the department. Departments could also create

formal or informal opportunities for students to have conversations with chairs—or assistant chairs or committee members who share responsibility for supervising part-time faculty—about their experiences in general education courses. These changes in practice could help departments cultivate stronger relationships with students enrolled in their general education courses, which might have the added benefit of making departments feel more accountable to hold these courses to a high standard of quality.

Changes in departmental policy could also create opportunities for informal assessment of student learning in general education courses. As it stands, students enrolled in these courses typically take them to fulfill requirements of the general education curriculum and they rarely enroll in further courses in these departments. As a result, these departments have limited evidence about how well their general education courses prepare students for subsequent coursework. However, one chair described a department in which a popular general education course also serves as the introductory course for one of the department's degree programs; students enrolled in that program are required to take a sequence of foundational courses before moving into their advanced electives. Faculty teaching the next course in the sequence noticed that students moved into that course with “amazingly different sets of skills,” which motivated the department to take steps to improve quality across all sections of the first course. Because that general education course also serves as the first step in a sequence of courses in the department's degree program, the department was able to identify and address issues with student learning in a timely way. Other departments could consider adopting this same strategy: redesigning their curricula so that there is a strong and structured relationship between their general education courses and their degree programs. In addition to

creating opportunities for assessment of student learning in general education courses, this type of change could also put pressure on departments to ensure that these courses meet a high standard of quality, since they would also serve students in their degree programs. Requiring students to follow a more structured degree program might feel contrary to tradition in some arts and sciences departments; however, requiring students to enroll in a sequence of foundational courses could help these departments identify and address gaps in student learning in a timely way and reduce the number of students enrolled in their degree programs who are able to progress into their advanced coursework without mastering foundational skills or content.

Finally, chairs said that in the arts and sciences disciplines, part-time faculty are not typically teaching as a sideline; instead, they professionally identify as college teachers. Chairs expressed frustration that their best part-time faculty members—those with a “proven track record in quality of teaching”—often leave because they want to move forward in their careers as college teachers but Cardinal State offers them very limited opportunities. Chairs would like to see Cardinal State create a trajectory of professional advancement for part-time faculty, so that departments would have a way to acknowledge—and encourage—excellent teaching. They would like to offer their best part-time faculty members promotions and raises to recognize the value of their contributions. At the same time, being able to offer them increased job security and higher income would help address chairs’ concerns about their part-time faculty members’ livelihoods. Departments could also use promotions and raises as incentives to encourage all part-time faculty members to do their best work. Furthermore, if Cardinal State could establish itself as an institution that offers a clear pathway from part-time to

full-time faculty appointments, that reputation would likely attract a stronger pool of candidates to apply for its part-time positions and it would also put more pressure on departments to be selective in their hiring decisions.

In addition to creating a trajectory of professional advancement for part-time faculty members, Cardinal State could also consider broadening the professional opportunities that are available to them. For example, chairs suggested that part-time faculty members could be assigned to advise a small number of students enrolled in their departments' degree programs. This could not only expand departments' capacity to provide more one-on-one support to students, it could also strengthen the connections between part-time faculty members and their departments. Other chairs suggested that Cardinal State should find ways to support and encourage the scholarship of part-time faculty members, particularly as the university increases its focus on research. Although these kinds of reforms would require change on multiple fronts—not only renegotiation of the collective bargaining agreement, but also changes in institutional and departmental culture—chairs said that they would like to see the role of part-time faculty members evolve to better reflect Cardinal State's values and identity and to improve the university's capacity to provide its students with a high-quality education.

The Uncertain Implications of Cutting Back on Part-time Faculty

Chairs who described facing the most challenges in implementing quality control practices lead departments with high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, so it may seem logical that reducing their departments' reliance on part-time faculty would improve quality. That hypothesis is actually being tested by Cardinal State's current situation: the university is being compelled to bring these departments into compliance

with the collective bargaining agreement. As chairs described their options for bringing these departments into compliance, they raised a number of serious concerns about how these changes might jeopardize the quality of education that their departments provide. These concerns speak to the complex relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State. They also underscore the powerful influence of three characteristics of these departments—their high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and their focus on disciplines in the arts and sciences—that loom large in chairs’ work with part-time faculty.

Chairs described two ways that they could substantially reduce their departments’ reliance on part-time faculty: hiring additional full-time faculty members and increasing class size. Several chairs said that Cardinal State had authorized them to hire a few new full-time, non-tenure-track faculty members but, in most cases, not enough to bring their departments into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. They reported that the cost of hiring an adequate number of new full-time faculty members had been estimated to be in the “millions of dollars”—which many chairs described as financially impossible, given Cardinal State’s budgetary constraints. As an alternative, chairs said that increasing class size—which one chair described as “jacking up enrollments”—would reduce the number of sections their departments offer and, by extension, the number of sections they need to assign to part-time faculty. However, many chairs described small classes as critical to quality and, furthermore, in the years since the class size policy was implemented, classrooms have been physically reconfigured with the smaller class size in mind. “We couldn’t have any more students in those courses if we wanted to,” one chair said, “so we’re really stuck with those numbers.”

In addition to the prohibitive cost of hiring enough full-time faculty and the implications for quality of increasing class size, chairs emphasized another problem with these two approaches: they would require chairs to “get rid of” part-time faculty members whose livelihoods depend on their income from Cardinal State. Offering full-time, non-tenure-track appointments to some part-time faculty members would be “a double-edged sword,” as one chair explained:

“That means that only so many of these folks that we have here would be retained, and I would have to choose which ones and then let some people go, and they would have zero employment.... I think that that will probably be one of the harder moments in my work in academia.”

Chairs described this situation as “a nightmare” because they will “probably fire any number of people in the next year.” They said that part-time faculty members in their departments are “in a very, very unfair position of not knowing where the chips are going to land” and are anxiously wondering, “Do I have a job?” or “Should I start looking for another job?” One chair who is facing these prospects said, “You’re really torn, as a union member, as a department chair, as a concerned citizen if nothing else. What do you do?” To address these concerns, one chair reported sending an email to the department’s part-time faculty that said, “I’m not firing anybody.... They can take me out wearing handcuffs if they need to.” Many chairs expressed a similarly strong desire not to take employment away from their part-time faculty members, so “we’re trying to find ways to keep that from happening.”

