PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED: ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLANNING AND COVID-19

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess community colleges' readiness to maintain mission-critical activities of teaching and learning in the event of long-term or chronic emergencies, specifically COVID-19. The research examined chief academic officers' (CAOs') perceptions of community colleges' preparedness or readiness in maintaining mission-critical operations of teaching and learning in response to the long-term, chronic emergency of the pandemic. Current literature reveals that while higher education has employed an all-hazards approach to emergency management planning, academic continuity planning is not consistently a part of the emergency management process. The predominant research question that guided this study was as follows: What are the perceptions of CAOs of their level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning? In answering this question, the following supplemental questions were designed to assist: (1) Did community colleges have an instructional or academic continuity plan (ACP) in place as part of their long-term emergency management preparedness planning?; (2) How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?; and (3) What components are essential for an effective academic continuity plan?

A mixed methods approach was employed through a national, electronic survey and interviews with institutions' CAOs. Given the chronic nature of the crisis, emphasis was placed upon academic affairs to examine the readiness for a continuation of instruction. Such research is necessary to determine what revisions or redesigns community colleges might need to make to their processes to be better prepared should another crisis occur. As the crisis continued to evolve

and as cases continued to rise again across the United States, institutions must analyze and evaluate long-term emergency preparedness planning, particularly in light of academic continuity planning in higher education, to be better prepared for such situations that may arise in the future.

KEYWORDS: Academic Continuity, Emergency Management, Continuity Planning, Crisis Management, Community Colleges, COVID-19

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my love, Jim Whittier, who has been unrelenting in his support of my personal and professional growth. I appreciate the many sacrifices you have made, and thank God for our life together with our sweet babies. Thank you for all you do for us and for always being my sanctuary.

"Bendita Dios por encontrarnos en el camino, Y de quitarme esta soledad de mi destino. Bendita la luz, bendita la luz de tu mirada." - Mana

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP – Academic Continuity Plan

CAO – Chief Academic Officer

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CDC – Center for Disease Control

CAOP – Continuity of Academic Operations Plan

CMS – Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

COOP – Continuity of Operations Plan

EOC – Emergency Operations Command team

EOP – Emergency Operations Plan

ERP – Emergency Response Plan

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

HLC – Higher Learning Commission

ICCB – Illinois Community College Board

IHE – Institution of Higher Education

IPEDS – Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

LMS – Learning Management System

NCIRD – National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

REMS – Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools

RMA – Risk Management Assessment

SACSCOC – The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

SMS – Student Management System

WHO – World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

In early 2020, COVID-19, a novel coronavirus, swept across the globe, infecting mass numbers of individuals and killing thousands of those infected. The first case was reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019, in China's Wuhan Province. The virus spread quickly through China and into other countries, and on February 4, 2020, the WHO asked the United Nations to activate the United Nations Crisis Management Policy. Then on March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the novel coronavirus a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Shortly thereafter, on March 13, 2020, the United States declared the novel coronavirus a national emergency.

As the United States began to see increasing new novel coronavirus cases, citizens, businesses, and schools alike quickly monitored the situation. Institutions of higher education had to quickly prepare and adjust for the risks associated with the pandemic. Many institutions, both community colleges and universities, were off on spring break the week the United States declared the national emergency or were scheduled to go on spring break the following week. As such, institutions adjusted rapidly to accommodate the requirements set forth by the state and federal government, the various accrediting bodies, and local health departments, understanding that much of the information was changing as quickly as it was released as the situation evolved. For most community colleges and universities, the pandemic and the resulting shelter-in-place regulations meant a quick transition in placing all courses into an online medium to ensure academic continuity and maintain the mission-critical activity of teaching and learning. As the

situation evolved, many states extended the stay-at-home orders, and thus, colleges and universities were again forced to adapt, placing previously scheduled traditional classes online for summer, fall, and eventually spring as well.

In crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions typically fall back on their emergency management preparedness plans and pull together the necessary teams to accomplish the needed objectives and goals to assess and manage the risks and ensure continuity of services while at the same time relying on guidance released from local, state, and federal governing bodies. Emergency management planning is not a new field and is the backbone of all planning and contingency efforts. For institutions of higher education (IHEs), emergency management planning is required by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and enforced through the Department of Education through federal financial aid and the Clery Act. The Clery Act is a set of federal laws that require institutions to have established emergency responses, policies, and evaluation procedures in place in the event of a "significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or employees occurring on the campus" (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, pp. 1-6).

Emergency management preparedness planning or crisis management planning involves four critical areas that researchers suggest should be the foundation for all planning efforts. These critical areas include preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery (Worsley & Beckering, 2007). Additionally, researchers also stress the importance of being prepared for a wide variety of emergencies. Hence, according to Mitroff et al. (2006), "crisis management is thinking about and planning for a wide range of crises and especially for their interactions" (p. 62). This point is echoed throughout the literature, as Worsley and Beckering (2007) argue that "emergency preparedness at the higher education level must take an 'all-hazards approach,'"

where institutions complete a detailed hazard analysis or risk assessment to identify all possible threats to a campus (p. 3).

In emergency management planning, higher education institutions have the primary responsibility to ensure their college communities' health and safety, including students, faculty, and staff. Often these plans are managed by a vice president of administrative services or someone in a similar role. Emergency operation plans rightly focus on protecting "lives, property, and the environment" which support the operations (FEMA, 2018, para. 16). Simultaneously, as emergencies become increasingly common and, as we have seen in the pandemic, longer-lasting, it is critical to consider how the institution will recover and continue its primary mission-critical activities of teaching and learning. In taking an all-hazards approach to emergency management, colleges, and universities need to not only develop emergency management preparedness plans for a variety of crises but also to complete all the steps in the emergency management process or framework, including that of recovery, often referred to as consequence management or continuity of operations (Worsely & Beckering, 2007). This component of the emergency preparedness management plan describes how the college will return to normal operations and continue essential services to key stakeholders. The business continuity plan plays an exceedingly important role in "facilitating community and societal recovery from disaster" (Paton, 2009, p. 1). It is necessary to minimize losses to the organization by analyzing and evaluating how services might be continued during and following the crisis. In institutions of higher education, it typically encompasses an academic or instructional continuity plan. Institutions design academic continuity plans to ensure that they can continue to offer the mission-critical activities of teaching and learning in the event of a long-term crisis.

Despite community colleges having a thorough emergency management preparedness plan, emergencies or crises would not be such if one could effectively plan for them. By nature, an emergency is an emergency due to the very unexpectedness and fluidity of the crisis. Hence, it is also essential that planning and managing during a crisis such as a pandemic be dynamic to adapt and change to the circumstances and evolving threats (Siegel, 2020). While IHEs must have an academic continuity plan (ACP) in place as part of their emergency management preparedness plan, it is also vital to recognize that those plans will need to be revisited and revised according to the situation at hand.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

While the field of emergency management is well established and ever evolving, the emphasis on academic continuity planning as part of emergency management planning has been limited. Despite the literature and recommendations for a thorough emergency management plan or portfolio, colleges and universities are generally prepared only for crises they had already experienced at some time (Mitroff et al., 2006). In this same study, the authors completed a survey of 350 major United States colleges and universities and found that very few surveyed institutions had "broad-based crisis management programs" (p. 66). Instead, they suggest that the surveyed colleges and universities are in "the very early stages of establishing their crisis-management programs and much remains to be done" (Mitroff et al., 2006, p. 67). While IHEs may have advanced in their emergency management and continuity planning efforts in the last 15 years, Meyer and Wilson (2011) echo the authors' findings in their study of 50 flagship institutions of higher education and their preparation for the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. Meyer and Wilson (2011) found that two thirds of institutions studied did not include any reference to online learning as a way to continue instruction, and only one third offered recommendations for

faculty to find alternative delivery methods to deliver coursework in their emergency preparedness plans (p. 1). Thus, while the institutions had emergency preparedness plans in place, the majority of those plans did not include academic continuity plans, setting forth alternative delivery methods to continue teaching and learning in the event of a long-term, chronic emergency.

Nevertheless, academic continuity planning is a crucial component of emergency preparedness planning. In March 2020, the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD) released *Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*, organized into three categories based upon the level of community transmission. These were:

1. When there is no community transmission (preparedness phase);
2. When there is minimal to moderate community transmission; and
3. When there is substantial community transmission.

In this guidance, the NCIRD (2020) provides a decision tree for IHEs to limit the spread of COVID-19 and encourages IHEs to work closely with "local public health officials to determine cancellation of classes and closure of buildings and facilities" (p. 3). Additionally, the authors advised IHEs that "the most important thing to do now is plan and prepare," reviewing, updating, and implementing emergency management plans, developing information-sharing systems, monitoring, and planning for absenteeism, and creating plans to convey accurate and timely information to the community (p. 7). Particularly, they stress the necessity of implementing strategies to "continue education and other related supports for students" (p. 5). Thus, NCIRD's recommendations included the following:

- review continuity plans, particularly those regarding teaching, learning, and research
- implement distance learning plans and options as "feasible and appropriate"

- build off existing infrastructure and services
- determine how to convert traditional face-to-face courses and lessons online and how to train faculty in the technology to do so
- consider how to address students' and faculty's technical issues with limited IT staff
- address the possible lack of technological resources of students (p. 5).

These recommendations with their emphasis on the continuation of teaching and learning highlight the importance of academic continuity planning as part of institutions' overall emergency management preparedness efforts.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to assess community colleges' readiness to maintain mission-critical activities of teaching and learning in the event of long-term or chronic emergencies, specifically the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. A mixed methods approach was employed through a survey and interviews with institutions' CAOs. Given the chronic nature of the crisis, emphasis was placed upon Academic Services to examine the readiness for a continuation of instruction. Such research is necessary to determine what revisions or redesigns institutions might need to make to our processes to be better prepared should another crisis occur. As the crisis continued to evolve and as cases continued to rise again across the United States, community college leaders must analyze and evaluate long-term emergency preparedness planning, particularly in light of academic continuity planning in higher education, to be better prepared for such situations that may arise in the future.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research on academic continuity planning has been limited. Instead, emergency management planning often focuses on short-term crises and preserving the college community's

health and safety. Research completed on chronic emergencies has centered on those involving hurricanes or war, and thus, are typically limited to a single or groups of institutions. As a result, academic continuity planning research most often addresses infrastructure, informational technology, and financial considerations (Coyner, 2011; Meyer & Wilson, 2011). After Hurricane Katrina, some research was completed on academic continuity planning with a couple of different models proposed. However, as noted in Meyer and Wilson's 2011 study, only one third of flagship institutions surveyed had included academic continuity plans and references to alternative delivery methods after preparation for the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. This study seeks to build off Meyer and Wilson's research examining the level of preparedness and readiness at community colleges that might not have as many resources at many flagship state schools. Additionally, given the time elapsed between the H1N1 pandemic and COVID-19, the author sought to determine if more institutions were prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic almost a decade later and how institutions may continue to evolve their academic continuity planning processes in the future to ensure greater readiness for the increasing likelihood of more-frequent crises.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research questions for this paper are:

1. What are CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?
2. To what extent did community colleges have an ACP as part of their emergency management preparedness planning before COVID-19?
3. How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?
4. What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

The terms used within this study have been used in various ways. The working definitions are provided below.

Academic continuity – "a process that serves to sustain and maintain teaching and learning during a crisis situation whether a natural disaster, a man-made disaster, or some precipitating factor" (Sloan Consortium, 2008 as cited by Templeton & Ellerman, 2010, p. 1).

All-Hazards – "An approach for prevention, protection, preparedness, response, and recovery that addresses a full range of threats and hazards, including domestic terrorist attacks, natural and manmade disasters, accidental disruptions, and other emergencies" (Department of Homeland Security, 2006, p. 103).

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) – sometimes referred to as business continuity. Continuity of operations (COOP) is an organization's "ability to maintain or restore its business…when normal operations have been threatened or disrupted" (SchWeber, 2013, p. 151). The key feature of a COOP is the ability for the organization to continue essential functions and prevent mission-critical operations from being interrupted, "restoring full functionality as quickly as possible" (SchWeber, 2013, p. 151). At times, the institution's COOP will include an ACP or components for ensuring continuity of teaching and learning.

Emergency management – an overall approach for preventing emergencies and managing those that occur. In general, emergency management utilizes a risk management approach to prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery before, during, and after potentially destabilizing events and disruptions (International Standards Organization, 2020).

Preparedness – According to the Presidential Policy Directive on national preparedness (PPD-8), the term "preparedness" refers to the actions taken to plan, organize, equip, train, and exercise to build and sustain the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate the

effects of, respond to, and recover from those threats that pose the most significant risk to the security of the organization (Department of Homeland Security, 2018).

Readiness – The term "readiness" refers to an organization's ability to respond quickly and effectively to an incident while balancing an understanding of risks (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2018, p. 1022).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design encompassed a sequential, mixed method explanatory design. According to John Creswell (2009), a sequential explanatory strategy is "characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of research followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase" (p. 211). Through this strategy, the qualitative phase builds upon the results from the initial quantitative findings (Creswell, 2009). Thus, for this study, the research was conducted in two distinct phases. For Phase 1, the researcher utilized a quantitative approach to conduct and validate the research. During the quantitative Phase 1, an electronic survey was sent to CAOs across the United States. The survey was created based upon identified best practices in academic continuity planning as part of higher education institutions' overall emergency management preparedness planning (FEMA, 2018; NCRID, 2020; Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center [REMS], 2020; Regehr et al., 2017; SchWeber, 2013). For Phase 2, a qualitative approach was employed, and the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with CAOs identified through a set of pre-established criteria. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through video conferencing and were digitally recorded. Videos were deleted after the completion of the study. The researcher noted her observations and incorporated those into the data analysis. All interviews were completed by the researcher and were designed to last between 45–60 minutes.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As the author is an educator and an administrator at a community college, the author acts under several assumptions.

1. First, the author respects instructors' academic freedom to choose the best methods of delivering the coursework to maintain the programs' academic integrity within the institution. Simultaneously, the author has been in administration for many years and collaborated to quickly develop an ACP in response to COVID-19. As such, the author assumes that it is of paramount importance for an institution to be prepared for both short- or long-term emergencies through various risk assessments and determination of essential functions, processes, supports, and people. The author assumes that such preparation will increase the organization's responsiveness, level of agility, and ultimately resiliency in the face of a crisis.

2. Additionally, the study focused solely on CAOs' perceptions of their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning. Thus, one limitation is that the study did not include faculty or students' perceptions of how prepared the institution was for a long-term emergency. Such considerations would be recommended for a follow-up study, juxtaposing that data with the CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness for a gap analysis.

3. Moreover, in focusing on CAOs, the author acted under the assumption that the CAO would be the primary person responsible for the continuation of teaching and learning on the college's campus and thus would be knowledgeable about the policies, procedures, and practices in support of academic continuity planning. It is important to note that throughout the study, the researcher assumes the role of unbiased observer. The study is in no way designed to be an audit or judgment of institutions' academic continuity planning processes. Rather, the study is designed to capture CAOs' perceptions of their institutions' level of preparedness and readiness for a long-term emergency that others may learn from these events and improve academic continuity planning in the future.

4. Finally, while a wide range of community colleges were surveyed, the study did not take into account the diversity of the community or the resources that might be available to them, as the research design was that of a clustered, random sampling method.

SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the study by providing the background and significance of the problem, the purpose, significance, research questions, research design, and the assumptions and limitations of the study. Chapter Two will provide an overview of relevant literature in

emergency management and academic continuity planning. Chapter Three presents the methodology employed in the study, and Chapter Four presents the findings of the data analysis. Chapter Five provides a summary of the findings and concludes with recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This literature review will provide a brief history and framework of emergency management, as well as offer an overview of emergency management in institutions of higher education (IHEs) and the connection between emergency management planning and academic continuity planning. In the same manner, a review of proposed academic continuity models and three current academic continuity plans will be included as a framework for the research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of previous methods and the need for additional research on the preparedness and readiness of IHEs, specifically community colleges, to maintain mission-critical activities of teaching and learning.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HISTORY AND FRAMEWORK

The field of emergency management is by no means a new field but has a long and rich history as people have long considered risks and how best to mitigate and respond to those risks. Haddow et al. (2008) provide context and a historical overview of how emergency management has evolved from ancient civilizations to modern day emergency management efforts. While the term itself is relatively new, the discipline of emergency management has evolved in the United States over the past several hundred years. In the United States, the first recorded act of emergency management occurred in 1803 when Congress passed an act providing financial assistance to a New Hampshire community that had been devastated by fire (Haddow et al., 2008). In the same manner, in 1934, Congress passed the Flood Control Act, giving the U.S.

Army Corp of Engineers authority to design and build flood control projects in order to mitigate risks and essentially eliminate the risk of floods (Haddow et al., 2008). The authors continue to explain how emergency management continued to evolve in the United States with the rise of the Cold War and the need for civil defense. Hence, in the 1950s, two organizations were created—the Federal Civil Defense Administration and the Office of Defense Mobilization—which allowed staff to provide technical assistance and work to provide quick mobilization in the event of war (Haddow et al., 2008). Perhaps most notably, the Office of Defense Mobilization included an emergency preparedness function. In 1961, President Kennedy created the Office of Emergency Preparedness, operating inside of the White House, that would be responsible for addressing natural disasters. As the field of emergency management continued to evolve through the 1960s and 1970s, additional acts were passed and various programs created, including the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 and the Flood Insurance Act of 1972 (Haddow et al., 2008). As a result, responsibilities were spread out over more than five federal departments and agencies, and the goals and priorities were often competing and disjointed. Thus, after President Carter was elected, he prioritized emergency management and consolidated the various responsibilities and priorities to one primary emergency management organization. President Carter established the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by Executive Order 12127 in March 1979 (Haddow et al., 2008).