At the same time, chairs questioned how their departments will be able to meet demand for their general education courses after they reduce their reliance on part-time

faculty. Chairs said that cutting back on part-time faculty members would leave many sections of general education courses without teachers. Unless Cardinal State authorizes them to hire enough new full-time faculty members to cover those sections, their departments may have to “give up” those sections altogether. If they were forced to reduce the number of sections offered by their departments, chairs said that they would have to grapple with “a real philosophical tug of war”: whether to reduce their general education offerings or to ask their departments’ full-time faculty members to “drop what we’re doing in our majors” and teach general education courses instead. Chairs described this as “a very tough situation” and asked, “Where’s our commitment? Do we have a commitment to the [general education curriculum] or do we... take care of our majors first?” One chair said that, although “our first line of defense” would be cutting back on general education offerings, that cutback would be “counter-educational” and “criminal.” The chair explained:

“I think, without the [general education curriculum], we can’t even pretend to be a liberal arts school. I think that would make it a joke. And I think the elimination of the [general education curriculum] would be absolutely counter-productive to what [Cardinal State] is supposed to be and what we’re trying to do.”

Another chair speculated that Cardinal State might have to redesign its general education curriculum in order to come into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement, but added, “Everybody agrees—from the union, the faculty, the administration, the state—that that would undermine the quality of liberal arts education that we deliver here.”

Given this complex set of concerns, many chairs reported that they are considering how they might take advantage of loopholes in the collective bargaining agreement that would enable them to technically bring their departments into compliance without actually reducing the number of sections they assign to part-time faculty. In other words, as one chair said, they are thinking about “beating the system.” As another chair explained, “The union’s perspective and the administration’s perspective on what actually counts as part-time are two different things.” For example, sections that are offered online are excluded from the union’s calculations, so several chairs have considered moving “a whole bunch of courses online.” As one chair explained, “The part-time faculty could still teach them, but they would be online, and they don’t count if they’re online... so it’s like a pass on those classes.” At least one department at Cardinal State has already benefited from this exception; although the department relies heavily on part-time faculty, the chair described the department as “fine, contractually,” because so many part-time faculty members are assigned to online sections. Although many chairs have considered taking advantage of this loophole, they also expressed concerns about how moving sections online might affect the quality of education in their departments, “especially with our student population.” As one chair said, “the jury’s still out” when it comes to questions about the effectiveness of online education.

Chairs also mentioned another loophole: the limit on part-time faculty only applies to departments with more than a certain threshold number of full-time faculty members, so departments with very few full-time faculty members can assign part-time faculty to an unlimited percentage of sections. As the chair of one such “exempt” department explained, “We could start to hire way more part-time faculty” and “we’ll

never be in violation.” To take advantage of this loophole, some departments have considered “splitting up” into smaller departments. However, many chairs agreed that this kind of restructuring would have “huge implications,” so departments should only take this dramatic step for the purpose of improving the quality of education available to students, not solely to come into technical compliance with the collective bargaining agreement. Similarly, one chair reported that Cardinal State has “floated” the idea of creating “a general studies department” that would assume responsibility for administering many of the general education courses that currently belong to other departments. The department would employ just a few full-time faculty members who would manage an “army of part-time faculty.” Although this approach would technically bring Cardinal State into compliance, the chair expressed concerns about how it would affect the quality of education available to students:

“There are universities that work on that model. And if that was a model that we chose to move toward, then that would be a thing. But to go at it retroactively, to kind of grab at the straw and say, ‘Oh, let’s do that so we can adhere to that rule,’ as opposed to looking at that as a genuine curricular option that will best serve our students.... That’s not what people are talking about; they’re talking about a way to get around the rule.”

A few chairs said that Cardinal State has reacted to this complex, challenging situation as if “the house is on fire,” and so the conversation on campus has focused on extinguishing the fire by “fixing the numbers.” As one chair said, “That’s business thinking: only just solve the problem. ‘What’s the problem? Oh, the ratio’s wrong? Well, just fix the ratios.’ That’s not what universities... are supposed to be up to.” A few chairs

expressed concern that Cardinal State may make a decision about how to resolve this urgent situation without carefully considering the long-term implications.

Given the complex relationship between part-time faculty and quality that chairs described, many chairs expressed an expectation that reducing Cardinal State's reliance on part-time faculty would have ripple effects across the institution. Many expressed concern that the university may have to give up its small classes or its general education curriculum, which they described as well-intended and effective policy changes that have improved the quality of education at Cardinal State. However, chairs' descriptions of their experiences managing part-time faculty reveal that those well-intended policy changes also set off a cascade of unintended consequences: they drove up the number of part-time faculty members in departments that were assigned responsibility for delivering the general education curriculum and created a set of conditions that make it more difficult for chairs to implement quality control practices effectively. Although reducing their departments' reliance on part-time faculty would probably make it easier for chairs of these departments to ensure high-quality teaching by their part-time faculty members, they expressed a strong desire to avoid cutting back on part-time faculty, particularly if it would undermine those policy changes that were made in the interest of quality.

Faced with this complex, tangled set of issues, many chairs struggled to imagine a path forward that would dramatically reduce Cardinal State's reliance on part-time faculty without jeopardizing the quality of education that it provides. As one chair said, "It will change the shape of this university. [Cardinal State] as we know it is gone. It's going to be a different place." Some chairs said that the leaders of the faculty union and the statewide public university system were "in negotiations" and they expressed hope

that some sort of compromise would be reached that would prevent chairs from having to make painful cuts. One chair said, “I’m hoping they’re just kidding, you know?... It’s a very tough situation. And we’re going to be in big trouble if they really hold us to that.”

At the same time, other chairs described feeling “optimistic” because they have faith in the people who work Cardinal State: “We’ve got a good group here. We’re all really good people and we do [our] best to offer what we can.” Several chairs argued that this apparent crisis could instead be treated as an opportunity to convene chairs and other campus leaders in a conversation about how they see part-time faculty figuring into Cardinal State’s future and then to collaboratively develop a long-term plan that achieves compliance with the collective bargaining agreement but does so in an intentional, strategic way. “There’s a way in which, while this is a big deal and the biggest deal in a long time, it’s not a crisis,” one chair said, and then clarified: “It is a crisis, but what comes out of it can be positive.”

Chapter 7:

Discussion and Conclusion

Institutional Context, Part-time Faculty, and Quality

Existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality has typically been designed to contribute to the field's understanding of how this relationship looks in "higher education as a whole" (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003, p. 50), and researchers have often assumed that their generalizations about this relationship "can be applied to individual institutions" (Cross & Goldenberg, 2011, p. 3). Although this body of research has reached mixed conclusions about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, several studies have found a negative relationship between institutions' levels of reliance on part-time faculty and various measures of quality (Bailey et al., 2005; Ehrenberg & Zhang, 2005; Jacoby, 2006). Based on these findings, many researchers have called on institutions of higher education to reduce their levels of reliance on part-time faculty in the interest of improving quality, and this recommendation has been championed by professional organizations in the field (American Association of University Professors, 2003; National Council of Teachers of English, 2010) and has been integrated into the standards of some accrediting bodies (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, 2011; Elman, 2003).

Despite decades of advocacy directed at reducing higher education's reliance on part-time faculty, institutions rely on them now more than ever (Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Snyder & Dillow, 2015). Many in the field have argued that institutions' increasing reliance on part-time faculty is driven by institutional leaders' focus on reducing costs, even at the expense of quality (Benjamin, 2002; Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; Jacoby, 2006;

Townsend, 2003). However, institutional leaders have insisted that quality is central to their decision-making about the role of part-time faculty (Green, 2007; Smith, 2007), and some scholars have described the “broad attribution to an economic motive” as “an extreme oversimplification” of the intentions that drive institutions’ increasing reliance on part-time faculty (Cross & Goldenberg, 2003, pp. 50-51).

In contrast to existing studies that have sought to generalize about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, this study took an in-depth look at this relationship in the context of a single institution. Cardinal State University is a large, public institution that has a history of relying heavily on part-time faculty; however, the university is now being compelled to significantly cut back on part-time faculty in order to come into compliance with the faculty union’s collective bargaining agreement. For chairs at Cardinal State, who are responsible for bringing their departments into compliance with the collective bargaining agreement, this situation has prompted reflection about why their university relies so heavily on part-time faculty and also how cutting back might affect the quality of education available to students at Cardinal State.

Chairs’ explanations of why Cardinal State came to rely so heavily on part-time faculty challenge the assumption that institutions’ increasing reliance on part-time faculty is primarily about saving money. Although chairs acknowledged that recent declines in state appropriations have undoubtedly played a part in the rise of part-time faculty at Cardinal State, they also identified a series of changes in institutional policy and culture that played an important role: the redesign of the general education curriculum, across-the-board reductions in class sizes, and an emerging emphasis on research. Each of these institutional changes drove up demand for additional faculty. According to many chairs,

growing the ranks of part-time faculty enabled the university to meet that demand and implement changes that have improved the quality of education that Cardinal State provides to its students.

Chairs' analysis of the relationship between Cardinal State's level of reliance on part-time faculty and the quality of education it offers suggests that this relationship is neither clear nor direct. They described this as a complicated relationship, with nuances that reflect the unique context of their university. Chairs framed this relationship in context-specific terms, describing quality as a function of Cardinal State's identity as an institution and as a function of how Cardinal State can most effectively meet the needs of its students. In their descriptions and explanations of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State, chairs alluded to many different facets of the university, including its mission, history, culture, and leadership; characteristics of the students and communities it serves; trends in enrollment and funding; its academic programs and policies; the mix of faculty in different types of appointments; and the influential roles of the faculty union and the statewide system of public universities in defining Cardinal State's policy context. In other words, according to chairs, understanding the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State requires understanding Cardinal State as an institution.

Departmental Context, Part-time Faculty, and Quality

This study used two sampling criteria to identify and recruit a meaningfully diverse sample of chairs—their departments' academic disciplines and levels of reliance on part-time faculty—because previous research suggested that these variables shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. One of the goals of this study was to

understand whether these variables do indeed shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in Cardinal State's departments and, if so, why they matter. Although previous research identified these variables as important, their analysis did not provide empirical insight into the processes through which a department's academic discipline or its level of reliance on part-time faculty is related to quality. This reflects a broader gap in this body of literature: much of the existing research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality has focused on capturing the "outcomes and effects" associated with part-time faculty, rather than exploring the processes or mechanisms that explain those effects (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 59). As a result, "very few [researchers] can adequately explain why the results are what they are" (Kezar & Sam, 2011, p. 59). By using qualitative methods to explore this relationship in-depth, this study was able to shed some light on how and why variation in departmental contexts shapes the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State.

In line with previous research, this study found evidence suggesting that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality varies across departments and is shaped by departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty and their academic fields. This study also identified a third department-level variable that helps explain variation in this relationship: departments' levels of responsibility to Cardinal State's general education curriculum. Furthermore, this study found that, at Cardinal State, these department-level variables are inter-related, such that the university's departments tend to fit into one of two types: some departments have high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, focus on academic disciplines in the arts and sciences, and have high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum; others have low levels of reliance on

part-time faculty, are connected to professional fields, and have low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum. In keeping with previous research, this study's findings suggest that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may be more positive in departments that fit the second profile than in those that fit the first.

Part-time Faculty and Quality Control Mechanisms

So why do these department-level variables matter? The answer that emerged from this study was that, through a cascade of effects, these variables influence chairs' quality control practices: how they hire part-time faculty members into their departments, evaluate their performance, and make decisions about whether or not to renew their contracts. Departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty shape chairs' workloads; their academic disciplines shape the nature of the faculty workforce; and their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum shape the types of courses that departments tend to assign to part-time faculty. As this study found, all of these differences have meaningful implications for chairs' quality control practices.

From the perspective of implementing effective quality control practices, one type of department represents a best-case scenario: these departments enjoy all the benefits associated with having low levels of reliance on part-time faculty, connections to professional fields, and low levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum. The other type represents a worst-case scenario: these departments face all the challenges associated with having high levels of reliance on part-time faculty, focusing on disciplines in the arts and sciences, and having high levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum. A comparison of chairs' quality control practices in these two types of departments revealed striking differences, providing insight into how and why

the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may vary across Cardinal State's departments.

Implications for Research

Although this study focused on understanding variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in the specific context of Cardinal State, its major findings provide initial support for a long-standing hypothesis in the field—that this relationship is complex and varies in meaningful ways—suggesting that further exploration of this hypothesis would be a fruitful direction for future research.