FEMA was established that federal authorities could "anticipate, prepare for, and respond to major civil emergencies" and that these actions would be overseen by a single official that reported directly to the president (Blanchard, 2008, p. 452). It also established that "federal hazard mitigation activities should be closely linked with emergency preparedness and response functions" (Blanchard, 2008, p. 452). While the emphasis was on mitigation and creating a

unified system, much emphasis was still placed on civil defense and preparation, with a lesser emphasis on mitigating and planning for natural disasters. Thus, following the perceived failures of FEMA concerning both Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, in 1992, the organization evolved to taking an all-hazards approach (Haddow et al., 2008). According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services [CMS], 2019), an all-hazards approach "is an integrated approach to emergency preparedness planning that focuses on capacities and capabilities that are critical to preparedness for a full spectrum of emergencies or disasters, including internal emergencies and a man-made emergency (or both) or natural disaster" (p. 3). This definition echoes the definition set forth by the Department of Homeland Security (2006) which outlines an all-hazards approach as one "for prevention, protection, preparedness, response, and recovery that addresses a full range of threats and hazards, including domestic terrorist attacks, natural and manmade disasters, accidental disruptions, and other emergencies" (p. 103). The all-hazards approach is a key component in emergency management planning, as governments, communities, and organizations prepare for, respond to, mitigate, and recover from a wide range of threats through completion of a hazard vulnerability or risk assessment. Whether the threats be domestic terrorism, natural disasters, active shooters, or a pandemic, an organization should be prepared to respond to the threat quickly and effectively.

Furthermore, Haddow et al. (2008) explain that after the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, the United States again reorganized the emergency management operations structure, creating the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 to which FEMA would report. Additionally, a new Office of Preparedness was created, and all preparedness capacities were moved from FEMA to the new office, and FEMA focused strictly on response and recovery (Haddow et al., 2008). Today, Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) establishes the National

Preparedness Goal of having a "secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk" (Department of Homeland Security, 2018, para. 2). Thus, FEMA and the Emergency Management Institute work under the Department of Homeland Security to meet Presidential Policy Directive 8 that the country and our communities may be ready for a wide range of crises. In doing so, they promote the principles of emergency management by applying an all-hazards approach, the National Response Framework (NRF), and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) (FEMA, 2019).

The National Response Framework and the National Preparedness Goal is built upon establishing core capabilities for executing five key mission areas at any time during an incident (before, during, and after) and across all threats and hazards. The five mission areas include prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Each mission area is composed of its own core capabilities, which are necessary to meet the national preparedness goal and are critical to the execution of the mission area (FEMA, 2018). The discipline of emergency management is based upon this framework of developing and establishing core capabilities in the five key mission areas of prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. This framework, applied through the all-hazards approach, guides preparedness and response efforts in local, state, and federal governmental agencies and institutions of higher education.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In IHEs, emergency management efforts are federally mandated through the Presidential Policy Directives 5, 8, and 10 and the principles and concepts outlined through NIMS (Worsely & Beckering, 2007). These principles are then enforced through the Clery Act. According to the

REMS Technical Assistance Center (REMS, n.d.), the Clery Act requires IHEs that participate in federal student financial aid programs submit campus crime and security information. As an institution submits its security information, it must also include the institution's emergency response and evacuation procedures in the annual security report. Additionally, IHEs are directed to test their emergency operations plan (EOP) to ensure successful implementation during an emergency (REMS, n.d.). Because of this directive, all institutions are required to have an emergency operations plan. Additionally, some state education boards also require community colleges to have outlined and submitted emergency operations plans. For instance, in the state of Illinois, the Illinois Community College Board (Illinois Community College Board [ICCB], 2020) requires community colleges to have a NIMS-compliant emergency response plan (ERP) that addresses and prepares the college for a wide range of emergencies. Illinois community colleges must regularly submit their ERPs, including ACPs, in order to stay compliant with ICCB recognition.

To help IHEs develop their emergency management plans, the U.S. Department of Education (2013), in collaboration with various other federal agencies, created a *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education* which outlines the emergency management framework noted above and establishes planning principles in order that IHEs may address a wide range of possible risks and threats. The guide identifies six steps in the planning process and further identifies individual departments and their contributions to the planning team. The six steps include (1) form a collaborative team, (2) understand the situation, (3) determine goals and objectives, (4) plan development, (5) plan preparation, review, and approval, and (6) plan implementation and maintenance (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Departments to be included are Academic Affairs, Business

Office, Central Administration or designee, Counseling and Mental Health Services, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Environmental Health and Safety, Facilities and Operations, Food Services, Health Services, Human Resources, IT, Legal Counsel, Public Information Office, Public Safety Operations, Residential Life, Student Affairs, Transportation, and International Student Services Office (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). While institutions may not have all of these offices, the inclusion of each of these noted areas is critical for effective planning and preparedness in order to respond quickly and effectively to a crisis situation.

As IHEs follow the framework set forth by the U.S. Department of Education, they are able to adapt to emerging crises and safeguard their primary responsibility of ensuring the health and safety of their students, faculty, and staff. The EOP as federally mandated predominantly focus on how to protect lives, property, and the environment in support of operations (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Certainly, safeguarding the lives, safety, and security of our campus communities is of paramount importance. At the same time, in order to maintain the viability of our institutions, particularly our community colleges, it is also critical to adopt the same all-hazards approach, evaluating and managing risks and developing a strong continuity plan that addresses not just structural, financial, or staffing components but also plans for the continuation of mission-critical activities, including teaching and learning.

Thus, not only does a strong crisis management program include plans for prevention, protection, mitigation, and response through the EOP, but it also includes plans for recovery. Recovery is sometimes referred to as Continuity of Operations (Worsley & Beckering, 2007). A continuity of operations plan (COOP) ensures that an organization is able to quickly resume or maintain mission-critical activities. Continuity plans may go by a diverse set of names and may originate from various planning teams or committees (Coyner, 2011). At times, they are

incorporated into the general EOP; other times, they are called ACP, instructional continuity plan, contingency plan, COOP, and so on. The continuity plan represents an institution's commitment to continue to provide high-quality education during a crisis (Coyner, 2011).

The recommendation to plan for a variety of emergencies across a diverse time (i.e., before, during, and after the emergency) is reflected repeatedly throughout the literature (FEMA, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). For instance, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal REMS (2020) released *Key Preparedness and Response Considerations for Coronavirus Disease 2019*. Their recommendation includes the development of a COOP that prepares the school to support all students, faculty, and staff in the event of significant student and staff absences or even possible short- or long-term school closures. Moreover, REMS recommended that schools recognize the importance of planning for continuity of teaching and learning, intentionally integrating academic continuity planning into the broader emergency operations plan's COOP.

Similarly, the NCRID (2020) recommended the IHEs develop and implement strategies that they may continue instruction and other key student supports for students in their *Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Institutions of Higher Education*. In response to COVID-19, the NCRID noted that IHEs should ensure the continuity of education and research. They recommend that IHEs should review their current continuity plans, utilize existing infrastructure and services, identify and incorporate other key student support services, and determine how to convert face-to-face lessons and instruction online, how to train faculty to do so, how to address technical issues, and how to address students' potential lack of internet or technology at home (NCRID, 2020).

However, despite the recommendations in planning for an all-hazards approach and inclusion of a COOP, research tells a different story regarding IHEs' previous levels of preparedness. According to research completed by Mitroff et al. (2006), the authors found that IHEs were "generally prepared only for those crises that they had already experienced" (p. 65). They note that of the 350 colleges and universities they surveyed, most were in the very early stages of establishing their crisis management programs, and as a result, much more work needs to be done in order to prepare effectively for a wide variety of emergencies (Mitroff et al., 2006). In the same manner, Coyner (2011) notes that most COOPs "focus on institutional facilities and employees" with a very limited number of plans including "specific recommendations for faculty and students to address academic disruptions on the classroom level" (p. 8).

These findings are further reinforced through Meyer and Wilson's (2011) landmark study regarding the role of online learning in the emergency operations plans of flagship institutions. In their study, Meyer and Wilson researched 50 state flagship institutions to determine if and how online or distance learning strategies were included in the institutions' EOPs. Meyer and Wilson define flagship institutions as "the first or largest of the public institutions in a state, and most often contain the state in its name, as in 'The University of [State]' or '[State] State University'" (p. 3). The study was in response to the H1N1 flu and was conducted in the fall of 2009 to determine if institutions' EOPs had been updated or modified in response to the virus. Of the 50 institutions examined, all 50 had guidance to both students and staff on how to handle the flu; however, two thirds of EOPs studied did not include any reference to academic continuity (how to continue classes in the event of an emergency). While one third included suggestions to faculty on finding alternative methods to deliver coursework or using technology, only one institution mentioned specifically online learning. Instead, continuity of services was

concentrated on the recovery of business and IT services. The authors conclude that only one third reference academic continuity, but these are largely focused on technological solutions—which appear to be more in the form of suggestions—that faculty may adopt if they are so inclined. Lastly, they note that no institution included any policy that courses would continue online in the event of an emergency. Hence, they conclude that higher education is "not well prepared" for emergencies (Meyer & Wilson, 2011, p. 7).

While some may argue that emergency management planning should rightly concentrate on the health, safety, and security of our campus communities, IHEs must take a much broader approach in their emergency management planning. Ensuring the health, safety, and security of students, faculty, and staff is of paramount importance and should rightly always be the first priority; however, it does not mean that an institution should forgo planning for its recovery efforts. As the COVID-19 pandemic has worn on, many institutions are worried about their very survival. In response to the pandemic, the American Council on Education surveyed nearly 300 college presidents. The survey's findings reveal that next to campus mental health, college presidents are most concerned about their own financial viability, as 43% cited long-term financial viability as a primary concern (Turk et al., 2020). As funding and enrollments decrease, financial viability is a real concern for many college presidents and institutions. As such, in order to better prepare for a variety of short- and long-term emergencies, institutions must assess and manage risks, developing a broad continuity plan that includes an academic continuity plan (ACP). An ACP is necessary to ensure an institution's ability to continue to offer mission-critical activities of teaching and learning that it may continue to meet the needs of the students, minimize financial losses, and safeguard its own financial viability (Regehr et al., 2017; Templeton & Ellerman, 2010).

ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLANNING FRAMEWORK

While the inclusion of an ACP in the EOP or continuity of operations plan (COOP) is considered best practice and recommended by the NCIRD and REMS, the research regarding academic continuity planning itself is somewhat limited. While there have been several articles that note the omission of ACPs in institutions of IHEs' operations plans (Coyner, 2011; Meyer & Wilson, 2011; Regehr et al., 2016), the research also suggests that academic continuity is often viewed as an individual faculty member's responsibility (Meyer & Wilson, 2011). Thus, it is important to note that there appears to be a distinction between *academic* continuity planning, where the burden for preparation is placed upon the institution, and *instructional* continuity planning, where the responsibility lies on the individual faculty member. With this in mind, both the NCIRD (2020) and REMS (2020) models address academic continuity planning, as they refer to the integration of planning for the continuity of teaching and learning into the *institution's* EOP or COOP. However, neither model specifically mentions academic continuity but refers to "continuity of teaching and learning" (REMS, 2020, p. 1) and "continuity of education" (NCIRD, 2020, p. 5). While this distinction may appear insignificant, the REMS' language of continuity of teaching and learning reinforces many accrediting bodies' criteria for accreditation (HLC, 2022; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges [SASCOC], 2019). For instance, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges specifically set forth criteria that require the college's mission to "address teaching and learning" (SASCOC, 2017, p. 4). By specifically referencing continuity of "teaching and learning," the guidance set forth by REMS reinforces key emergency management principles of maintaining mission-critical activities and adds a sense of urgency by tying it to significant accrediting body verbiage.

Several models of academic continuity planning have been proposed, most notably by Ekmekci and Bergstrand (2010), SchWeber (2013), and Regehr et al. (2017), in addition to the frameworks set forth by the NCIRD and the REMS. Many of these models are organized around the time of the crisis and thus follow the principles set forth in emergency management theory.

Ekmekci & Bergstrand (2010). Agility in Higher Education: Planning for Business Continuity in the Face of an H1N1 Pandemic

In their work, Ekmekci and Bergstrand (2010) take a qualitative approach to examining business continuity planning in light of the H1N1 pandemic. The study was conducted in 2009 to determine institutions' agility in adjusting for change during an unpredictable time. The authors focused on how IT was employed to allow for adequate flexibility in preparation for the impending crisis of the H1N1 pandemic during the 2009–2010 academic year. The authors examined academic continuity plans from 20 U.S. universities and then coded and clustered the concepts into themes. Emergent themes included IT service configuration, faculty readiness, and student readiness. In their analysis on IT service configuration, the authors note that the majority of institutions studied already had an electronic learning platform and web-based conferencing tools in place, but that these were primarily used for distance learning courses instead of backup to or enhancement of traditional courses. Thus, universities had to consider how to make all courses available in the learning management system (LMS). At this time, the authors found that many faculty were asked to provide an updated course syllabus (in the event of an emergency) that included updated and specific guidelines on communication procedures, make-up policies, attendance policies, assignment submission, office hours, and acceptable file formats. In the same manner, faculty faced the challenge of moving material from a traditional format to an online medium and determining alternative assignments as necessary. Through all this, IHEs also

had to determine if they had the capacity to handle the increased workload and demands on their IT departments.

In considering faculty readiness, the authors noted that the universities asked all instructors to attend training sessions on the LMS, review available online resources, and to modify the course syllabus and content as needed to adapt it to an online or hybrid modality. Moreover, many universities asked faculty to create practice assignments to help students familiarize themselves with the system.

In the same manner, students were asked to review the CDC guidelines to understand how to reduce spread. Students were also asked to identify how to stay in contact with their faculty and peers, as well as how to contact their IT helpdesk. Universities worked to highlight particular policies regarding course withdrawals, incompletes, medical stop-outs, tuition refunds, appeals, academic exceptions to ensure that students would have the knowledge and resources they needed to make informed decisions. Interestingly, the authors note that students were essentially asked to be prepared to transition from a traditional course to an online modality.

In conclusion, Ekmekci and Bergstrand maintain that an organization's ability to be agile is highly dependent on its ability to adjust to the speed and direction of change. Thus, the authors present the need to establish a "culture of readiness" (p. 28) which encourages agility and brings people together to create shared goals, plans, and a sense of urgency. They illustrate this relationship highlighting how organizations manage the speed and direction of change over time. Here, they envisioned direction of change and essentially the organization's level of agility is dependent upon the level of both faculty readiness and student readiness. Consequently, Ekmekci and Bergstrand's study on academic continuity and their proposed framework on how institutions can manage the speed and direction of change over time is a seminal work,

illustrating how institutions can be better prepared for an emergency through key preparedness strategies designed to increase faculty and student readiness and build IT capacity.

SchWeber (2013). Survival Lessons: Academic Continuity, Business Continuity, and Technology

Building off the research completed by Ekmekci and Bergstrand (2010), Dr. Claudine SchWeber examines the relationship between resilience and academic continuity planning, arguing that in order for institutions to be prepared and ultimately resilient in crisis situations, they must incorporate academic continuity planning into their emergency management and continuity of operations planning. SchWeber firmly situates academic continuity planning as an essential component of continuity of operations planning, noting "teaching and learning is the core function of higher education" (p. 153). She also provides a historical perspective, tracing the history of academic continuity planning back to 1939 with the establishment of the *Centre national d'enseignement a distance* (CNED) by the French government shortly after WWII began. With the advent of war, the institution quickly transitioned face-to-face classes to correspondence courses, adapting content and methods employed in the traditional structure. SchWeber also examines Xavier University's response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Empire State College's response to the War in Lebanon in 2006, and France and the United States IHEs' preparation for the H1N1 virus in 2008. Through these examples, she builds out a model that includes an institutional "Design for Resilience" (p. 158) that organizations may plan and prepare for any emergency. This model is based upon the four principles of emergency management theory: preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery and includes a four-prong approach to continuity planning. The model proposes that as IHEs prepare for a crisis, they should consider continuity in terms of business continuity, operational continuity, academic continuity, and campus safety and security. As addressed above, emergency management

planning often focuses primarily on campus safety and security, and if addressing continuity issues, the emphasis is operational in terms of technology and infrastructure.

In proposing a model on academic continuity planning, SchWeber notes how some universities developed training to teach faculty how to teach online while others considered notification systems and communication strategies. Moreover, the author also notes the importance of rapid response and, in doing so, the importance of assigning responsibilities prior to a crisis occurring. Recovery, on the other hand, considers how to quickly restore "full functionality" (p. 160) and includes not only addressing continued teaching and learning but also the continuation of key support services, including emotional and mental health services, food services, and resident housing. As she examines various examples of how institutions have responded to crises to ensure continuity of mission-critical services, SchWeber concludes that continuity at each stage during a crisis must include: (1) clear communication with stakeholders, (2) continuation of learning through alternative delivery methods, (3) development of instructor readiness, (4) identification of infrastructure support needs; (5) establishment of collaboration with various external partners, and (6) assurance that multiple technology systems are available.
Regehr, et al. (2017). *Academic Continuity Planning in Higher Education*

Written in 2017, Regehr et al. set forth a model for academic continuity planning. The model evolved out of their existing research and from responding to two significant crises at the University of Toronto, namely the H1N1 pandemic and a labor dispute that ultimately suspended classes for four weeks during a strike. The authors maintain that crisis planning should address three primary components including emergency management procedures to address the immediate situation, procedures for ensuring the continuation of business and administrative functions, and procedures to ensure the academic integrity of their programs (Regehr et al.,

2017). The authors focus on this last component, recommending how other higher education administrators may complete long-term planning for academic continuity. Thus, they propose a four-phase model that includes pre-planning for academic continuity, mobilizing when the threat is noted, managing academic continuity during the crisis, and conducting a review upon the conclusion.

In developing the ACP, policies, and procedures, the authors ask institutions to consider the following: the significance of the educational mission, the importance of program academic integrity, how to ensure fairness for all students, and how to provide timely information. Also included in their recommendations is a clear delineation of duties and responsibilities in the plan (prior to the crisis occurring). Furthermore, the authors describe an instructional continuity advice sheet for teaching faculty that derived out of the university's learning centers. These recommendations to instructors include advice to collect and maintain grades, post all critical information into the LMS, create communication strategies and communicate with students in advance on the tools to be used, develop a plan for alternative work submission, understand policies surrounding adjustment to assessment methods, and consider how alternative or online modalities might be a substitute for in-person learning or activities. Hence, the authors note that while their model includes the four phases, it is paramount that "all planning respect the Academic Freedom of individual faculty members" (p. 81).

NCIRD. (2020). INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR ADMINISTRATORS OF U.S. IHES

The NCIRD's guidance was prepared for the event of serious viral transmission, specifically COVID-19. The NCIRD is a branch of the CDC. The guidance set forth is organized around recommendations for IHEs on where they stand depending on virus transmission and spread. The model provides a decision tree and is based upon whether there are confirmed cases

on campus, when there is minimal to moderate community transmission, and when there is substantial community transmission. While the guidance for IHEs refers to how to plan, prepare, and respond to a variety of circumstances, it also sets forth a model to ensure the "continuity of education and research" (p. 5). This continuity of education model includes recommendations to (1) review and update continuity of teaching and learning plans, (2) build off existing infrastructure and services, (3) consider how other key student support services will be available in the event of a closure, (4) determine how to convert face-to-face lessons online, (5) consider how to train faculty to move lessons online, (6) decide how to triage technical issues, and (7) determine how to address students' lack of access to the internet and/or computers (NCIRD, 2020). Additionally, the guidance includes recommendations to base decisions on collaborations with the local health department and to be prepared to thoroughly communicate with students, faculty, and staff. While additional recommendations were included, the author chose to focus on recommendations that specifically related to those of academic continuity as opposed to emergency management planning as a whole.

REMS. (2020). Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Key Preparedness and Response Considerations

The REMS guidance is similar in nature to that of the NCIRD's guidance in that it was also released in response to COVID-19. However, this guide focused specifically on continuity of operations (COOP) planning for educational institutions. This guide differs slightly in its recommendations in that it intentionally recommends that the continuity of teaching and learning be incorporated into the COOP and the EOP of the institution that they may "maintain mission-oriented activities, including teaching and learning for the whole school community in the context of day-to-day operational disruptions" (p. 1). The model also includes recommendations

to review and update existing ACPs, to build from existing resources, to train faculty (and students), and to plan for a variety of circumstances. Distinct in the REMS model are recommendations to incorporate various state policies and resources on online learning, utilize multiple formats in teaching, and accessibility and assessment considerations. Moreover, the recommendations also include key questions that institutions should consider during the continuity planning process. These include what existing technologies the school has already acquired, what training materials will need to be developed and to what audiences, who will need to be trained on the technologies, and the role of cost in proposed short- and long-term solutions. These questions are in addition to the strategies set forth.

ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLANNING AT INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

While there have been several models for academic continuity planning set forth, individual institutions of higher education will interpret these differently, customizing them to the unique needs and characteristics of the institutions. Thus, in order to provide a broader scope of how institutions are applying emergency management principles and best practices in academic continuity planning to their own processes and procedures, the author reviewed several ACPs. Those chosen were plans publicly available on the institutions' websites at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in the spring/summer of 2020. California State University Northridge was chosen given the broad scope of the institution's planning, as well as the level of detail and specific templates they provided. Additionally, the author chose to review two community colleges' academic continuity plans, as community colleges may not have the resources available as those of four-year institutions. As the focus of the study is upon

community colleges, the author wanted to ensure an accurate representation of academic continuity planning at the community college level was reflected appropriately.

California State University Northridge

In 2008, California State University's Division of Academic Affairs created a consolidated business continuity plan, which outlined plans for a continuation of services for areas of Academic Affairs, Admissions and Records, Oviatt Library, and Tseng College of Extended Learning. These plans were revised and updated in October 2019. While California State University's plan is larger in scope as it focuses on additional departments besides instruction, the plan clearly articulates the academic continuity planning process and establishes key considerations for maintaining mission-critical functions and services necessary for the organization's survival. Additionally, the plan includes a vulnerability or risk management assessment (RMA) and identification of recovery priorities as essential components of the planning process. Although the inclusion of the RMA and identification of recovery priorities is common in business continuity planning and risk assessment practice, the inclusion of such practices is not always included in higher education's, particularly in community college's business and academic continuity planning. Hence, California State University's Business Continuity Plan for the Academic Affairs Division was included for both the RMA and recovery priorities identification, as well as the more traditional guidelines one would expect to see in an ACP: communication, backup, and access of data/records, and syllabi collection and recommendations.

In their business continuity plan for the Academic Affairs Division, California State University first establishes two crucial actions of (1) establishing clear lines of authority and a decision-making process and (2) ensuring the commencement of the continuity plans with an

understanding that plans may need to be modified accordingly to ensure responses are appropriate and relevant as the situation warrants. The objective of the continuity plans is to enable the university to "resume core instructional, research, and essential services as quickly as possible" (p. 3). The emphasis is on preparation as the continuity plan identifies critical functions at the college, individuals responsible for functional planning, type of plans submitted, and recovery priorities. Recovery priorities are identified by the process of evaluating each critical function and assigning a priority level of 1–3 to each. By identifying critical functions and recovery priorities prior to the crisis occurring, it allows the university to prepare accordingly, creating policies, procedures, and team leads responsible for the continuation of key services. Furthermore, when a crisis occurs, the college will be able to respond more quickly and concentrate services and support to areas most critical to mission completion, minimizing disruption of instruction and integral student support services key to students' successful completion of their coursework.

Additionally, the Academic Affairs business continuity plan provides templates that each department or area may utilize to document crucial business processes or resources. Templates include (1) communication with students, faculty, and staff, (2) protection of data, records, and files, (3) protection of faculty intellectual property, (4) class scheduling, (5) student advisement, and (6) community services programs (p. 3–5). While the templates provide a method for documenting vital records and methods for documentation and loss avoidance, the university also requires certain departments or areas to provide accompanying narrative when the template alone will not suffice. Rather than being prescriptive and dictating a certain methodology, the narratives allow for departmental creativity and ownership as they consider ways to maintain critical functions in their areas. Hence, the continuity plan provides a checklist of important

considerations around the identified critical functions: campus communication, backup and access to data, records, and files, admissions and records, classroom and online instruction, classroom availability, smart classroom functionality, and student advisement.

The plan's section on implementation identifies themes of vulnerabilities in all units of Academic Affairs. These vulnerabilities include facilities, data and records, and personnel. Again, the plan emphasizes that the campus response would largely depend upon the situation, including the time of the year and the extent of the damages. Thus, the continuity plan illustrates a need for planning to be dynamic in nature but also the importance of planning in advance to reduce potential impacts. Additionally, it also includes planning guidelines for the protection of faculty syllabi and content, Academic Affairs Division critical narrative, and a specialized pandemic response plan. The pandemic response plan identifies crucial activities to be completed in three different pandemic periods, including the interpandemic period, pandemic alert, and pandemic. In addition to having a pandemic response plan, the institution also created a faculty-centric checklist to help improve preparedness for various course formats, including hybrid, online, and traditional face-to-face classes. California State University's Business Continuity Plan for the Academic Affairs Division was included in this study because of its breadth of scope to approaching academic continuity planning and essential support services. While many ACPs focus strictly on guidelines for continuation of instruction and many business continuity plans focus largely on informational, technological concerns, California State University's Academic Affairs Business Continuity Plan took a much more holistic approach, engaging more stakeholders in the process through various unit leaders and considering risks and vulnerabilities prior to crises occurring.

VIRGINIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

In March of 2020, Virginia's Community Colleges released guidelines for faculty members to quickly move online in preparation for the COVID-19 pandemic: *GOLF – Get Online Fast*. The guidelines were produced by the eLearning & Educational Technology Committee and focused on preparing in advance for the likely eventual transition to online instruction. The guidelines were broken into three sections: preparing in advance, methods for providing high-quality online instruction, and what to do when the time (emergency) comes.

In the first section of preparing in advance, the guide lays out the necessity of having a plan, preparing students, technical preparation considerations, advice for moving course activities online, and categories for moving classroom activities online. In establishing the need for a plan, the guide notes two primary components. First, the authors stress the importance of instructors demonstrating "flexibility with due dates, assignments, and excused absences" (p. 2). The second key component the guide identifies is the importance of establishing clear lines of communication in advance of a crisis occurring. As such, in the discussion on preparing students, the guide provides a sample statement to include in the syllabus that establishes Canvas or the LMS as the preferred method of communication for both email and continued instruction. In the same manner, a sample announcement is also included for instructor use should the college be required to physically close. Moreover, the guide provides tips for technical preparation as well, recommending that faculty test their internet connection and remote access to the college's tutorials from an alternative working location. Preparation advice also includes backing up documents to alternate locations, testing the ability to access Canvas (the LMS), and being able to successfully reset passwords. Additionally, as faculty prepare to move their course activities online, the guide recommends that instructors start with the established learning objectives and then identify any supporting activities. Rather than focusing on how to move activities online,

the guide asks instructors to consider online or remote learning alternative activities that could not only create a high-quality learning environment but also more easily accomplish the established learning objectives. In taking this approach, the guide provides specific suggestions on how to move a variety of classroom activities online (i.e., lectures, labs, discussions, tests, peer review, etc.). Hence, in this section, the emphasis is placed on the need to be creative and consider how to meet the desired learning objectives instead of transitioning favorite traditional teaching methods to an online environment.

In the second section of the guide, the focus is placed upon methods for providing high-quality online instruction. With its emphasis on high-quality online instruction, Virginia's Community Colleges seemingly echo the principles established in Regehr et al.'s academic continuity planning framework. Regehr et al. (2017) establish that institutional academic continuity policy should include a "primacy of the educational mission" and "the importance of the integrity of academic programmes in the event that it may be necessary to change programmes or courses" (p. 78). Virginia's Community Colleges' guide reiterates the priority of the colleges' mission to not only continued instruction but also an unwavering dedication to the integrity of that instruction through the commitment and guidance on providing high-quality instruction. In addressing how to maintain this integrity, the guide reinforces the importance of learning outcomes and provides tips for providing a variety of activities and assessments when possible. Moreover, the guide also addresses how to engage students in an online environment, promoting active involvement, communicating effectively, and utilizing Canvas to support active, involved learning.

The final section of Virginia's Community Colleges guide includes what faculty should do if a crisis occurs. This section, while brief, reminds instructors again of the importance of

communicating with students quickly, referring back to the alternate plan, and relying on the assistance of the dean and/or distance learning department. The guide concludes with the reminder not to panic but to fall back upon established plans and assistance as needed.

ILLINOIS VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

In March of 2019, Illinois Valley Community College published its Plan for Continuity of Academic Operations (CAOP). This plan was later revised and updated in March of 2020 to reflect changes in Blackboard (the LMS) and Colleague (the Student Management System [SMS]) integration that occurred in the summer of 2019. Illinois Valley's CAOP is designed to be a supporting document to the institution's Emergency Response Plan (ERP) and cannot be activated unless college officials have declared a state of emergency and activated the ERP. The CAOP establishes procedures for the continuation of normal academic activities in the event of an emergency. It is operated by the president's office in conjunction with the vice president of Academic Services. The CAOP outlines procedures on when the plan should be activated, how it will be communicated, how the college will prepare for academic continuity, and how continuity of instruction will be ensured.

The CAOP outlines that because Illinois Valley has multiple sites, it will first look to relocate classes, faculty, and students as needed for in-person instruction, if possible, given the emergency presented. If in-person instruction is not a viable option, continuity of instruction should take place remotely via phone, internet, email, and/or the LMS as available. These changes and an anticipated timeline will be communicated through college-wide communication. Communication channels include emergency alert SMS text and email messages, email, the LMS, and WebAdvisor/Colleague (Illinois Valley College, 2020).

In planning for various emergency situations, Illinois Valley's CAOP provides preparation procedures. Similar to Virginia's Community Colleges GOLF plan, Illinois Valley also asks faculty to incorporate specific communication procedures into the syllabus through a CAOP statement in order to better prepare for an emergency. Additionally, the plan sets forth processes for maintaining continuity through email, phone, and the LMS, as all faculty and staff are issued college email accounts, and faculty are able to directly email students through WebAdvisor. It is noted that rosters include student phone numbers as well as instructor communication to students. In the same manner, the college creates a site within the LMS for each class every semester, and students are automatically enrolled. Faculty may use existing course content they have established or work with the Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Assessment to utilize the LMS and input content in the event of an emergency. Other resources are also noted, such as the Library and Learning Resources in preparation (Illinois Valley College, 2020).

Finally, should the college be required to activate the CAOP in order to ensure continuity of instruction, the document lays out the college's next steps. In doing so, the plan emphasizes that the emergency is likely to impact syllabi, assignments, assessments, evaluations, and grades. It also notes the possibility of adjustment to the academic calendar in order to continue to meet accreditation and financial aid requirements. Should the internet be available, and the disruption is 1–5 days in length, the college will issue college-wide communication, and instructors are also expected to communicate directly with their students. If the disruption is between 6–10 days and the internet is available, again college-wide communication will be issued, instructors will be expected to communicate with students, and delivery of instruction will resume through established mediums. However, in-person labs, clinicals, or internships may be suspended,

rescheduled, or canceled in the event of an emergency. Should the disruption last more than 10 days, college-wide communication will be issued, and the administration will determine the viability of the remainder of the semester. If the internet is not available to instructors, college-wide communication will be issued with instructions (Illinois Valley College, 2020).

While Illinois Valley Community College's COAP does not include specific recommendations for moving course activities online or to alternate delivery methods, it does establish procedures on how academic continuity will be ensured from college-wide and instructor communication to expectations on when coursework would resume in an alternate delivery method. Moreover, Illinois Valley Community College developed a Faculty Quick Start guide, which summarizes much of this material for faculty members. Both of these resources are public documents available on the college's website.

LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH METHODS

Academic continuity planning has been recommended as a best practice in emergency management planning, with various state and federal governing bodies recommending that planning for the continuity of teaching and learning be included in institutions of higher education EOPs or COOPs. Additionally, academic continuity planning has been tied to an organization's level of agility and resilience. Thus, the incorporation of institutional academic continuity planning is established as essential to the recovery process and the institution's financial viability. The literature has shown that previous emphasis on continuity planning efforts has been focused on IT and business services, with little emphasis given to how an institution will quickly transition coursework to alternative delivery modalities in the event of a long-term emergency. While some research has been completed on how institutions incorporated distance learning or alternative delivery modalities into their COOPs, this research largely

focused on four-year public universities (Ekmekci & Bergstrand, 2010; Meyers & Wilson, 2011). While the research provided valuable foundational knowledge, additional research needs to be completed, particularly on the community college sector, which often functions under different guidance and faces greater limitations than those of four-year universities.

Additionally, Ekekci and Bergstrand's (2010) research concentrated on a convenience sample of those institutions that made their COOPs publicly available. While their work provides a valuable model on which to build, as the authors themselves note, it is difficult to generalize from a convenience sample, and additional research needs to be completed to determine institutions' level of preparedness for long-term emergencies. Moreover, much of the research into academic continuity planning derived out of various crises that occurred, including H1N1, Hurricane Katrina, and the War in Lebanon, and thus, is several years old. As such, follow-up research would be beneficial to understand how IHEs, particularly community colleges, have evolved in their academic continuity planning. In a similar manner, there is an opportunity to reflect upon IHEs' current level of preparedness for the COVID-19 epidemic. This analysis and review are one more essential component of the emergency management preparedness process that institutions may adjust actions based upon lessons learned.

SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to so many families, businesses, as well as IHEs. With the advent of the COVID-19 epidemic in March 2020, the majority of institutions were forced to physically close their doors, some for almost two years, as they transitioned most of their coursework online. Community colleges, in particular, were more likely to remain remote in the fall of 2020 and the spring of 2021 despite serving some of the most at-risk students in America. Many community colleges were still largely remote in fall 2021 and spring

2022. As such, in order to continue to serve students effectively and ensure the financial viability of the institution, community colleges need to review their ACPs, policies, processes, and procedures to evaluate their level of preparedness and readiness in the event of another chronic emergency. This literature review has briefly provided historical background on emergency management, as well as emergency management's role in higher education. While research has been completed on academic continuity planning and models set forth, it is essential to now evaluate if these recommendations were followed and, if so, what was their bearing on the level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of the mission-critical activities of teaching and learning.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methodology employed during this study. For this study, the researcher employed a sequential, mixed methods explanatory design. As such, the research was conducted in two distinct phases. The first phase consisted of a quantitative approach where the researcher conducted a national electronic survey to obtain chief academic officers' (CAOs') perceptions of readiness in the continuation of teaching and learning as a response to the COVID-19 crisis. The second phase of the research took a qualitative approach as the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with various CAOs. This chapter includes a restatement of the study's purpose, a description of the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis methods, and a discussion on the validity and limitations.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to assess community colleges' level of preparedness and readiness in maintaining the mission-critical function of teaching and learning in response to the long-term emergency of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The study sought to capture CAOs' perceptions of their institutions' level of preparedness and readiness to continue teaching and learning in the event of the COVID-19 crisis. The research questions were designed to determine community colleges' overall level of preparedness and readiness in the continuation of teaching and learning despite the challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions were meant to capture the CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness to continue mission-

critical teaching and learning activities. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?
2. To what extent did community colleges have an ACP in place as part of their emergency management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19?
3. How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?
4. What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design encompassed a sequential, mixed method explanatory design. According to John Creswell (2009), a sequential explanatory strategy is "characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data in a first phase of research followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in a second phase" (p. 211). Through this strategy, the qualitative phase builds upon the results from the initial quantitative findings (Creswell, 2009). Thus, for this study, the research was conducted in two distinct phases. For Phase 1, the researcher utilized a quantitative approach to conduct and validate the research. During the quantitative Phase 1, an electronic survey was sent to CAOs across the United States. The survey was created based upon identified best practices in academic continuity planning as part of higher education institutions' overall emergency management preparedness planning (Ekmekci & Bergstrand, 2010; NCIRD, 2020; REMS, 2020; Regehr et al., 2016; SchWeber, 2013). For Phase 2, a qualitative approach was employed, and the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with CAOs identified through a set of pre-established criteria. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through Zoom and were digitally recorded. The researcher noted their observations and incorporated those into the data analysis. All interviews were completed by the researcher and were designed to last between

45–60 minutes. Throughout the research design and process, the researcher adopted the role of an unbiased observer.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

POPULATION

The study's target population included community college CAOs (or equivalent position) employed in their role during the COVID-19 pandemic. Titles for these individuals varied, but each individual was in some capacity responsible for the overall continuation of teaching and learning at their respective institutions. This assumption was verified on the survey itself, as participants were asked not only for their titles but also if they were administratively responsible for the institution's academic continuity plan.

SAMPLE

The sample consisted of CAOs (or equivalent positions) employed at community colleges across the 50 states (excluding Puerto Rico) during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the quantitative first phase of the research, the sample quantity sought was 100–150 survey responses. If the minimum number of participants was not reached, additional CAOs were invited to participate based upon sampling methods outlined below. For the qualitative second phase of the research, the sample quantity sought was 7–10 for semi-structured interviews. The minimum number of participants was reached in each phase, and thus additional contact or selection was not necessary.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

For Phase 1, the researcher employed a clustered, systematic random sampling method to identify community colleges to receive the initial electronic survey. The selection of community

colleges for the initial electronic survey was identified using a clustered random sampling method. According to Trochim (2022), a clustered random sampling method divides samples into clusters (often around geographic boundaries), randomly samples each cluster, and measures all units within each identified cluster. In applying this approach, the researcher clustered community colleges by state and then systematically and randomly sampled 10 institutions from each state. The CAO from each of the selected institutions received the electronic survey. If a state did not have 10 community colleges, then the survey was sent to the total number of community colleges in the state. Surveys were sent to either 10 randomly selected institutions or the total number of institutions in the state, whichever number was fewer. To obtain an accurate listing of all community colleges in the United States, the researcher employed the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to generate a list of two-year public institutions. For district systems, the researcher followed the breakout as identified in IPEDS. Thus, if the district was broken out into the individual colleges (as most were), then the researcher sent the survey to the CAO at the individual college within the system. If individual colleges were not identified, then the researcher sent the survey to the vice chancellor of Academic Affairs (or a similar position) at the district level. Contact information was retrieved from the selected colleges' websites, and only one survey was sent to each selected institution.

For the qualitative phase of the research, Phase 2, a purposive sampling method was applied to select participants for the interviews based upon the research findings in Phase 1. According to Rai & Thapa (2015), in a purposive sampling technique, a researcher deliberately choses a participant based upon the qualities they may possess. The purposive sampling technique is "a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants" (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). As such, the researcher purposely decides

who to interview based upon certain qualities or characteristics. In this case, potential participants were identified from survey respondents who met the following criteria:

- Institutional representatives who indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up study
- Institutional representatives who had direct knowledge of academic continuity planning
- Institutional representatives who served in the role of CAOs or closely related position.

PROTECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

To fully protect the participants of the study, the researcher provided consent forms for both the electronic survey and the recorded interviews. The researcher disclosed all known risks and potential benefits to the participants. In acknowledgment of the information provided, participants signed consent forms before they participated in the study. Additionally, while the electronic survey and recorded interviews did capture personal identifying information, all information was kept confidential through the data collection process. No participant was or will be identified in any way in the reporting or presenting of the data. Thus, all participants were coded through generic, alphanumeric codes (i.e., CAO 1, CAO 2, and so on). All information was stored electronically. Survey data and interview recordings were saved to a portable external hard drive stored in a locked file cabinet for five years.

INSTRUMENTATION

For the instrumentation in the survey phase, the author employed an electronic survey with various open-ended and closed-ended questions. The survey was distributed through Survey Monkey and targeted community colleges' CAOs through the selection methods addressed

above (Appendix B). From the responses, participants for the semi-structured interviews were identified utilizing the selection criteria outlined above (Appendix C).

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The data analysis for this study employed a mixed methods approach. The survey phase of the research employed descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics examine the distribution, central tendency, and measures of dispersion (Trochim, 2022). The distribution was employed to understand the frequency in which community colleges had previously incorporated academic continuity planning into or as part of their overall emergency management preparedness process. Similarly, measures of central tendency, including the mean, median, and mode, were employed to understand how frequent academic continuity planning is as a practice. These measures were also employed to examine the mean, median, and mode of CAOs' perceived level of preparedness and readiness. The survey was designed to measure if existing ACPs incorporated specific elements identified as best practices such as guidance on leadership, instructional, funding, and technical considerations. Descriptive statistics were utilized to measure the frequency and range of these established best practices in academic continuity planning. Upon evaluating the closed-ended questions through descriptive statistics, the researcher examined the data from the open-ended questions, coding, and theming them appropriately. The cleaning also involved extracting pertinent data that was employed to select potential participants for the interviews.

For the interview phase of the research, a qualitative data analysis approach was employed. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), in employing a qualitative approach, data collection and data analysis often happen simultaneously throughout the process. The data management process is divided into three phases: data preparation, data identification, and data

manipulation. In this process, the qualitative research design itself is "recursive and dynamic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 195). Because of this dynamic structure, participants may be identified after initial research, and interviews may be highly structured, semi-structured, or unstructured.

For this study, interviews followed a semi-structured approach, and participants were provided the questions in advance. Following a semi-structured format enabled the researcher to advance the primary research questions, probe deeper into individual responses, and allow the conversation to ebb and flow naturally. Interviews were digitally recorded through the virtual conferencing platform Zoom. After each interview, the researcher prepared the data, typed notes, reviewed each interview, and generally prepared it for data identification and extraction purposes. During the data preparation, each participant was coded accordingly (CAO 1, CAO 2, etc.) to ensure confidentiality and protection of the participants. No participant or institution was named in the data analysis, reporting, or writing related to this research. After the data set was appropriately cleaned and prepared, the researcher completed data identification through open coding on each data set. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this process involves taking notes, jotting in margins, and identifying any section of data that might be helpful. At this point, the researcher identified initial categories or themes. In identifying categories, the researcher followed several principles in data analysis as set forth by Merriam and Tisdell:

- Categories are responsive to the purpose of the research.
- Categories are exhaustive.
- Categories are generally mutually exclusive.
- Categories are sensitizing.
- Categories are conceptually congruent.

This process was repeated after each interview's conclusion, capturing the dynamic and simultaneous nature of data collection and data analysis with a qualitative research design. The data analysis involved categorizing themes and sub-themes that were common across the data sets. The data analysis was captured in a table that noted the research questions, identified themes, and regular reoccurrences.

VALIDITY

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), internal validity addresses how closely the research findings match reality. For qualitative research, human beings are the primary instrument of the data collection and analysis, and thus, reality is filtered through their observations and perceptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To establish internal validity, the researcher employed multiple sources of data, including surveys and interviews. Additionally, the researcher also engaged a panel of experts to review the survey design before distribution. A pilot study was also completed to identify possible errors and evaluate the content validity (again before distribution).

Moreover, the researcher also completed respondent validation, where feedback was solicited on the preliminary findings from some of the initial interview participants. Participants were provided the audio recordings of the conversation and asked for verification and clarification as needed. Finally, the researcher also employed adequate engagement throughout the data collection process. In obtaining adequate engagement in the data collection, the researcher makes sense of the data by accurately capturing various participants' perceptions of a particular phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

LIMITATIONS

The study encompassed the following limitations.

1. **The study was limited to CAOs' perceptions.** For this study, only CAOs' perceptions of their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning were included. The study did not delve into faculty or students' perceptions regarding their institutions' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and their ability to continue effectively and efficiently teaching and learning through the crisis. Thus, the researcher would recommend such considerations be addressed in a follow-up study. Further research could be conducted to complete a gap analysis, juxtaposing that data of the CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness with that of faculty and students.

2. **The researcher acted under the assumption that the CAO would be the primary person responsible for the continuation of teaching and learning.** As the study focused strictly on CAOs, the researcher acted under the assumption that the CAO would be the primary person responsible for the continuation of teaching and learning on the college's campus and thus would be knowledgeable about the policies, procedures, and practices in support of academic continuity planning.

3. **Some participants could be disingenuous to protect the reputation of the college.** As the study was designed to capture CAOs' perceptions of their institutions' responses to COVID-19, it relied on CAOs' open and honest disclosure of the events. It is possible that an individual could distort the truth or events out of a desire to protect the college's reputation. However, the study was not created to audit or judge institutions' academic continuity planning processes. Instead, the study was designed to capture the CAOs' perceptions of their institutions' level of preparedness and readiness for a long-term emergency that other community college leaders may learn from these events and improve academic continuity planning in the future. This intent was noted in the survey and on the consent form.

4. **No consideration was given for community diversity or additional resources.** While community college CAOs from each state were surveyed, the study did not consider the community's diversity or any other additional resources that might be available to the individual institutions, as the research design was that of a clustered, random sampling method. Although the level of institutional diversity was not an investigative factor in this research, it can be expected that the selection process would produce a relative representative sample of the general population of community colleges.

SUMMARY

The study's analysis is primarily directed toward scholars and community college administrators interested in evaluating and improving ACPs. Emergency management planning

is essential for community colleges, as they must prepare for a variety of emergencies. As part of the emergency management process, not only must institutions be prepared for and ready to mitigate a variety of emergencies, so too must they consider how they will effectively and efficiently continue those services during and after the emergency. Moreover, crisis management incorporates learning or "adequate reflection and critical examination of the lessons learned from experiencing a crisis" (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 54). This study sought to reflect upon the COVID-19 pandemic and community colleges' responses to the pandemic regarding academic continuity planning as part of this essential crisis management component. Hopefully, through these lessons learned, institutions may adapt or redesign academic continuity plans accordingly to be better prepared for another long-term crisis, should it arise.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four presents and analyzes the findings from this sequential mixed method study. The purpose of this study is to assess community colleges' level of preparedness and readiness in maintaining the mission-critical function of teaching and learning in response to the long-term emergency of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. The study sought to capture chief academic officers' (CAOs) perceptions of their institutions' level of preparedness and readiness to continue teaching and learning in the event of the COVID-19 crisis. The goal of this study is to reflect upon lessons learned regarding the continuation of teaching and learning through the pandemic in order to be better prepared for future, long-term emergencies. As outlined in Chapter Three, this study employed a sequential mixed method explanatory design to capture CAOs' perceptions of their institutions' levels of readiness in the continuation of teaching and learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following research questions were addressed as they pertained to academic continuity planning:

1. What are CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?
2. To what extent did community colleges have an ACP in place as part of their emergency management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19?
3. How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?
4. What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?

These questions were examined through the viewpoint of the CAO or those serving in similar leadership positions.

The data was collected in two sequential phases. The first phase consisted of a quantitative survey conducted through electronic submission via SurveyMonkey. The second phase collected qualitative data collected during semi-structured follow-up interviews with Phase 1 participants who self-identified and indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up study. Only individuals who served in the role of CAO and were administratively responsible for the continuation of teaching and learning were selected for follow-up participation. Seven CAOs were purposefully chosen for the study based upon criteria identified above and to ensure an equitable representation of the Phase 1 sample. Follow-up interviews were conducted to provide a greater context and understanding of the data collected in Phase 1. The following sections describe the sample demographics of each phase, findings regarding academic continuity planning, and the results as they relate to the specific research questions outlined above.

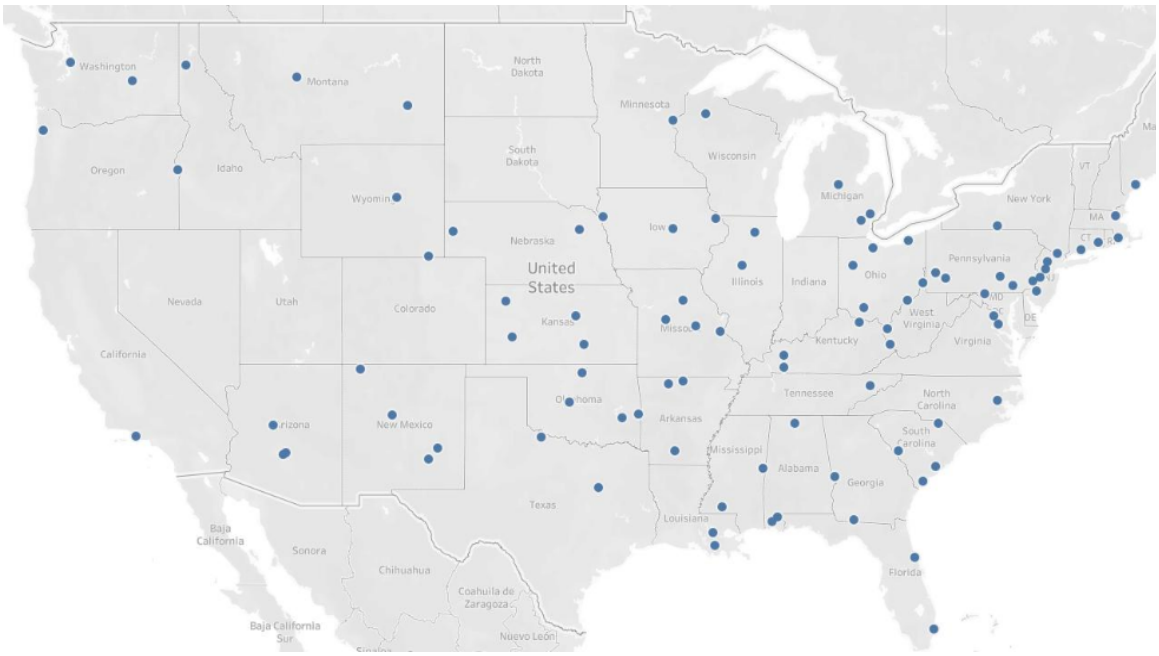
PHASE 1: SURVEY SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

For the first phase of the study, an electronic survey was distributed nationally to acting CAOs at two-year, public associate-granting institutions. A sample was drawn from a population of 1,008 community colleges identified through the IPEDS database. As IPEDS does not specifically define "community college," the following parameters were used: degree-granting, public two-year and public four-year and above, degree-granting associate degrees and certificates and degree-granting, not primarily baccalaureate or above. These parameters were employed to capture the changing definition of community colleges, as many community colleges grant some baccalaureate degrees. Continued emphasis was placed upon institutions primarily granting associate degrees and certificates, as was captured in the above parameters.

Of the 1,008 community colleges identified, electronic surveys were sent to CAOs (or those serving in similar roles) at the identified institution. Only one survey was sent to each

institution. Of the 465 surveys that were sent out, 104 were returned for a return rate of 22.4%. Of the 104 surveys returned, 96 were considered viable. In order to be deemed as a complete, viable survey, the participant needed to complete at least 75% of the entire survey. Of the 96 viable surveys, 91 were completed by CAOs, and the remaining five were completed by the college president. The five surveys completed by college presidents were included in the results, as the president also bears primary responsibility for the fulfillment and continuation of the college's mission as delegated by the board of trustees. A diverse representation of participants was achieved, as institutions surveyed represented those from a wide range of locations, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) regions, and institutional sizes. Additionally, representation from 38 states of the 50 surveyed states was achieved. Two respondents chose not to self-identify location. Figure 1 shows survey responses by location.

Figure 1. Survey Responses by Location



In achieving a representative sample, the researcher strove to include institutions from each of the BEA regions as identified by the Department of Education. Table 1 shows institutions as they are represented from each of the BEA regions.