This study's findings suggest that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality is shaped by institutional context; however, because these findings are based on research in a single institution, they provide limited insight about how and why institutional context matters at other colleges and universities. To build a stronger understanding of how institutional context shapes the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, future research should explore this question across a diverse set of institutions. Institutional variables that chairs described as salient to understanding the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State may not be salient—or even relevant—at other institutions. Even so, the variables that seem to matter most at Cardinal State may provide a helpful starting point for exploring this relationship in other contexts. These variables include: 1) how many part-time faculty members are used and how they are distributed across departments; 2) what factors have driven the institution's use of part-time faculty to its current level; 3) how part-time faculty are deployed, in terms of the types of courses they teach; 4) who part-time faculty are, in terms of their professional backgrounds and circumstances; 5) what methods are used for quality

control of part-time faculty; and 6) who is responsible for quality control and what kinds of pressures support or interfere with their ability to do this work effectively. Because previous research about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality has rarely accounted for differences in institutional context, future studies that pursue this line of inquiry promise to contribute a great deal to the field's understanding of this complex relationship.

Researchers interested in studying this relationship should also consider including departments as a unit of analysis. Specifically, future studies might explore whether the variables that this study identified as shaping the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in Cardinal State's departments—their levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their academic disciplines, and their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum—also matter at other institutions or, alternatively, if other department-level variables are more salient in different institutional contexts.

In terms of methodology, researchers interested in learning more about the department-level relationship between part-time faculty and quality are encouraged to consider asking chairs to contribute their perspectives. Chairs at Cardinal State were remarkably responsive to my requests for interviews about this topic and, as the institutional leaders who work most closely with part-time faculty, their perspectives reflected rich experience and careful attention to the complex issues surrounding part-time faculty. At the same time, much still remains unknown about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, so future research that includes the perspectives of other stakeholders—such as part-time faculty members, full-time faculty members, or students—could also greatly enrich the field's understanding.

The patterns this study observed at Cardinal State suggest that differences in quality control practices can help explain variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. This study identified several dimensions of variation in quality control practices that could serve as a starting point for future research about how—if at all—differences in quality control practices shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in other contexts, besides Cardinal State. Furthermore, the department chairs in this study reported that the quality control practices for full-time faculty at Cardinal State are more effective than those for part-time faculty. If this kind of difference is typical at other institutions of higher education, that could help explain why some previous research has found that full-time faculty have a more positive relationship to quality than part-time faculty do. Future research could explore this possibility. Gaining a fuller understanding of how quality control practices shape these relationships could have valuable implications in the field, because quality control practices are subject to intervention and could be a promising avenue of change for institutions seeking to improve quality.

Another potentially fruitful next step for research would be to undertake efforts to more fully tease apart the inter-relationships that this study observed between departments' levels of reliance on part-time faculty, their academic disciplines, their levels of responsibility to the general education curriculum, and quality. The high level of correspondence between the first three of these variables raises questions about how the field should interpret previous studies that found relationships between part-time faculty and quality, but did not control for any of those other variables. For example, if institutions' reliance on part-time faculty is typically concentrated in their general

education courses, as is the case at Cardinal State, then a study that reported an apparent relationship between part-time faculty and quality could alternatively be interpreted as offering evidence of a relationship between general education courses and quality. The field stands to learn a great deal about the relationship between part-time faculty from future studies that account for contextual variation, and this path forward could shed light on why previous studies have reached such mixed conclusions.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This study's findings about variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality at Cardinal State and about the important role of quality control practices in shaping that relationship suggested a number of interventions in policies and practices that could help improve quality in Cardinal State's diverse departments. These interventions were presented as recommendations in the previous chapter. Because this case study focused on developing a contextualized understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality that is specific to Cardinal State, the details of those recommendations may not speak to the exact circumstances of other institutions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Yin, 2009). After all, a major finding of this study is that understanding institutional context is essential to making sense of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. However, these recommendations may still resonate with the circumstances of other institutions because, as one chair said, "What we're going through is very reflective of what a lot of institutions in the U.S. are going through."

Beyond those specific recommendations, this study's findings also suggest a general principle that policymakers should keep in mind when working on issues related

to part-time faculty: policies regarding part-time faculty should be informed by and should account for meaningful differences in the contexts in which they will be implemented. At Cardinal State, chairs leading very different departments are expected to implement quality control policies that were designed based on the assumption that all departments are essentially the same. Furthermore, these policies are institutionalized in a collective bargaining agreement that applies across an entire system of public universities, so they were also designed based on the assumption that all of those universities are essentially the same. The findings of this study suggest that blanket policies like these may have unintended negative implications for quality, because they do not account for relevant contextual differences that can interfere with their effective implementation.

The collective bargaining agreement's blanket policy limiting departments' reliance on part-time faculty represents another instance of this same problem. Although reducing institutions' reliance on part-time faculty is often framed as a way to improve educational quality, Cardinal State's case suggests that implementing policies that hold all departments to the same limit, in terms of their reliance on part-time faculty, can have negative consequences. Chairs of departments at Cardinal State that rely heavily on part-time faculty to teach general education courses expressed serious concerns that reducing their reliance on part-time faculty will jeopardize their departments'—and, by extension, the university's—ability to deliver the general education curriculum, which many chairs described as fundamental to educational quality at Cardinal State.

Given these issues, institutions that plan to develop or revise policies regarding part-time faculty should consider undertaking self-studies, with the intention of

discovering dimensions of variation within their institutions that might shape the implementation of these kinds of policies. Policies that are designed based on an understanding of how and why an institution uses part-time faculty—as well as how and why the use of part-time faculty varies within an institution—would be more sensitive to meaningful, relevant differences across departments. Although the contextual variables that emerged as important in this case study are specific to Cardinal State, they may provide a helpful starting point for other institutions. Institutions are also encouraged to consult with department chairs—or whoever else within an institution works most closely with part-time faculty—because, as this study found, they can be an invaluable source of insight about complex issues surrounding part-time faculty.

Conclusion

For decades, researchers studying the relationship between part-time faculty and quality have based their analyses on an important assumption: that part-time faculty can be treated as a homogeneous group. Researchers' generalizations about the relationship between part-time faculty and quality have been highly inconsistent, creating confusion about how to make sense of this body of research. With the aim of contributing to a more coherent and nuanced understanding of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality, this study explored a long-standing hypothesis in the field: that, in order to understand this relationship, research should acknowledge that part-time faculty members are not all alike and that the relationship between part-time faculty and quality may vary in meaningful ways. Lending support to that hypothesis, this study found patterns of variation in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality that suggest that this relationship is shaped—in somewhat systematic ways—by the diverse departmental

contexts in which part-time faculty members work. This pattern of variation may help explain why existing research has reached apparently contradictory conclusions: because previous studies have not been sensitive to the possibility that variation in institutional or departmental context might shape the relationship between part-time faculty and quality.

Researchers have not been alone in treating part-time faculty as a homogeneous group. Policies regarding part-time faculty at Cardinal State also reflect the assumption that all part-time faculty members—and all departments, for that matter—are essentially the same. However, as this study found, those policies have to be implemented in departments that vary in meaningful ways, and these blanket policies break down under certain departmental conditions. “We have an assumption that every department is the same,” chairs said, but actually “they’re all different.” An important message for policymakers, then, is that policies regarding part-time faculty should be based on an understanding of the diverse contexts in which those policies need to be implemented. Without that sensitivity, policies may unintentionally undermine the ability of institutional and departmental leaders to ensure a positive relationship between part-time faculty and quality.

Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear [Prospective Participant]:

My name is Maya Weilundemo Ott, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. I am writing to ask you, as Chair of [Department], to participate in an interview for my dissertation. This study will explore how the chairs of academic departments at [Cardinal State University] make sense of the relationship, if any, between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education. [Name of provost], [title of provost at Cardinal State University], has granted me permission to conduct this research at [Cardinal State University], and the study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Boards of both Harvard and [Cardinal State University].

Specifically, I am asking you to participate in one interview, lasting approximately 45 minutes, scheduled at your convenience and in an on-campus location of your choosing. During the interview, I would ask you to reflect on your experiences working with part-time faculty and to share your perceptions of the relationship, if any, between part-time faculty and quality. With your permission, I would audio-record our conversation.

If you agree to be interviewed, I will keep your interview responses confidential and will not share your personal information with anyone other than my dissertation committee. To protect the identities of interview participants, I will assign pseudonyms to [Cardinal State University] and to each interviewee. When I transcribe the audio-recording of our conversation, I will remove names and any other potentially identifying information, and you will be welcome to review the transcript. After transcription, I will delete the audio-recording. I will store identifying information about participants in a separate, password-protected file and, when I have completed data collection for this project, I will delete that file; at that time, the transcript of our conversation will no longer be connected to your identity. To make the most of these interviews, I plan to keep the de-identified transcripts indefinitely, in case future opportunities arise for further analysis. However, I want to emphasize that this research will not be used to evaluate chairs, departments, or part-time faculty at [Cardinal State University].

Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you agree to be interviewed, you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. During the interview, you will have the right to skip questions that you do not want to answer or to stop the interview at any time.

I hope you will agree to participate in this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I have also included the contact information for my dissertation advisor, Professor Judith McLaughlin, as well as for Harvard's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research and [Cardinal State University's] Institutional Review Board.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maya Weilundemo Ott

Doctoral Candidate, Harvard Graduate School of Education

maw795@mail.harvard.edu

443-535-3812

Dr. Judith McLaughlin, Harvard Graduate School of Education

judith_mclaughlin@gse.harvard.edu

617-495-3447

Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research, Harvard University

cuhs@fas.harvard.edu

617-496-2847

[Contact information for Institutional Review Board at Cardinal State University]

Appendix B

Data Collection Methods and Sources

Goal of Data Collection	<u>Data Sources, by Goal of Data Collection and Method</u>	
	Document Analysis	Interviews
Exploring institutional and departmental contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cardinal State University's website • Websites for professional organizations or accrediting bodies in each department's field • Website for the statewide system of public higher education that includes Cardinal State • Website for the union that represents Cardinal State's faculty • Websites for the statewide and national unions affiliated with the union that represents Cardinal State's faculty • Website for the private organization that developed Cardinal State's course evaluation instrument 	
Exploring chairs' perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum vitae for department chairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs of academic departments

Appendix C

Protocol for Semi-structured Interviews

Introduction: First of all, I want to thank you again for making the time to talk to me today. As I mentioned in my email, the purpose of this study is to learn how department chairs perceive the relationship, if there is any, between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education.

Researchers have been studying this topic for decades, but I don't think existing research has adequately explored whether there might be nuance in the relationship between part-time faculty and quality. By interviewing you and other chairs here at Cardinal State, my goal is to understand whether you all see this relationship in essentially the same way, or if there are meaningful differences in your perspectives that can help the field understand this topic in a more nuanced way. With that goal in mind, I want to emphasize that I'm not looking for any particular "right" answers. What will be most helpful to me will be to hear what you personally believe, based on your experience and observations.

To give you a sense of my agenda for our conversation, I'm hoping we'll be able to cover several topics: first, how and why your department uses part-time faculty; then, what the concept of quality means to you; then, whether you believe there is any relationship between part-time faculty and quality in your department and more generally in higher education; and, finally, what you see as effective policies or practices related to these topics.

Before we get started, do you have any questions about my study?

Main question 1: To get started, I'd like to learn more about how your department uses part-time faculty. I read that part-time faculty make up about [number] percent of the faculty in your department—does that sound right?

Follow-up question 1a: How does your department use part-time faculty? What roles do they play? What purposes do they serve? Why do you use part-time faculty?

Main question 2: Next, I'd like to talk about how you see the concept of quality. Some people in the field of higher education argue that there's a relationship of some kind between part-time faculty and quality, but it's not always clear what they mean by quality. So I'm wondering: when you think about whether there's any relationship between part-time faculty and quality, what does that word, *quality*, mean to you?

Follow-up question 2a: Besides [the definition just offered], are there other ways that you think about the meaning of *quality*?

Follow-up question 2b: In your work with part-time faculty, what do you look for as evidence of *quality*?

Main question 3: Do you think there's any relationship between part-time faculty and

quality in this department?

→ If response to main question 3 indicates that the participant believes that there is a relationship between part-time faculty and quality:

Follow-up question 3a: How would you describe that relationship?

Follow-up question 3b: Besides [that effect on quality], have you noticed any other ways that part-time faculty are related to quality in this department?

Follow-up question 3c: In your work with part-time faculty, have you seen particular evidence that led you to believe that part-time faculty [have that relationship with quality]?

Sample probe for question 3c: Is there a specific example that comes to mind, when you saw evidence that part-time faculty [have that relationship with quality]?

Follow-up question 3d: Why do you think part-time faculty [have that relationship with quality]? For example, do you attribute it to particular characteristics of the part-time faculty, or conditions within this department, or something else?

Follow-up question 3e: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons why part-time faculty [have that relationship with quality]?

Follow-up question 3f: What do you see as the most important factor that contributes to part-time faculty [having that relationship with quality]?