Table 1: Survey Respondents by BEA Region

Bureau of Economic Analysis Region	Survey Respondents
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	5
Mideast (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	13
Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	11
Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	14
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	28
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	13
Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)	5
Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)	5
Undisclosed	2
Total	96

Moreover, survey participants also represented institutions from varying degrees of urbanization and size. Survey respondents represented institutions from all degrees of urbanization except town: fringe. Degree of urbanization representation is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Participating Institutions by Degrees of Urbanization

IPEDS Categorization	IPEDS Description	Number of Participating Institutions	Percentage of Sample
11	City: Large	2	2.08
12	City: Midsize	7	7.29
13	City: Small	12	12.50
21	Suburb: Large	13	13.54

IPEDS Categorization	IPEDS Description	Number of Participating Institutions	Percentage of Sample
22	Suburb: Midsize	2	2.08
23	Suburb: Small	2	2.08
31	Town: Fringe	0	0.00
32	Town: Distant	12	12.50
33	Town: Remote	15	15.63
41	Rural: Fringe	24	25.00
42	Rural: Distant	4	4.17
43	Rural: Remote	1	1.04
	Undisclosed	2	2.08
	Total	96	99.99

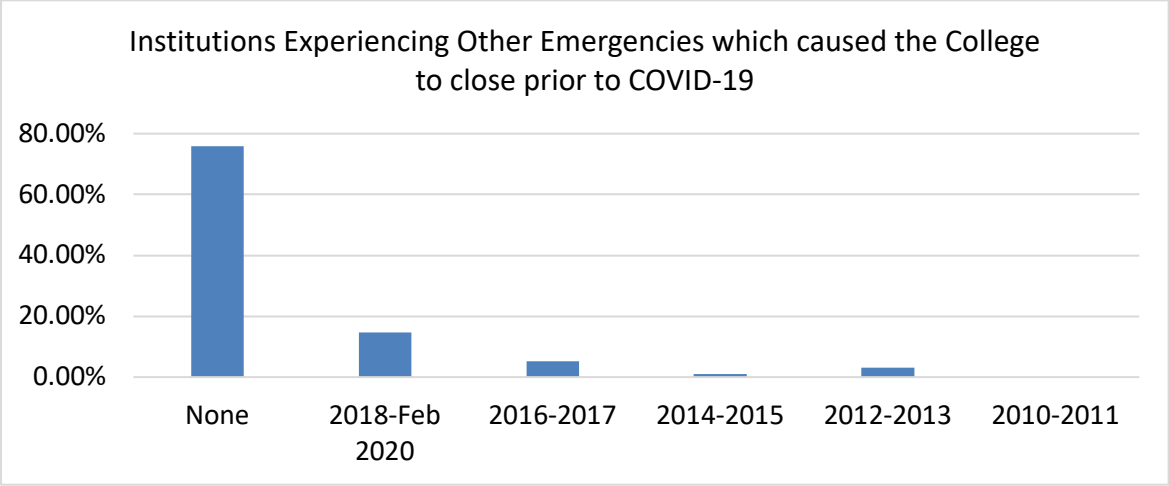
In the same manner, survey respondents also represented institutions from a variety of size categories. According to IPEDS, institutional size refers to student headcount. Of the respondents, seven participants (7.29%) were from institutions with fewer than 1,000 students; 52 respondents (54.17%) were from institutions between 1,000–4,999 students. Furthermore, 24 respondents (25%) were from institutions with 5,000–9,999 students, and eight respondents (8.33%) were from institutions with 10,000–19,999 students. Three respondents (3.13%) were from institutions with over 20,000 students, and two respondents (2.08%) chose not to disclose location. Table 3 captures institutions by size category.

Table 3: Participating Institutions by Size Category

IPEDS Coding	Size	Number of Participating Institutions	Percentage of Sample
1	Under 1,000	7	7.29
2	1,000–4,999	52	54.17
3	5,000–9,999	24	25.00
4	10,000–19,999	8	8.33
5	20,000 and above	3	3.13
Undisclosed		2	2.08
Total		96	100.00

Additionally, participants were asked if their respective institutions had experienced any emergencies within certain timeframes that caused the college to close prior to COVID-19. This question sought to identify if institutions had previously experienced crises which would in turn contribute to future preparedness and planning efforts. Of participating institutions, 14 institutions (14.7%) had experienced an emergency which caused the college to close between 2018 and February 2020. Similarly, five institutions (5.26%) had experienced emergencies between 2016–2017, and one institution (1.05%) had experienced an emergency between 2014–2015. Furthermore, three institutions (3.16%) had experienced an emergency in 2012–2013, and no respondents experienced any emergencies in 2010–2011. The majority of respondents indicated that their institutions had not had any emergencies in the past decade that would cause the college to close with 72 or 75.79% responding that they had experienced no emergencies from 2010 to February 2020 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Institutions Experiencing Other Emergencies That Caused the College to Close Prior to COVID-19



PHASE 2: INTERVIEW SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

For Phase 2 of the research, the researcher employed a qualitative approach, conducting follow-up interviews with CAOs who participated in the original electronic survey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through the video conferencing platform Zoom, and the interviews were digitally recorded. The researcher noted her observations and incorporated those into the data analysis. All interviews were completed by the researcher and were designed to last between 45–60 minutes. Throughout the research design and process, the researcher adopted the role of unbiased observer. Possible participants were identified through a set of pre-established criteria. The criteria included:

- Institutional representatives who indicate a willingness to participate in a follow-up study
- Institutional representatives who serve in the role of CAO or closely related position
- Institutional representatives that are presumed to have direct knowledge of academic continuity planning.

The researcher collected these observations and incorporated them into the data analysis. Seven interviews were conducted during the period of October 6, 2021, to December 1, 2021.

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 96 survey participants, 45 participants indicated a willingness to participate in a follow-up interview. Of those 45 willing to participate in a follow-up interview, 40 were CAOs and five were presidents. Given the focus of the research, only CAOs were selected for the interviews, and the researcher strove to interview a variety of participants, including those who had indicated they had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 and those who did not. The researcher deliberately chose to interview participants who had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 and those who did not because the researcher wanted to determine if having an ACP in place contributed to CAOs' perception of being more prepared or ready to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to the pandemic. Furthermore, the researcher also sought to identify what components are essential to an effective ACP, and thus, she was interested in speaking with CAOs who created an ACP as a result of the pandemic. Of the 40 CAOs willing to participate in a follow-up interview, 20 were selected and invited to participate. Of those invited, seven confirmed, responded, and were subsequently interviewed.

The seven interview participants represented institutions across the country including representation from five of the eight BEA regions including New England, Great Lakes, Plains, Southeast, and the Far West regions. Furthermore, three interviewees were male and four were female. Table 4 summarizes the composition of the seven Phase 2 interview participants. Although the participants and respective colleges are listed below sequentially, these same codes are not employed in the results as to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the interview participants.

Table 4: Composition of Phase 2 Interview Participants

Participant Code	College Code	BEA Region	College Setting	College Size	Gender
1	1	Southeast	City	10,000–19,999	F
2	2	Plains	Town	1,000–4,999	F
3	3	Southeast	City	20,000 and above	M
4	4	Great Lakes	Suburb	10,000–19,999	F
5	5	New England	City	5,000–9,999	M
6	6	Far West	City	5,000–9,999	M
7	7	New England	Suburb	5,000–9,999	F

Additionally, to verify the accuracy of the information collected in the survey phase, interview participants were first asked to identify the individual (or position) who was administratively responsible for the continuation of instruction in the event of an emergency. This question was used to verify that the participant was directly responsible for academic continuity at their institution and thus could be expected to speak informatively about the subject matter. Of the seven participants, all seven identified that they were either entirely or partially responsible for the continuation of instruction in the event of an emergency. Four participants indicated that they were singularly responsible as the CAO, while the remaining three noted a shared responsibility with the president. One participant also indicated that the responsibility was shared between the CAO, the president, and the CFO. In the end though, all participants acknowledged that as the CAO, they were all or partially responsible for the continuation of instruction. In the same manner, participants were also asked if they served on their EOC team or similar crisis response team. Of the seven participants, four individuals noted that they served on the EOC (or similar). One participant noted that they did not have such a team, but that they did serve on the executive council where they addressed various crises. Two respondents did not respond to that second half of the question. Overall, the majority of participants responded

affirmatively that not only were they directly responsible for the continuation of instruction, but that they also served on the crisis response team.

FINDINGS SUPPORTING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

For both the survey and interview portions of the research, the researcher created a crosswalk of questions to the primary research questions. The researcher designed survey and interview questions based on the primary research questions. Both the survey and interview questions were cross walked to the primary research questions to ensure relevancy and alignment for each question (See Table 5). Additionally, interview questions were slightly modified after completion of the survey to reflect the results and dig deeper into preliminary findings. This crosswalk was utilized in presenting the findings by each research question in this chapter.

Table 5: Crosswalk of Research Questions to Survey and Interview Questions

Research Question	Survey Questions	Interview Questions
1. What are CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?	1, 2, 3, 4, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22	4
2. To what extent did community colleges have an ACP as part of their emergency management preparedness planning before COVID-19?	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 27, 28, 29, 30	1, 2, 3
3. How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?	20, 21, 31	6, 7, 8, 9, 12
4. What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?	11, 19, 23, 24, 25, 26	5, 10, 11

RESEARCH QUESTION FINDINGS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

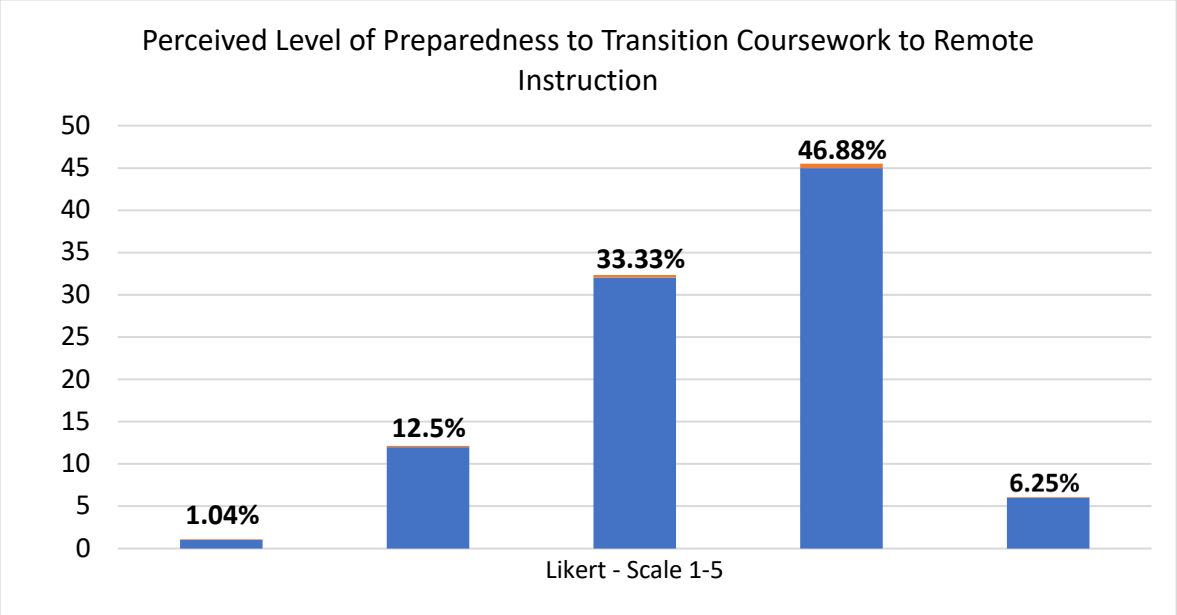
What are CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?

The question addressed the CAO's perception of their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission critical activities of teaching and learning in the event of a chronic emergency, specifically COVID-19.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1

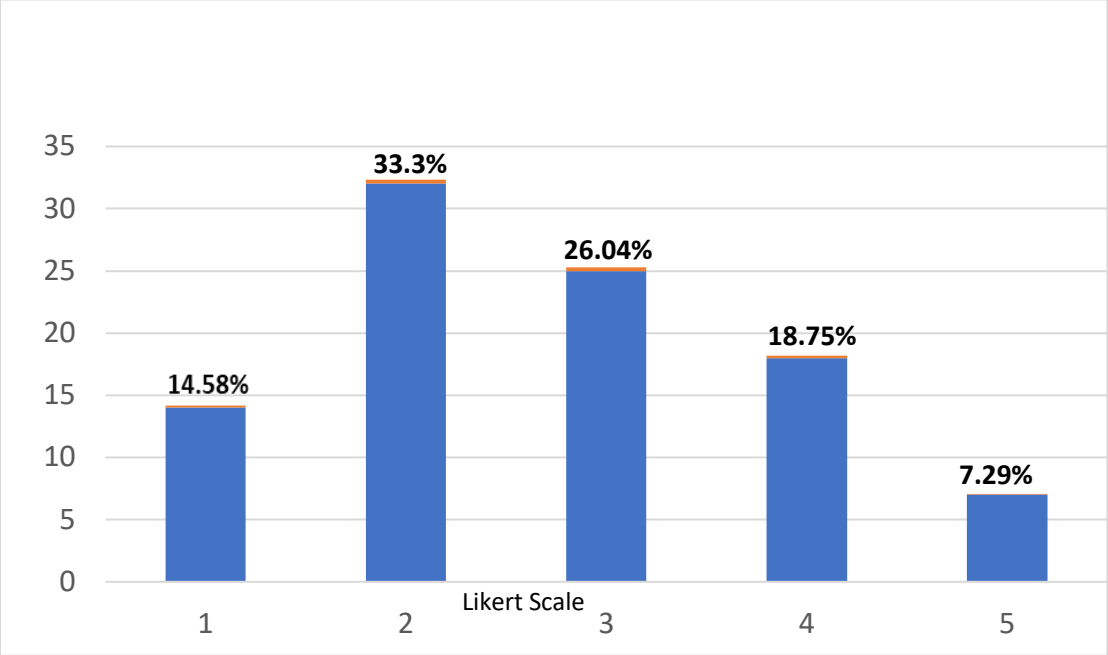
To examine CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness to continue teaching and learning in the event of COVID-19, the researcher asked a number of survey questions designed for CAOs to rank the degree to which they believed their institutions were prepared. Questions were based upon a Likert scale with 1 being the least degree and 5 being the highest degree. First, CAOs were asked to rate how prepared they believed their institutions were to transition coursework to remote instruction to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to COVID-19. On a Likert scale of 1–5, one participant (1.04%) gave their institution a ranking of a 1 on preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction; 12 participants (12.5%) gave their institutions a ranking of a 2, and 32 participants (33.33%) ranked their colleges a 3. Additionally, 45 participants (46.88%) ranked their institutions a 4, and six participants (6.25%) noted a rating of 5 (Figure 3). The average rating was 3.45 and the median was 4. Furthermore, the standard deviation of the results was .83.

Figure 3. Perceived Level of Preparedness to Transition Coursework to Remote Instruction



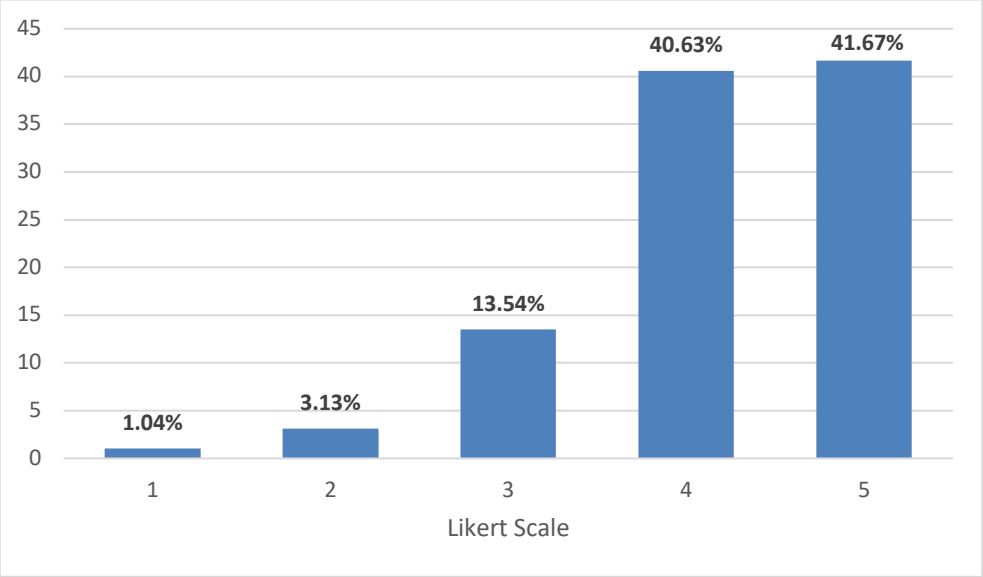
In addition to asking how prepared CAOs perceived their colleges were to transition coursework to remote instruction in response to COVID-19, the researcher also asked CAOs to rate the level of importance their institution placed on preparedness activities regarding academic continuity prior to COVID-19. Again, based upon a Likert scale, CAOs were asked to rate the level of importance placed on these activities on a scale of 1–5 with 1 being the least important and 5 being most important. The average response to this question was 2.71, and the median response was 3. The standard deviation of the responses was 1.15. Of the 96 participants, 14 participants (14.58%) gave their institutions a 1; 32 participants (33.33%) gave ratings of 2; 25 participants (26.04%) noted a 3; 18 participants (18.75%) marked a rating of 4, and seven respondents (7.29%) noted a 5 (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Perceived Level of Importance of Academic Continuity Planning



Moreover, the researcher also asked CAOs to rate their institution's ability to financially support the goals of the ACP or process based on a Likert scale of 1–5 with 1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive. The average of the ratings was 4.18, significantly higher than the ratings CAOs gave for their levels of preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction and the importance they placed upon academic continuity planning prior to COVID-19. Additionally, the median was 4 and the standard deviation was .86. As shown in Figure 5, one participant (1.04%) ranked their institution a 1; three respondents (3.13%) noted a rating of 2; 13 participants (13.54%) noted a 3; 39 participants (40.63%) marked a rating of 4, and 40 respondents (41.67%) gave a rating of 5 on their institutions' ability to financially support the goals of the ACP.