Follow-up question 3g: I'm intrigued by what you're saying, because many people in the field of higher education believe that part-time faculty [have the opposite relationship with quality; e.g., if the interviewee describes a mostly positive relationship with quality, I will mention a mostly negative relationship]. How would you explain to them why part-time faculty in this department [have the described relationship with quality]?

→ If response to main question 3 indicates that the participant believes there is no relationship between part-time faculty and quality:

Follow-up question 3h: In your work with part-time faculty, have you seen particular evidence that led you to believe that there isn't any relationship between part-time faculty and quality in this department?

Follow-up question 3i: I'm intrigued by what you're saying, because many people in the field of higher education believe that there *is* a relationship between part-time faculty and quality. How would you explain to them why there isn't any relationship between part-time faculty and quality in this department? For example, do you

attribute it to particular characteristics of the part-time faculty, or conditions within this department, or something else?

Follow-up question 3j: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons that there isn't any relationship between part-time faculty and quality in this department?

Main question 4: Do you think that all of the part-time faculty members in this department [have the same relationship with quality], or do you think that some have a different relationship with quality than others?

→ **If response to main question 4 indicates that the participant does see variation in this relationship:**

Follow-up question 4a: Thinking back on your experiences working with part-time faculty, have you seen particular evidence that led you to believe that some part-time faculty members have a different relationship with quality than others?

Follow-up question 4b: Why do you think that some part-time faculty members have a different relationship with quality than others? For example, do you attribute it to different characteristics of the part-time faculty, or different conditions within this department, or something else?

Follow-up question 4c: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons why some part-time faculty members have a different relationship with quality than others?

Follow-up question 4d: What do you see as the most important factor that influences the relationship between a part-time faculty member and quality in this department?

Follow-up question 4e: Is it fair to say that there are different types of part-time faculty in this department? If so, how would you differentiate those types?

Follow-up question 4f: Have you noticed any exceptions to those “types”?

→ **If response to main question 4 indicates that the participant does not see variation in this relationship:**

Follow-up question 4g: Thinking back on your experiences working with part-time faculty, is it fair to say that you've never encountered a part-time faculty member that seemed like an exceptional case?

Follow-up question 4h: Why do you think that all of the part-time faculty members in this department [have that same relationship with quality]? For example, do you attribute it to particular characteristics of the part-time faculty, or conditions within this department, or something else?

Follow-up question 4i: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons why all of the part-time faculty members in this department [have that same relationship with quality]?

Follow-up question 4j: I'm intrigued by what you're saying, because many people in the field of higher education believe that some part-time faculty [have the opposite relationship with quality; e.g., if the interviewee describes a mostly positive relationship with quality, I will mention a mostly negative relationship]. How would you explain to them why all of the part-time faculty members in this department [have the described relationship]?

Transition: Next, I want to learn about your perceptions of the relationship between part-time faculty and quality in other departments and institutions. For these questions, feel free to reflect on a broader set of experiences, beyond your work as chair of this department, drawing on things you may have seen, heard, or read that informed your thinking. As I mentioned at the beginning of our conversation, I'm not looking for any particular "right" answers. What will be most helpful to me will be to hear what you personally believe, based on your experience and observations.

Main question 5: Do you think that what you've described about your department is pretty typical, in terms of the relationship between part-time faculty and the quality of higher education, or do you think that the relationship between part-time and quality is different in this department than in other departments at Cardinal State or at other institutions of higher education?

→ If response to main question 5 indicates that the participant does see variation in this relationship:

Follow-up question 5a: Can you recall particular evidence that led you to understand that part-time faculty [in those departments or institutions] [have that relationship with quality]? For example, have you seen, heard, or read that they have that effect?

Follow-up question 5b: Why do you think that part-time faculty in [those departments or institutions] have a different relationship with quality than part-time faculty in this department? For example, do you attribute it to different characteristics of the part-time faculty, or different conditions within [departments or institutions], or something else?

Follow-up question 5c: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons that part-time faculty in [those departments or institutions] might have a different relationship with quality than the part-time faculty in this department?

Follow-up question 5d: What do you see as the most important factor that influences the relationship between part-time faculty and quality [in a department or institution]?

Follow-up question 5e: Is it fair to say that you think there are different types of [part-time faculty, departments, or institutions]? If so, how would you differentiate those types?

Follow-up question 5f: Have you noticed any exceptions to those “types”?

→ **If response to main question 5 indicates that the participant does not see variation in this relationship:**

Follow-up question 5g: Thinking back on what you’ve seen, heard, and read during your time in higher education, is it fair to say that you’ve never encountered evidence of an exceptional case?

Follow-up question 5h: Why do you think that all part-time faculty, across higher education, [have that same relationship with quality]? For example, do you attribute it to particular characteristics of part-time faculty, or conditions within higher education, or something else?

Follow-up question 5i: Besides [that explanation], can you think of any other reasons why all part-time faculty [have that same relationship with quality]?

Follow-up question 5j: I’m intrigued by what you’re saying, because many people in the field of higher education believe that part-time faculty [have the opposite relationship with quality; e.g., if the interviewee describes a mostly positive relationship with quality, I will mention a mostly negative relationship]. Why do you think they see the relationship between part-time faculty and quality so differently?

Follow-up question 5k: If conditions were different, do you think part-time faculty could have a different relationship with quality? If so, what would have to change?

Main question 6: Finally, I’m interested in hearing about policies or practices that you see as effective in dealing with these issues. If you could give one piece advice to another chair—maybe the chair of another department here at Cardinal State or maybe even your successor as chair of this department—about how to approach their work with part-time faculty, what would your advice be?

Follow-up question 6a: During your time as chair, have you adopted any new policies or practices regarding part-time faculty, in order to improve quality in this department? If so, what were the results?

Follow-up question 6b: If you could change any one thing, to improve the relationship between part-time faculty and quality—assuming you had unlimited resources and unlimited authority—what would you want to change, and why?

Main question 7: We’ve talked about all the questions I had prepared for today. Is there anything that you’d like to add to our conversation that I didn’t ask about?

Appendix D

Oral Consent Script

At the beginning of the interview appointment:

Review of consenting information: Before we begin the interview, I want to take a few moments to talk about your participation in the study.

As I said in my letter [or email], your participation in this study is voluntary. You can decline to answer questions or end the interview at any time.

I also want to remind you that I will keep the data I collect confidential. I won't share your personal information with anyone outside of my dissertation committee, and I won't use your name or information that could identify you in any publications or presentations.

Do you have any questions about the study?

If you have any questions in the future, my contact information, and the contact information for my dissertation advisor, is included in my letter [or email]. I also have a hard copy of that letter [or email] with me, if you'd like it for your records.

Consent to audio-record: Do you mind if I audio-record our conversation?

At the end of the interview appointment:

Consent to re-contact: Do you mind if I re-contact you, if I have any follow-up questions?

Appendix E

Coding Scheme Development

The coding scheme for this study evolved through six rounds of coding and analysis. This appendix includes the coding scheme from each round, along with a brief introduction describing its development.

Round 1, March 2015

This preliminary coding scheme was designed to identify data related to each of this study's research questions. Testing the coding scheme on actual data suggested that the codes were too abstract to be meaningfully and consistently applied.

- Interpreting the meaning of quality
- Describing the relationship—or lack of relationship—between part-time faculty and quality
 - in home department
 - across part-time faculty members within home department
 - across departments within Cardinal State
 - across institutions of higher education
- Explaining the relationship—or lack of relationship—between part-time faculty and quality
 - in home department
 - across part-time faculty members within home department
 - across departments within Cardinal State
 - across institutions of higher education
- Describing strategies for improving quality
- Describing Cardinal State University
- Describing Department A
- Describing Department B, etc.
- Other data of interest

Round 2, September 2015

I developed this new coding scheme through an inductive process: I used memos to identify major topics in the data. This version of the coding scheme was used to code data from all of the interview transcripts and from selected documents.

- Faculty role
 - Part-time faculty role
 - Full-time faculty role
- Faculty characteristics

- Part-time faculty characteristics
- Full-time faculty characteristics
- Faculty hiring
 - Part-time faculty hiring
 - Full-time faculty hiring
- Faculty evaluation
 - Part-time faculty evaluation
 - Full-time faculty evaluation
- Faculty retention
 - Part-time faculty retention
 - Full-time faculty retention
- Faculty development
 - Part-time faculty development
 - Full-time faculty development
- Quality
- Cardinal State culture and policies
- Curriculum
- Resources
- Students
- Chairs
- Union
- Broad context

Round 3, October 2015

In this round of development, I elaborated the coding scheme by identifying narrower sub-codes within each major topic coded in round 2. This version of the coding scheme was used to code all of the data from interview transcripts.

- Part-time faculty role
 - Number or percent of part-time faculty
 - Scheduling
 - Types of courses assigned to part-time faculty
- Full-time faculty role
 - Number or percent of full-time faculty
 - Types of courses assigned to full-time faculty
- Part-time faculty characteristics
 - Desire to work part-time
 - Part-time faculty professional or academic background
- Part-time faculty hiring
 - Criteria for hiring part-time faculty
 - Process for hiring part-time faculty
 - Recruitment of part-time faculty

- Part-time faculty evaluation
 - Criteria for evaluating part-time faculty
 - Overall quality of part-time faculty
 - Process for evaluating part-time faculty
- Part-time faculty retention
 - Long-term part-time faculty
 - Losing good part-time faculty
 - Nonrenewal of part-time faculty
 - Resistance to nonrenewal or reduction in hours of part-time faculty
 - Retaining good part-time faculty
- Part-time faculty development
 - Career advancement for part-time faculty
 - Integrating part-time faculty into department
 - Part-time faculty improvement through practice
 - Part-time faculty interest in development
 - Preparing part-time faculty for role
 - Recognition of part-time faculty
 - Remediating issues with part-time faculty quality
- Quality
 - Accreditation
 - Availability for students
 - Curriculum
 - Diversity
 - Outcomes
 - Reputation
 - Value for students
- Cardinal State culture and policies
 - Academic culture
 - Class size
 - Culture
- Curriculum
 - Service courses
- Resources
 - Financial priorities
 - Space
- Students
 - Enrollment
 - Student characteristics
- Chairs
 - Chair workload
 - Experience as contingent faculty
 - Feelings about being chair
 - Terms of chair contract
- Union

- Compliance with collective bargaining agreement
- Full-time, non-tenure-track appointments
- Terms of part-time faculty contract
- Broad context
 - Culture
 - Higher education
- Job market

Round 4, November 2015

Drawing on patterns that emerged in the previous round of coding, this round elaborated sub-codes in three major topics—part-time faculty hiring, evaluation, and retention—with the goal of identifying factors that shape chairs’ practices. This version of the coding scheme was used to code selected data from interview transcripts.

- Quality control mechanisms
 - Overall role of chair in quality control of part-time faculty
 - Part-time faculty hiring practices
 - Part-time faculty evaluation practices
 - Part-time faculty retention practices
- Importance of quality control mechanisms
 - Importance of chair’s role for quality control of part-time faculty
 - Importance of part-time faculty hiring practices for quality control
 - Importance of part-time faculty evaluation practices for quality control
 - Importance of part-time faculty retention practices for quality control
- Constraints on quality control practice
 - Chair lacks access to useful information
 - Chair lacks specific expertise
 - Chair is overextended
 - Contract limits chair’s practice
 - Depends on judgment of predecessors
 - Financial constraints
 - Full-time faculty are unresponsive to changing demands on department
 - High demand for departmental courses
 - Last-minute changes in demands on department
 - Low demand for departmental courses
 - Others’ opinions influence chair
 - Part-time faculty are unresponsive to changing demands on department
 - Part-time faculty have limited availability
 - Predecessors not effective in quality control role
 - Pressure from Cardinal State leadership
 - Sense of loyalty to part-time faculty
 - Sensitivity to demands on part-time faculty

- Sensitivity to financial plight of part-time faculty
- Latitude in quality control practice
 - Accreditation standards
 - Chair has access to useful information
 - Chair is in powerful position regarding part-time faculty
 - Chair is not over-extended
 - Contract allows latitude in chair's practice
 - Cardinal State is committed to hiring full-time faculty
 - Demands on department are relatively predictable
 - Departmental reputation
 - Full-time faculty are responsive to changing demands on department
 - Including other colleagues in quality control process
 - Part-time faculty are responsive to changing demands on department
 - Pool of qualified part-time faculty
 - Predecessors committed to quality control role

Round 5, November 2015

Drawing on patterns that emerged across multiple data sources, this round of development focused on elaborating codes that describe departments' reliance on part-time faculty, the structure of curricula in their degree programs, the focus of their course offerings, and the types of courses they tend to assign to part-time faculty. This version of the coding scheme was used to code selected data from interview transcripts.