Figure 5. CAOs' Perceived Ability to Financially Support the Goals of the ACP

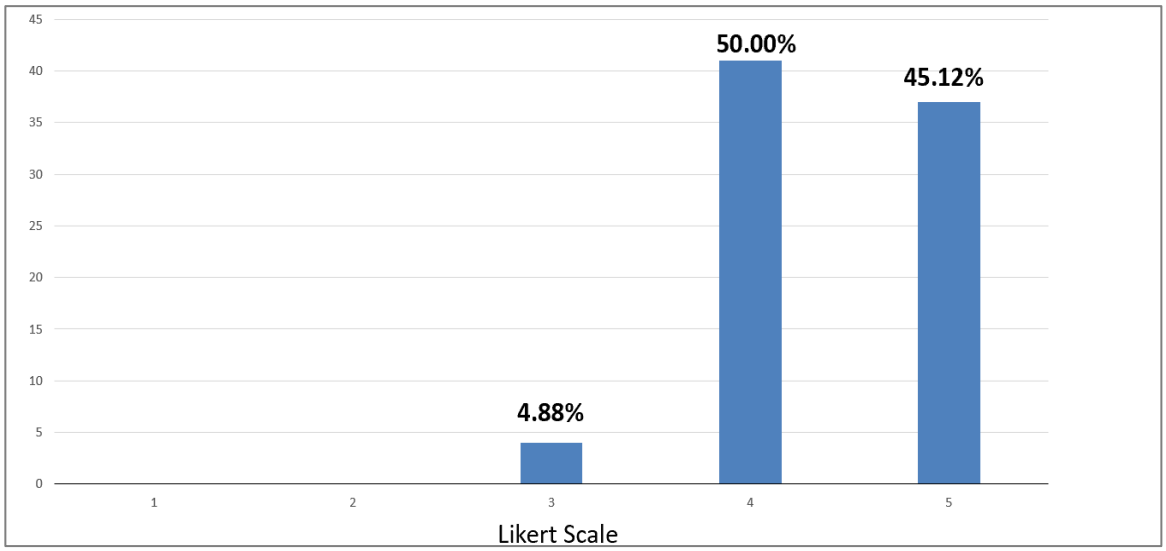


In considering CAOs' perception of preparedness and readiness to continue mission-critical activities of teaching and learning in response to COVID-19, the researcher also considered the institution's ability to support faculty and students during the transition. Thus, participants were asked how many days faculty were given to transition to remote instruction after their institutions shut down face-to-face instruction due to the pandemic. Of the 94 responses, the range of responses were from 0 days to 60 days. The average time given to faculty to transition instruction to alternate modalities was 10.125 days. The median was 8.5 days. However, the 60-day response was an outlier. Without the outlier of 60 days, the average 9.6 days.

CAOs were also asked to rate the institution's level of support for faculty during the transition to and continuation of teaching and learning to remote instruction during COVID-19. Ratings were completed on a Likert scale of 1–5 with 1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive. Of the 96 respondents, 14 skipped this question. Of the remaining 82 participants, no respondents noted a rating of 1 or 2. Four (4) respondents (4.88%) noted a rating

of 3 and 41 participants (50%) marked a rating of 4. Finally, 37 participants (45.12%) noted a rating of 5 on their institutions' ability to support faculty throughout the transition to remote instruction during COVID-19 (Figure 6). Overall, CAOs perceived that their institutions were able to reasonably support their faculty during the transition to remote instruction, as over 95% of respondents noted a rating of 4 or 5.

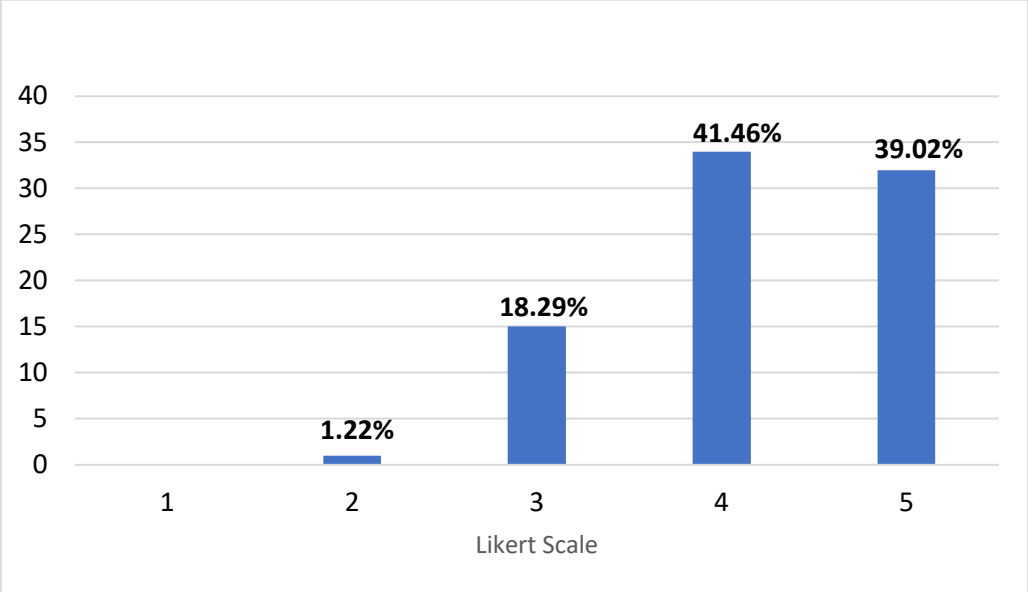
Figure 6. CAOs' Perceived Level of Faculty Support



Furthermore, CAOs were asked to consider and rate their institution's level of support for students during the transition to and continuation of learning in remote instruction as a result of COVID-19. Figure 7 captures these ratings on a Likert scale with 1 being the least support and 5 being the most supportive. Of the 96 respondents, 14 skipped the question. The average for level of support to students was 4.18, and the median was a 4. Additionally, the standard deviation was .77. Of the 82 responses, zero respondents noted their institutions at a 1; one participant (1.22%) noted a 2; 15 participants (18.29%) marked a rating of 3; 34 respondents (41.46%) noted a rating of 4, and 32 participants (39.02%) indicated a rating of 5. Further research would be interesting

to determine how this data would compare to the faculty's perceptions at these institutions, but it is beyond the scope of this research.

Figure 7. Perceived Level of Student Support During the Transition to Remote Learning



In comparing CAOs' perceived level of support to faculty versus the level of support to students, CAOs perceived that they were slightly more prepared to support faculty throughout the transition and continuation of instruction to alternate modalities than they were prepared to provide those supports to students. Thus, 95.12% of participants rated their institutions a 4 or 5 in their ability to support faculty, and 80.48% of participants rated their institutions a 4 or 5 on their ability to support students during the continuation of instruction as a result of COVID-19.

Survey Analysis and Summary

In order to determine CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning, the researcher asked a number of quantitative questions regarding how prepared the CAO believed their institution was. Questions were based upon a Likert scale, and participants were asked to

rate their institution's level of preparedness on preparedness to transition to remote instruction, perceived level of importance placed upon academic continuity planning, and perceived ability to financially support the goals of the academic continuity plan. In the same manner, participants were also asked to consider the time allotted for faculty to transition to remote instruction and to consider the level of support offered to both faculty and students during the duration of the pandemic, COVID-19.

MAJOR THEMES

- *Overall, CAOs perceived their institutions were relatively prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction.*
    - When asked to consider how prepared their institution was to transition to remote instruction, 53% of the respondents rated themselves a 4 or 5 on the Likert scale of 1–5. At the same time, 33.33% of respondents noted a 3. Thus, while many participants noted they were well prepared, a third noted that they were only relatively prepared to transition the coursework to remote instruction.
- *A relatively low importance was placed upon academic continuity planning prior to COVID-19.*
    - Unlike the responses to how prepared CAOs believed they were to transition coursework to remote instruction, CAOs responded very dissimilarly to the level of importance placed upon academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic. As such, 47.91% of respondents gave themselves a rating of 1 or 2 on the level of importance they placed upon academic continuity planning. Moreover, 26.04% gave themselves a 3 on the Likert scale. As such, while CAOs believed they were relatively prepared to transition instruction to remote modalities, they indicated that there was not a strong emphasis placed on academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic.
- *Institutions were financially able to support the goals identified in the academic continuity plan.*
    - In considering the institution's ability to financially support the goals of the ACP, CAOs perceived that institutions were able to financially support the goals of the ACP. As such, 82.3% of respondents rated their institutions as a 4 or 5 on being able to fund the goals identified in the ACP. The researcher notes that this ability to financially support the goals of the ACP may have been impacted by the institutions receiving Higher Education Emergency Relief funds. However, this possible impact is beyond the scope of this research.

- *CAOs perceived that they were able to support their faculty than their students more fully in the transition to remote instruction.*
    - In considering the level of support provided to faculty, over 95% of respondents rated their institutions as a 4 or 5 in the level of support they were able to provide to faculty.
    - Similarly, 80.48% of respondents rated their institutions as a 4 or 5 on the level of support they were able to provide to their students. While this figure is notably lower than the level of support provided to faculty, at the same time the majority of respondents perceived they were able to successfully support their students during the transition to remote learning and throughout the continuation of instruction during the pandemic.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

During the interviews, the researcher asked participants follow-up questions that elaborated on their responses on the survey. Participants were sent their survey responses in advance of the interview. The researcher informed the participants of how they rated their college on preparedness to transition coursework to alternative modalities in response to COVID-19. The researcher then asked participants to describe why they gave themselves the rating they did.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 4

On the survey, on scale of 1–5 (with 1 being the least ready and 5 being the most ready), you rated the College a # (insert number participant rated) on how prepared the College was to transition coursework to alternative modalities to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to COVID-19. Could you describe why you gave the rating you did?

Participant A. Participant A explained that they did not really remember why they gave their institution a rating of a 3, but assumed they marked a 3 because it was down the middle of the scale. Prior to the pandemic, the participant explained that 70% of classes already had a shell in the LMS. Furthermore, 25–30% of faculty were already trained in online teaching and learning. However, the college did not have master courses established, as many people do not

support those at the institution. The participant also explained that many students had already taken online classes or were in face-to-face classes with online enhancements. Additionally, they noted the college had a very robust academic technology group with instructional designers and instructional technologists that knew how to teach faculty to convert their courses in high-quality ways. During the transition to remote learning, the academic technology group worked 20 hours a day for those two weeks. Hence, the CAO noted that while many faculty were able to convert their course on their own and were already using Zoom, "nobody was prepared for the length of time and the comprehensiveness of the shut down." The CAO also stated, "I think we were in contrast to other colleges reasonably well-prepared." Thus, Participant A felt like the college was "reasonably prepared" given that the majority of courses already had a course shell established in the LMS, a quarter of the faculty were trained in online teaching and learning, and the institution had a robust academic technology center.

Participant B. Similar to Participant A, Participant B also gave their institution a rating of a 3 on preparedness to transition their coursework to alternative modalities to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to the pandemic. Participant B noted that prior to the pandemic, 80–85% of courses had an online component in that they were either fully or partially online. Additionally, the participant explained that 60–65% of faculty were trained and certified to teach online, and 30–35% of faculty were not trained. The interviewee went on to describe how some faculty had no idea Canvas existed, and the goal of the distance education committee was to increase use of Canvas shells. Hence, every course had a shell set up, but some faculty had no interest in teaching online. The participant described how the most difficult part of transition was "getting folks to teach remotely." The CAO describe the other challenge as follows:

> Our students are at the lower echelon socio-economically, even compared to our sister schools in the district, so they were unlikely to have the best internet access, the best devices, or quiet places to connect to the internet. Generational families live in the same living quarters, sharing devices with their siblings. It was a multitude of issues.

In reflecting on the institution's preparedness to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning during COVID-19, the CAO rated the institution a 3 because the majority of the classes already had an online component built-in or were fully online, over 60% of the faculty were already trained and certified to teach online, and each course already had a shell set up in the LMS. At the same time, the CAO identified the challenges of getting faculty to teach remotely and the many equity gaps that students faced with access to reliable internet, devices, and a conducive learning environment.

Participant C. Participant C rated their institution a 4 on readiness to transition coursework to alternative modalities as a direct result of the pandemic. The participant noted that the institution had been working to increase the number of online courses. As such, they had online learning departments and had added more staff. Furthermore, they had also posted a new dean of online learning position which they hired shortly after the pandemic began. Additionally, they also had an Academic Innovation and Professional Development Department that included the Teaching and Learning Center. In response to the initial shutdown, the institution mobilized the Academic Innovation/Professional Development Department to offer training around online learning and course development. The CAO noted that thankfully these departments were already in existence, and so they had some "structural elements" already there. The Academic Innovation team provided one-on-one training, and they revised over 800 courses. They later moved to a group training model. Additionally, the LMS was already in place, and the college funneled much of their money into online learning, focusing on "supporting students as well as supporting faculty development."

Furthermore, the college also received an additional federal grant with many of the funds earmarked for online learning and faculty support. As such, the CAO noted that they spent almost $2 million with faculty. In reflecting on their preparedness to transition the coursework to alternative modalities, the CAO ranked the institution a 4 because the college already had some existing structural pieces in place upon which they could build. These structural pieces allowed them to mobilize quickly, responding to the crisis at hand.

Participant D. Participant D rated their institution a 4 on their readiness to transition courses over to alternative modalities in response to COVID-19. In reflecting upon their readiness to transition to remote learning, the CAO noted,

> I would say it was dumb luck. It's amazing that the couple of years leading up to the pandemic we had, unbeknownst to us, been taking steps toward preparedness. As example, in our January 2020 in-service we happened to spend all of our time on technology. We had specifically how to use our new voice over IP system, RingCentral. We introduced OWL technology, which is a classroom camera, and we introduced them to this new thing called Zoom.

The CAO continued to explain how during this time they also trained faculty and staff on how to use their new Microsoft 365 suite of products. The participant described how

> I had even put together as part of that training: this is how you set up a synchronous class session in Zoom; here's how you use breakout rooms in Zoom. I was just kind of learning as I went too, but I thought there was maybe some potential that it would be good down the road.

Thus, the January 2020 in-service was devoted entirely to technology and introducing faculty and staff to new technologies that could be employed inside and outside of the classroom.

Additionally, the participant explained how they had also started implementing or installing Airtame systems, so several classrooms had that technology which allows for hybrid conferencing and screen sharing. Furthermore, faculty had ready access to professional development. The college is a member of Quality Matters, so those resources were available.

Quality Matters is an organization that provides resources and training for faculty and establishes standards for best practices in online teaching. The institution also has a warehouse of professional development called atomic learning, so the CAO expressed, "we had all this stuff available. It was just a matter of putting it out there for people to use." Lastly, the participant maintained that "the thing that helped us be ultra-prepared for this was the culture that we had on our campus and that does not happen overnight so relationships that had been built. Our labor management relationships are excellent." Hence, she explained how "people just dug in and made it through." Thus, Participant D rated their institution a 4 in preparedness to transition coursework to alternative modalities as the institution has invested a significant amount of time and resources in training faculty and staff on new and innovative technologies, as well as invested resources in upgrading classrooms to be more technologically innovative. With this said, the CAO believed the greatest component in determining readiness was the culture the institution had and the relationships that had been built. The participant believed that it was these relationships that enabled them to pull together and make it through together.

Participant E. In reflecting upon their rating of a 3, Participant E expressed, "If I could divide our curriculum into two buckets, I would have given us a 1 and the other a 5, so I settled on 3." The CAO noted that the reason she gave this rating is because the college has strong online support structures, and the institution has been highly rated on their online instruction. In fact, she noted that they have been identified as one of the top 50 online institutions by the *US News and World Report.* Thus, the institution puts a lot of resources into their online programs.

Additionally, the participant explained that for faculty to teach online, they must complete a 45-hour training and must apply Quality Matters. Furthermore, every course has a shell, even face-to-face classes. The participant noted that many faculty had already taught a

hybrid and had gone through the basics. She described how they use D2L for the LMS, and many faculty had gone through D2L training. She also noted that they had some faculty who had been teaching the same class for a number of years, and they had their own notebook and now "this was a whole weird word for them." Thus, the CAO stated, "For a lot of them, it was nerve wracking, but they could do it; they already had some basic tools, and they could transition."

The participant also identified how the college had a large number of vocational programs that could not transition easily to remote learning. She explained that programs—like nursing, occupational therapy, and respiratory—could switch the didactic to online fairly easily. However, clinicals could not transition and students could not come to campus to do simulations, so those were suspended. At the same time, the institution also has welding, machining, HVAC, and automotive collision programs which were challenged to find alternative ways to offering programming. The participant expressed how the faculty did wonderful activities: "vocational instructors would take their phones into class and film each other doing things and then post that in the shell." At the same time she noted, "we weren't ready there and there's not really a way to be ready there." In her reflection about the transition to remote learning, the CAO expressed how it was "traumatic—to think about going back to those times." In hindsight, she expressed they could have learned to use more technology in the classroom, and they have learned to put more things in the shell that can help support instruction.

Participant F. Participant F gave his institution a 3 in preparedness to transition coursework over to alternative modalities. The participant explained that he gave the rating of a 3 because of the situation in which they were in the middle. At the beginning of the pandemic, the institution was in the middle of a transition from Blackboard for Brightspace. The spring 2020 semester was the last semester they were contracted with Blackboard, and thus by summer 2020,

right after the outbreak, they were in Brightspace. Thus, the participant explains, “That made us ill-prepared. Even though we had training all fall, faculty didn’t feel the urgency. Oh, it’s only going to happen next summer; I’ll learn it next summer.” At the time the pandemic hit, about 20% of faculty had been trained in Brightspace. Thus, the participant identified that they had a “big gap” as most of the faculty had not yet been trained.

While the institution has “a robust online learning program,” changing systems was a challenge. The online learning department is a large department, but the institution found that they were having to run courses in both systems and train people on both—people who had never taught online. Furthermore, the participant noted that they had a couple of rogue faculty who built their own websites. There was one person that decided they were going to teach on Facebook. The participant explained that they allowed only one class to run on Facebook about social media and marketing but other than that, they do not. In reflection upon the series of events, Participant F gave the institution a rating of a three largely due to the challenges presented by transitioning from one LMS to another during the middle of a pandemic.

Participant G. Participant G rated their institution a 4 on the survey. When asked to explain the reasoning behind the rating, the participant described key components that contributed to greater readiness for an emergency.

> In all honesty, I think there was a lot of communication in place. I think the fact that we’ve been through hurricanes and so it wasn’t in a sense our first rodeo with a disaster of that type. We were prepared in that way, as I mentioned we had even in a traditional class, we were somewhat equipped to pivot to use online formats. Our technology team did a fantastic job. We have professional development, a pretty active office to quickly coordinate and train faculty.

The participant described how they were not offline for a couple of weeks, but rather it was only a few days. The institution has contingency plans in place for a variety of emergencies although not a pandemic. Hence, the CAO noted that “timing is everything,” and they did have spring

break in there to help out. Unlike many other institutions, they did not extend spring break, but they did cancel classes the first day. At the same time, they were working, and they did not lose much time. The participant described how when it first happened, everyone was trying to survive. The CAO noted how in the collective bargaining situation, the academic leadership worked with faculty leadership for joint communications. The president of the faculty union and vice provost of Academic Affairs would put out joint communications, saying "hey we're all in this together; here are the guidelines." The guidelines outlined how students had to have their cameras on and needed to be engaged. At the time, they had one faculty member trying to teach the whole class over chat. People wanted to use their own platforms, and they were having all kinds of Zoom bombings. Thus, the Academic Affairs leadership and the president of the faculty union worked together to address some of the issues and jointly communicate the guidelines established. In response to the pandemic, they required more professional development and usage of certain platforms. The college moved into "a more formalized posture," but again the participant noted that leadership has to have the support of the union.

Additionally, the participant explained, "We don't have remote learning anymore; we have what we call online live where there's a real set of structures around our established modalities." The interviewee noted that the college had established modalities pre-pandemic. At the same time, the state helped in defining modality so anytime one is in a Zoom situation, they would define it as an online class. If it is an online class, the collective bargaining agreement required professional development. Moreover, the participant noted that it was a complex political environment, as at the state level, they were "very anti-masking," but in the county the college was in, was very "mask, mask, mask." At the same time, they could not say the word 'vaccine.' Thus, the participant noted how the political environment complicated the situation.

Finally, at the state level, the participant explained how they have a council composed of academic leadership. This council met every week and the CAO noted that those meetings were very helpful. Hence, the participant described, "it was great to kind of hear what other people were struggling with; what they were dealing with; what some of their solutions were as time went on." In reflecting upon the transition to remote learning, the participant rated the institution a 4 as they had previous experience in responding to other crisis situations, and thus had contingency plans in place. Additionally, the participant noted the importance of communication and working together in consistent collaboration with the union to address issues as they arose. Finally, the participant noted the complexity added by the often conflicting political climate.

Interview Analysis and Conclusions

This interview question delved deeper into the reasoning behind why the participants rated their preparedness to transition to remote instruction the way they did. The researcher wanted to identify if the respondent chose a 3 rating because it was a safe, middle-of-the-road choice or if there were other factors that indicated how prepared their institution was for a long-term, chronic emergency.

Major Themes

- *Participants believed they were reasonably prepared to transition instruction to a remote learning environment.*
    - Each participant rated their institution either a 3 or 4 on preparedness to transition coursework to a remote learning environment. Many participants noted that courses already had shells established in the LMS or that faculty were already trained.
- *Participants believed that courses already encompassing an online component(s) were more ready to transition to remote learning.*
    - Multiple participants noted that their courses already had a shell set up in the LMS or already required an online component. Hence, Participant A noted that 70% of classes

already had a shell in the LMS, and Participant B indicated that 80–85% of courses had an online component. This theme was reinforced throughout as participants noted that many courses already had an online component which seemingly contributed to the belief that the institution was more prepared as a result.

- *Training and development contributed to the belief that the institution was more prepared.*
    - In a similar manner, when asked why CAOs gave the rating they did on preparedness, many participants noted that their faculty had been trained in online teaching methodology. Hence, Participant E noted that faculty must complete a 45-hour training and must apply Quality Matters standards. On the other hand, Participant F described how they were in a transition from Blackboard to Brightspace and thus not everyone had been trained on the new platform. As a result, the CAO rated their level of preparedness lower and spoke to the challenges that arose from the timing of the transition. Thus, participants contributed faculty training and development to either positively or negatively impacting their level of preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction.

- *The ability to build off existing infrastructure also contributed to the belief that the institution was more prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction.*
    - Several participants also spoke of having existing infrastructure in place that allowed them to scale up and respond more quickly. Participant C identified that they already had some "structural elements" already in place including an Academic Innovation and Professional Development Department and instructional designers. Similarly, Participant G described how the institution had been through crisis situations before and had communication strategies and contingency plans already in place as a result.

While the above themes represent topics raised by multiple participants, it is important to note that several CAOs addressed the challenges that arose throughout the transition including students not having access to critical equipment or internet. In the same manner, another CAO addressed the importance of collaboration and working with the faculty union in responding to the crisis at hand.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

To what extent did community colleges have an ACP in place as part of their emergency

management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19?

In order to measure the extent to which community colleges had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 as part of their overall preparedness efforts, it was important to examine the context and the extent to which other preparedness efforts where taking place, including the following standards:

- Institution had an EOC, or similar crisis management response team, in place prior to COVID-19
- Institution's CAO served on the EOC (or similar crisis management response team)
- Institution had an RMA in place prior to COVID-19

Thus, the survey was designed to identify the extent to which overall emergency management practices were being employed and how academic continuity planning was being incorporated into overall emergency management preparedness efforts.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2

In examining the extent to which community colleges had an EOC in place prior to COVID-19, the study revealed that 81.25% of respondents (78 out of 96) had an EOC or similar crisis management response team in place prior to the pandemic as shown in Table 6. In the same manner, 18.75% (18 participants out of 96) did not have an EOC in place prior to COVID-19. Additionally, based upon preliminary findings, the researcher disaggregated results by BEA and institutional size for each of the standards identified above. The researcher found that institutions in the Rocky Mountain region and the Far West region more frequently reported having an EOC in place prior to the pandemic.

Table 6: Percentage of Respondents Having an EOC Team in Place Prior to COVID-19 by BEA Region

Bureau of Economic Analysis Region	EOC Prior to COVID-19	Total Responses by Area	EOC prior to COVID-19 (%)
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	2	5	40.00
Mideast (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	11	13	84.62
Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	8	11	72.73
Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	10	14	71.43
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	25	28	89.29
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	11	13	84.62
Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)	5	5	100.00
Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)	5	5	100.00
Undisclosed	1	2	50.00
Total	78	96	81.25

Similarly, results show that larger institutions more frequently reported having EOCs in place prior to COVID-19. For instance, 57.14% of respondents from institutions under 1,000 had an EOC in place prior to pandemic; 84.62% of respondents from institutions with 1,000–4,999 had an EOC in place. Additionally, 79.17% of institutions with 5,000–9,999 had an EOC in place, and 87.5% of institutions with 10,000–19,000 responded affirmatively as illustrated in Table 7. Finally, 100% of respondents from institutions with over 20,000 responded that they had an EOC in place prior to the pandemic.

Table 7: Percentage of Respondents with an EOC Team in Place Prior to COVID-19 by Institutional Size

Institutional Size Category	EOC Prior to COVID-19	Total Responses by Size Category	EOC prior to COVID-19 (%)
Under 1,000	4	7	57.14
1,000–4,999	44	52	84.62
5,000–9,999	19	24	79.17
10,000–19,000	7	8	87.50
20,000 and above	3	3	100.00
Undisclosed	1	2	50.00
Total	78	96	81.25

Likewise, the researcher examined the extent to which CAOs served on the EOC or similar crisis management response team if the institution had an EOC in place prior to COVID-19. Findings indicated that of surveyed participants, 82% or 64 respondents indicated that the CAO served on the EOC or similar team. Of the respondents, 18% or 14 respondents indicated that the CAO did not serve on the EOC or similar team.

Additionally, research showed that 58.9% of respondents had a risk management assessment (RMA) in place prior to the pandemic. Table 8 highlights the breakdown of respondents that had an RMA in place prior to COVID-19 by the BEA region. Thus, 56 of 96 (58.33%) respondents indicated they had an RMA in place while 40 of 96 (41.67%) indicated they did not have an RMA in place. In disaggregating the data by BEA region, institutions in the Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, and TX) and Far West (CO, ID, MT, UT, and WY) more frequently reported having an RMA in place prior to COVID-19. Twelve out of 13 respondents or 92.3% in the Southwest indicated having an RMA in place while four out of five respondents or 80% in the Far West affirmed they had an RMA in place prior to the pandemic.

Table 8: Percentage of Respondents Having an RMA in Place Prior to COVID-19 by BEA Region

BEA Region	RMA Prior to COVID-19	Total # Respondents by Region	RMA in Place Prior to COVID-19 (%)
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	3	5	60.0
Mideast (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	6	13	46.2
Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	7	11	63.6
Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	5	14	35.7
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	14	28	50.0
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	12	13	92.3
Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)	3	5	60.0
Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)	4	5	80.0
Undisclosed	2	2	100.0
Total	56	96	58.3

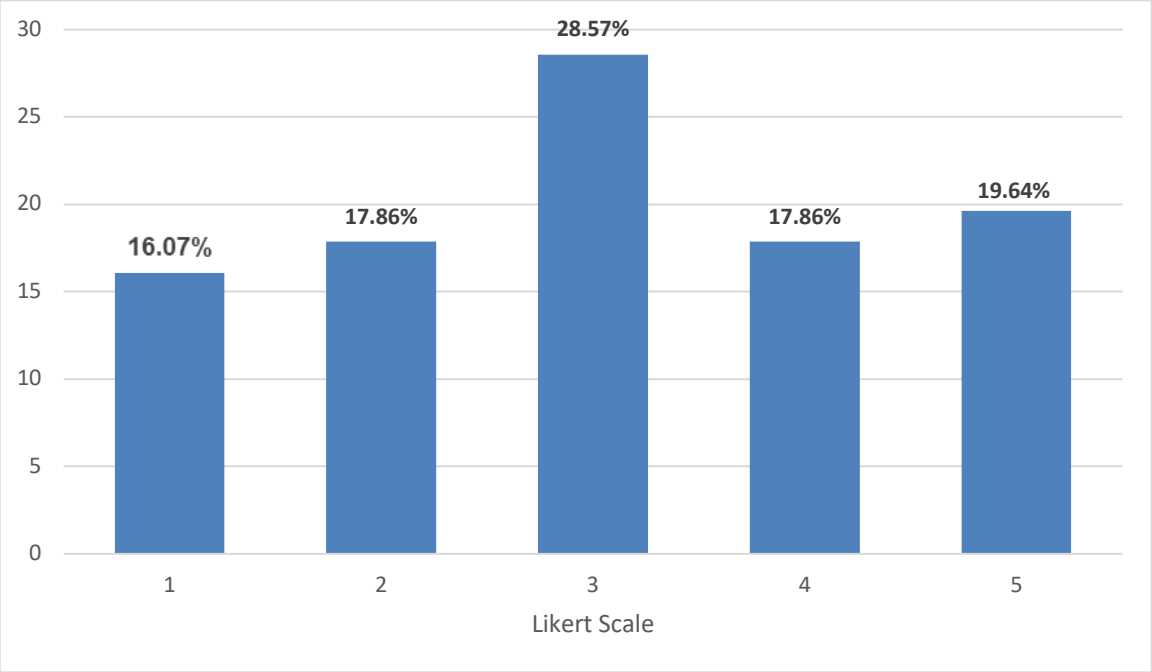
In the same manner, findings show larger institutions more frequently reported having an RMA in place prior to COVID-19. Table 9 captures the breakdown of institutions having an RMA in place prior to COVID-19 by institutional size category. Institutions with fewer than 1,000 students reported having an RMA in place 42.9% of the time (three of seven respondents); institutions with between 1,000–4.999 students reported having an RMA in place 48.1% of the time and institutions with 5,000–9,999 students reported having RMAs 66.7% of the time. Furthermore, institutions with 10,000–19,999 noted having an RMA in place 87.5% and institutions with over 20,000 students reported having an RMA in place at a rate of 100%.

Table 9: Percentage of Respondents Having an RMA in Place Prior to COVID-19 by Institutional Size Category

Institutional Size	RMA in Place Prior to COVID-19	Total Respondents by Institutional Size	Respondents with an RMA in Place Prior to COVID-19 (%)
Under 1,000	3	7	42.9
1,000–4,999	25	52	48.1
5,000–9,999	16	24	66.7
10,000–19,999	7	8	87.5
20,000 and above	3	3	100.0
Undisclosed	2	2	100.0
Total	56	96	58.3

Participants were also asked the degree to which they utilized the risk management assessment (RMA) in the development and/or subsequent implementation of the ACP in response to COVID-19. Ratings were provided on a Likert scale of 1–5 with 1 being the least degree of utilization and 5 being the highest degree of utilization. Of the 56 institutions that noted that they had an RMA in place prior to COVID-19, nine institutions (16.07%) indicated a rating of 1 in that they did not use the RMA much in the development or implementation of the academic continuity plan. Ten institutions (17.86%) noted a ranking of a 2; 16 participants (28.57%) noted a 3; and 10 (17.86%) noted a 4. Eleven participants (19.64%) ranked themselves at a 5 on the extent to which they utilized the RMA in the development and/or implementation of the ACP (Figure 8). The average degree to which the RMA was considered in the development and implementation of the ACP was 3.07. The median was 3 and the standard deviation on responses was 1.35, indicating a larger variance on responses.

Figure 8. Degree to Which Institutions Considered the RMA in the Development of and/or Subsequent Implementation of the ACP



In examining the extent to which community colleges had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, 37.5% or 36 respondents out of 96 responded affirmatively that they had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 while 60 participants out of 96 (62.5%) indicated they did not have an ACP prior to COVID=19. Findings show that institutions in the Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, and WV) most frequently reported having an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, as 17 out of 28 respondents or 60.7% indicated they had an ACP. The percentage of respondents having an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 disaggregated by the Bureau of Economic Area is shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Percentage of Respondents Having an ACP in Place Prior to COVID-19 by BEA

Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) region	ACP Prior to COVID-19	Total Responses by Region	% Respondents with an ACP Prior to COVID-19
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	2	5	40.0

Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) region	ACP Prior to COVID-19	Total Responses by Region	% Respondents with an ACP Prior to COVID-19
Mideast (DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA)	6	13	46.2
Great Lakes (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	2	11	18.2
Plains (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	4	14	28.6
Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV)	17	28	60.7
Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, TX)	3	13	23.1
Rocky Mountains (CO, ID, MT, UT, WY)	1	5	20.0
Far West (AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA)	0	5	0.0
Undisclosed	1	2	50.0
Total	36	96	37.5

When examining institutions which had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 by institutional size category, results showed that was an association existed between larger institutions and frequency of having an ACP in place prior to the pandemic. Table 11 notes the percentage of respondents having an ACP in place prior to the pandemic by institutional size category.

Table 11: Percentage of Respondents Having an ACP in Place Prior to COVID-19 by Institutional Size Category

Institutional Size	ACP in place prior to COVID-19	Total respondents by institutional size	% of respondents with an ACP prior to COVID-19
Under 1,000	0	7	0.0
1,000–4,999	17	52	32.7
5,000–9,999	10	24	41.7
10,000–19,999	5	8	62.5

Institutional Size	ACP in place prior to COVID-19	Total respondents by institutional size	% of respondents with an ACP prior to COVID-19
20,000 and above	3	3	100.0
Undisclosed	1	2	50.0
Total	36	94	37.5

Additionally, respondents who affirmed that they had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 were subsequently asked how they then responded to the crisis to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning. Respondents were asked if they (1) followed the written ACP, (2) revised the ACP accordingly, or (3) threw out the previous ACP and created a new plan. Of the 36 respondents who indicated they had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic, three followed the written plan, 30 respondents revised the ACP accordingly, and three threw out the plan and created a new ACP. Furthermore, of the 60 participating institutions who indicated they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, 44 or 73.3% noted that they created an ACP as a result of COVID-19. Sixteen institutions or 26.7% noted they did not create an ACP as a result of COVID-19 despite not having one already established.