- Reliance on part-time faculty
 - Compliant with collective bargaining agreement
 - Cardinal State's reliance on part-time faculty
 - Heavy reliance on part-time faculty
 - Low reliance on part-time faculty
 - Violations of collective bargaining agreement
- Curricular demands on department
 - Major-intensive demands
 - Service-intensive demands
- Demands met by part-time faculty
 - Part-time faculty assigned to major courses
 - Part-time faculty assigned to service courses
 - Part-time faculty assigned to service and major courses
- Degree program structure
 - Loosely structured program
 - Tightly structured program

Round 6, December 2015

This round focused on refining the coding schemes developed during the previous two rounds. This version of the coding scheme was used to code all of the data from interview transcripts.

- Constraints on quality control practice
 - Academic freedom
 - Collective bargaining agreement constrains evaluation practices
 - Collective bargaining agreement constrains quality control practices
 - Collective bargaining agreement constrains retention practices
 - Chair lacks access to useful information
 - Chair lacks specific expertise
 - Chair opts out of quality control process
 - Chair is overextended
 - Chair is unaware of part-time faculty issues
 - Changes in demand for departmental courses
 - Deference to judgment of predecessor
 - Formal evaluation processes not viewed as providing valid information
 - Full-time faculty are not qualified to teach courses assigned to part-time faculty
 - Full-time faculty prefer not to teach courses assigned to part-time faculty
 - High demand for major courses
 - High demand for service courses
 - Hiring criteria don't fit field
 - Last-minute changes in demand for courses
 - Last-minute changes in full-time faculty schedules
 - Last-minute departure of faculty member
 - Low demand for departmental courses
 - No mechanism for part-time faculty advancement at Cardinal State
 - No timely mechanism for accountability to student learning outcomes
 - Nonrenewal related to increase in full-time faculty
 - Pool is limited
 - Pressure from Cardinal State leadership
 - Part-time faculty compensation is not competitive
 - Part-time faculty vetting is brief and shallow
 - Reassign part-time faculty based on quality
 - Sense of loyalty to part-time faculty
 - Sensitivity to demands on part-time faculty
 - Sensitivity to financial plight of part-time faculty
- Latitude in quality control practice
 - Active recruitment of qualified candidates
 - Chair apprised of part-time faculty issues
 - Chair has relevant expertise

- Chair is in powerful position regarding part-time faculty
- Demands on department are relatively predictable
- Departmental reputation
- Full-time faculty are responsive to changing demands on department
- In-depth vetting process
- Including other colleagues in quality control process
- Informal feedback from students/complaints
- Mechanism for evaluating student learning
- Mechanism for part-time faculty advancement at Cardinal State
- Part-time faculty appointments are temporary
- Part-time faculty are versatile
- Pool of qualified part-time faculty
- Pressure from accreditation standards
- Remediating issues with part-time faculty quality
- Reliance on part-time faculty
 - Compliant with collective bargaining agreement
 - Heavy reliance on part-time faculty
 - Heavy reliance but compliant with collective bargaining agreement
 - Light reliance on part-time faculty
- Service demands
 - Heavy service demands
 - Light service demands
- Demands met by part-time faculty
 - Part-time faculty assigned to major courses
 - Part-time faculty assigned to service courses
 - Part-time faculty assigned to service and major courses
- Degree program structure
 - Accreditation standards
 - Loosely structured program
 - Tightly structured program
 - Part of program is tightly structured
 - Defined course-level curriculum
- Cardinal State context
 - Chair role at Cardinal State
 - Chair's experience as contingent faculty
 - Commitment to small class size
 - Cardinal State as teaching institution
 - Cardinal State commitment to hiring full-time faculty
 - Cardinal State commitment to liberal arts
 - Cardinal State culture
 - Cardinal State enrollment
 - Cardinal State leadership
 - Evaluation culture at Cardinal State
 - Full-time, non-tenure-track appointments

- Resource limitations
- State context
- Student characteristics
- Union
- Value for students

Appendix F

Departmental Characteristics Included in Analytic Matrices

This study used analytic matrices as a structured framework for exploring variation in the characteristics of Cardinal State's departments and as a tool for testing hypotheses about how, if at all, that variation in departmental contexts might shed light on chairs' perspectives on the relationship between part-time faculty and quality (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). This appendix summarizes the departmental characteristics that were included in the matrices and considered in this study's analysis.

- Academic discipline
- Faculty
 - Number of full-time faculty, in terms of headcount
 - Number of full-time faculty, in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty⁵
 - Number of part-time faculty, in terms of FTE faculty⁶
 - Total number of faculty, in terms of FTE faculty
 - Percentage of total FTE faculty who are part-time
 - Student-to-faculty ratio⁷
 - Percentage of full-time faculty with terminal degrees
 - Percentage of full-time faculty with tenure
 - Distribution of full-time faculty, by rank
 - Current and historical compliance with the collective bargaining agreement's provision limiting the percentage of sections assigned to part-time faculty
- Degree program offerings
 - Undergraduate degree programs offered
 - Graduate degree programs offered
 - Undergraduate degree programs offered in evenings
 - Degree programs monitored by external organizations, such as accrediting agencies
 - Structure of degree programs, in terms of the percentage of credits that must be fulfilled by specific required courses
- Enrollment in degree programs

⁵ In contrast to a headcount, calculating the number of full-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty accounts for the reduced workloads of full-time faculty members who have course release, are on sabbatical, or are on leave.

⁶ The number of part-time faculty in terms of full-time equivalent faculty is based on the total number of course sections assigned to a department's part-time faculty, divided by the workload of a full-time faculty member. For the purposes of this calculation, Cardinal State considers the workload of a full-time faculty member to be equivalent to teaching five course sections per semester.

⁷ The student-to-faculty ratio is based on the number of students enrolled in the departments' degree programs, divided by the total number of full-time equivalent faculty.

- Total number of students enrolled in degree programs
- Number of students enrolled in undergraduate degree programs
- Number of students enrolled in graduate degree programs
- Percentage of students enrolled in degree programs who are undergraduates
- Course offerings
 - Number of sections offered
 - Number of sections assigned to part-time faculty
 - Percentage of sections assigned to part-time faculty
 - Number of sections offered that serve the general education curriculum
 - Percentage of sections offered that serve the general education curriculum
 - Percentage of general education sections offered that are assigned to part-time faculty
 - Number of sections offered that serve other departments' degree programs
 - Percentage of sections offered that serve other departments' degree programs
 - Percentage of sections serving other departments' degree programs that are assigned to part-time faculty
 - Average section size, in terms of number of students enrolled

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