When asked who the lead person was responsible for the development of the ACP, responses varied. Of the 44 institutions who created an ACP as a direct result of COVID-19, 29 participants indicated that the vice president of Academic Affairs, vice chancellor of Academic Affairs, or provost was primarily responsible for the creation of the ACP. Additionally, five participants noted that the academic deans created the ACP, and three indicated it was created by the cabinet or executive leadership team. Furthermore, two participants noted that the chief of staff created the plan, two described the chief human resources officer creating the plan, and two described the president or CEO as being responsible for creating the ACP. Furthermore, one

noted that the director of Health and Safety created the ACP. One participant noted that the vice president of Information Services developed it; one other indicated the vice president of Finance and Administrative Services crafted the ACP, and another mentioned the director of Online Learning. Finally, four participants described the drafting as a plan as a team effort; one specifically mentioned faculty, and one mentioned department chairs. Table 12 demonstrates the frequency of these open-ended responses.

Table 12: Frequency of Responses of Lead Person Responsible for Drafting the ACP

TITLE	FREQUENCY
Vice President of Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Provost (or similar position)	29
Academic Deans	5
Cabinet or executive leadership team	3
President or CEO	2
Chief of Staff	2
Chief Human Resource Officer (or another HR professional)	2
Director of Online Learning (or similar position)	2
Director of Health and Safety	1
Vice President of Information Services	1
Vice President of Finance and Administrative Services	1
Director of Marketing	1
Division Chairs	1
Faculty	1
Total responses	51

In considering the extent to which institutions had an ACP in place as part of their overall emergency management planning, participants were asked if they were administratively

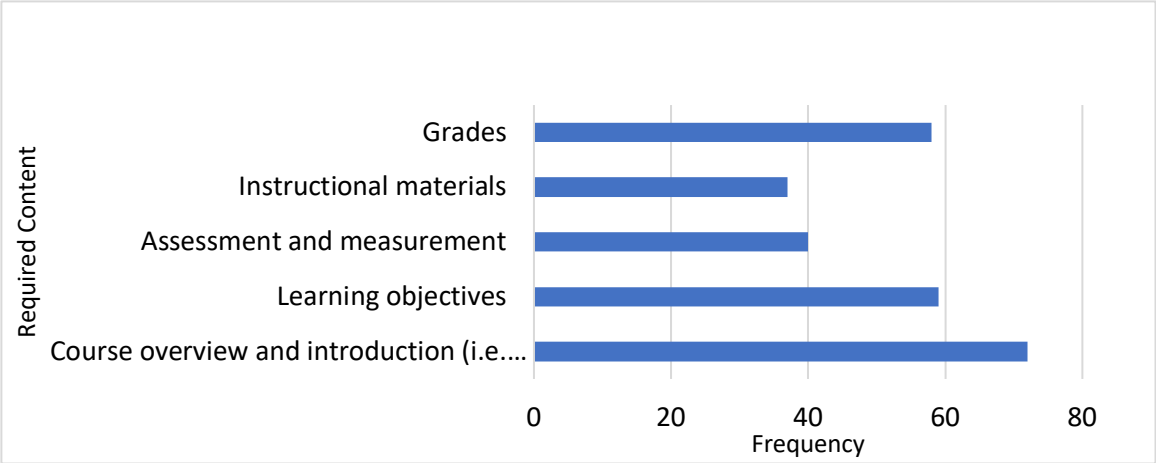
responsible for implementing the institution's ACP. Of those participating in the survey, 92 respondents indicated they were all or partially responsible for the implementation of the academic continuity plan. Three respondents indicated that they were not responsible, and one individual skipped the question out of 96 respondents.

Additionally, in considering the extent to which institutions had an ACP in place as part of their overall emergency management planning, the researcher considered if institutions had policy and processes set up in advance that required faculty to have training to teach online or established a minimum amount of content in a LMS. Such questions were included based upon various academic continuity planning frameworks (outlined in the literature review) that address training opportunities for faculty and students and the establishment of policies and practices that codify the commitment to academic continuity planning (NCRID, 2020; Regehr et al., 2017; REMS, 2020). As a result, CAOs were asked if their faculty were required to complete training prior to being approved to teach online. In response to this question, 60 (64.52%) respondents noted that faculty were required to complete training prior to teaching online and 33 (35.48%) respondents noted that no training was required for online teaching. In the same manner, participants were also asked if the institution required faculty to have a course shell set up in the LMS. Of the institutions surveyed, 77 participants (81.92%) noted that faculty were required to have a course shell established in the LMS, and 17 respondents (18.08%) indicated they had no such requirement. Moreover, participants were asked what percentage of course sections had a corresponding course shell created in the LMS. Of participating institutions, the range of course sections that had a corresponding course shell established in the LMS was between 15% and 100%. The average was 80.93% and the median was 87.5%. Additionally, the standard deviation was 9.7, suggesting that there was significant variance in responses. Several participants

qualified that while all course sections were automatically generated a course shell in the LMS, it did not mean that the shells were being utilized by the faculty member.

Participants were also asked to elaborate on what content was required if a requirement was iterated. Participants were asked to select required content based upon standards established by Quality Matters: course overview and introduction, learning objectives, assessment and measurement, and instructional materials. Grades were also included as a choice, and respondents had the option of noting other required content. Of the 77 institutions that require faculty to have a course shell in the LMS, 93% require faculty to maintain a minimum amount of content. Of the 77 respondents noting that the institution required faculty to have a course shell set up in the LMS, 72 noted that a course overview and introduction was required. Furthermore, 59 participants noted that learning outcomes were required, and 58 indicated grades were required as well. Forty participants indicated assessments were required and 37 noted instructional materials were a requirement. Other notable requirements included announcements, a course calendar with assignments and due dates, handouts, a welcome message, or attendance. Figure 9 captures the results of these findings.

Figure 9. Required Content for Institutions Requiring Faculty to have a Course Shell in the LMS



SURVEY ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

In considering the extent to which community colleges had an ACP as part of their emergency management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19, the researcher asked a series of questions designed to determine if the institution had a plan in place based upon a series of best practices.

MAJOR THEMES

- *Overall, CAOs reported having EOCs and RMAs at higher rates than having an ACP.*
    - The majority of respondents indicated that they had an EOC or similar crisis management team in place prior to the pandemic. As evidenced in the data, 81.25% of participants indicated they had an EOC in place prior to the pandemic. Similarly, 58.33% of respondents indicated their institutions had an RMA in place prior to COVID-19, as compared to 37.5% of participants who indicated they had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic.
- *CAOs frequently serve on the EOC or similar crisis response team.*
    - Survey results found that 82% of respondents indicated the CAO serves on the EOC or similar team.
- *Larger institutions more frequently reported having an EOC, RMA, and ACP in place prior to COVID-19.*
    - When disaggregating the data by institutional size, findings showed that larger institutions more frequently reported having an EOC, RMA, and ACP in place prior to COVID-19. Thus, 87.5% of institutions with 10,000–19,000 students responded affirmatively and 100% of respondents from institutions with over 20,000 responded that they had an EOC in place prior to the pandemic. In a similar manner, 87.5% of institutions with 10,000–19,999 noted having an RMA in place prior to the pandemic and institutions with over 20,000 students reported having an RMA in place at a rate of 100%. Finally, 62.5% of institutions with 10,000–19,999 noted having an ACP in place prior to the pandemic and 100% institutions with over 20,000 students reported having an ACP. Consistently, the larger institutions more frequently reported having emergency management procedures and plans in place prior to the pandemic, including the EOC, an RMA, and an ACP, than the smaller institutions.
- *Institutions in the Southwest and Far West more frequently reported having an RMA in place prior to COVID-19.*

- In disaggregating the data by BEA, institutions in the Southwest (AZ, NM, OK, and TX) and Far West (CO, ID, MT, UT, and WY) more frequently reported having an RMA in place prior to COVID-19. Twelve out of 13 respondents or 92.3% in the Southwest indicated having an RMA in place while four out of five respondents or 80% in the Far West affirmed they had an RMA in place prior to the pandemic. These rates were significantly higher than those from the other areas.

- *Institutions in the Southeast more frequently reported having an ACP in place prior to COVID-19.*

  - Findings show that institutions in the Southeast (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, and WV) most frequently reported having an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, as 17 out of 28 respondents or 60.7% indicated they had an ACP. This rate was significantly higher than the overall percentage of institutions having an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 at 37.5%

- *Participants who had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, most frequently reported revised the existing ACP according to the situation presented.*

  - Of the 36 institutions that had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic, 30 institutions chose to modify the existing plan.

- *Participants who did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, most frequently reported creating an ACP as a result of the pandemic.*

  - Of the 60 participating institutions who indicated they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, 44 or 73.3% noted that they created an ACP as a result of COVID-19. Of the 73.3% who chose to draft an ACP as a result of the pandemic, participants most frequently noted that the vice president of Academic Affairs, vice chancellor of Academic Affairs, provost, or someone in a similar position was responsible for creating the ACP.

- *Faculty were frequently required to complete training and maintain a course shell within the LMS.*

  - 64.52% of participating institutions require faculty to complete training prior to teaching online. In the same manner, 81.92% of participating institutions require faculty to have a course shell established in the LMS. Of the 77 institutions that require faculty to have a course shell in the LMS, 93% require faculty to maintain a minimum amount of content. Minimum content may include (1) a course overview and introduction, (2) learning outcomes, (3) grades, (4) assessments, (5) instructional materials, (6) announcements, (7) course calendar with assignments and due dates, (8) handouts, (9) a welcome message, or (10) attendance.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

Of the seven CAOs interviewed for the study, all were directly responsible for the continuation of instruction in the event of a chronic emergency, as identified above. In considering the extent to which community colleges had an ACP in place as part of their overall emergency preparedness planning before COVID-19, interview participants were asked follow-up questions to their responses on the survey. The questions were designed to identify how the college initially responded to the pandemic to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning. As such, the researcher did not disqualify any participants based upon whether or not they already had an ACP in place prior to COVID-19. Rather, the questions were designed to determine the extent to which participants were prepared for COVID-19, having an ACP in place prior to the crisis and how the colleges continued to ensure the continuity of instruction as a result of the pandemic.

In analyzing the responses, three of the seven participants (42.86%) indicated that they had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic and four of the participants (57.14%) noted that they did not have a plan in place prior to the crisis. These numbers are in keeping with the results of the survey but at no directive of the researcher.

The researcher asked participants who indicated that they *did not have an ACP* in place prior to COVID-19 a follow-up question: Could you describe how the college responded to ensure the continuation of instruction?

INTERVIEW QUESTION 2A

On the survey you noted that the college did not have an ACP in place as part of the overall emergency management planning. If you did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19,

could you describe how the college responded to ensure continuation of instruction?

Participant A. The first CAO noted that they did not start in the role until April 2020, but that they were aware of what happened. They noted that the campus was shut down and everyone was sent home. Faculty were given the week of spring break and one additional week to convert face-to-face classes to remote classes. Furthermore, they noted that students were provided laptops and internet devices, and the college procured virtual simulations for hands-on students (i.e., nursing and welding). In the same manner, all of Student Services were put online. Put all student services online. Finally, Participant A noted that the college had multiple campuses that were "greatly removed" so they were "accustomed to doing things apart."

Participant B. The next participant explained that while they noted on the survey that they did not have a plan in place prior to COVID-19 that it was not to say they had not planned. Hence, the CAO explained,

> We've always had an emergency plan; we were planning for things like earthquakes, wildfires, and active shooters. We did not factor in a virus pandemic, so we had lots of contingency plans, but pandemic was not one of them specifically.

The CAO described how while they had multiple contingency plans, they did not have one created for a pandemic. Thus, the college responded by modifying existing plans. They had previously set up teams: finance team, logistics team, communications team, and had plans in place including roles for different people. The college responded by modifying the plan, expanding it greatly, and constantly updating it because they were not sure what the spring semester would hold. Furthermore, leadership created operational guidelines for employees and students. The CAO noted that these plans were nuanced as they are one college in a district and thus did not have complete autonomy. Rather some things were decided at the board of trustees and chancellor's cabinet level. However, each college had a voice in the process, and the emergency management plans were built at the individual college level but had to be in

alignment with the district. The district continued to develop more comprehensive plans as the pandemic played out. Participant B stressed that collaboration with sister colleges was incredibly useful. The participant also expressed that at times there could be contradictory messaging between district and individual college(s). For example, at one point the district noted that students could do testing when the college had no mechanism for testing. The participant expressed that at times the messaging was challenging, and at the individual college level, they would then have to "pick up the pieces."

Participant D. Participant D described the college as "We're fast and flexible and we have an amazing leader in our president." The CAO noted that the state would receive guidance from the chancellor and the local health department. The president would then bring together senior leadership in the cabinet. The planning process was a series of quick meetings where they examined what they were going to need to take into consideration and that their answers would be. They described the crisis response as such:

> So, it really was a senior cabinet level decision making process that then got implemented through myself and our managers and leaders, you know the other dean, and our student affairs folks. So, I would say it was more top down. Generally, our planning processes are collaborative but this one because it was an emergency really needed to be top-down.

The CAO noted that, thankfully, they have the culture that would support that decision-making process in time of emergency.

Participant F. Participant F began by describing how the college had:

> this old plan sitting out there for swine flu. It's the only thing we had for continuity of instruction. I read it and laughed a bit. Luckily, the technology from 2009 to today has changed considerably, so we were able to do so much more than we could have done back then, and we had so many more online courses running.

Participant F explained that they had a better basis upon which to build. Furthermore, Participant F described how the college shut down and extended spring break for a week to give

faculty the chance to prepare. The college was in the middle of a transition to Brightspace, and so that exacerbated the situation. The CAO explained that not everyone was trained on Brightspace yet, and they did have another LMS, Jenzabar, in place. Hence, they explained that faculty were given "multiple ways of doing it." The college purchased many Zoom licenses, and while "Zoom was a popular way for people to run courses, some people ran courses totally through email." The CAO described it as "less than adequate" and that it didn't really "work well at all." Participant F explained that faculty employed a wide variety of techniques in transitioning courses to remote instruction in spring 2020. Some ran traditional asynchronous courses, posting materials in the LMS, and others postponed hands-on instruction until the fall semester when they were able to bring some small groups of students back to campus. They noted that some of the hands-on learning was not able to happen until the following fall. In considering how the college responded to ensure the continuation of instruction, Participant F captured, "COVID really brought out the community in community college. People really helped each other." They described how so many people volunteered to help each other through the transition to remote learning.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 2B

On the survey you noted that the college had an ACP in place as part of the overall emergency management planning. Could you describe how you revised or modified the plan to ensure the continuation of instruction?

In the same manner, participants who noted that they had a plan in place prior to COVID-19 were asked to describe how they revised or modified the plan to ensure the continuation of instruction.

Participant C. Participant C described how the plan they had in place was "very inaccurate." The participant noted that the plan they had put into place was essentially an effort

to appease the accreditation bodies and to appease the state. The plan essentially said the college was going to "do everything in our power to keep our doors open." In reflecting, the CAO described that the plan was "not helpful," noting that they could never have anticipated what happened. Rather, Participant C described how the plan was built for a short-term emergency such as a loss of power or hurricane. The plan focused on "facilities and moving classes to another space, thinking about our partnerships." Additionally, the CAO noted that the plan did not even include a reference to putting coursework online. The participant described how their first thought was how they were going to get through the next couple of weeks. Then they realized the situation was not temporary. As a result, the president's cabinet had frequent meetings every other day. The academic leadership team began meeting daily. The team first had to think of all the questions they needed to answer. Participant F described how it was frustrating to many people as they still had no answers. In response to the crisis, the academic leadership team developed a short-term plan for two weeks. The first week was spring break, and they canceled classes the week after spring break. The cancellation was designed to give people a little time to figure out a direction and build capacity to move everything online. Furthermore, the college employed temporary definitions, specifically "remote learning." Additionally, the CAO asked every faculty member to provide them with a plan of what they were going to do to ensure the continuation of instruction. Participant C described how they "pretty much let them do whatever they wanted." During spring 2020, 25% of courses were already online and deeply regulated. Even with that being the case, the CAO described it as a "free for all." The participant noted that they had students complaining that faculty members asked them to use postal mail to send in their assignments. The interviewee described it as "the wild, wild west." In the midst of the crisis, the college hired a new dean for online learning. He started putting the pieces in place,

developing standards for a quality online course and a process for having a course online. Overall, the academic leadership team aspired to raise the academic quality and build infrastructure. As such, they required training for faculty which lasted almost a year through the spring of 2021. The CAO described how this move was a big lift on faculty in that first they said everything had to be online, and later said that there was a specific way to place the material online.

Participant E. Participant E began by stating, "Well, I will say that I don't think we had imagined anything like COVID-19, and so our continuity plan was very much based on getting past short times of very interrupted operations at the college." Participant E continued to describe how the college is in a hurricane prone area and how as a result, they have had multiple hurricanes or really bad weather that causes short term changes. The CAO explained that at one point in time they had an armed person running through campus away from the police. In the same manner, they have had bomb threats that were very specific and very alarming. As a result of those various situations, they have some experience with emergency situations.

At the same time, the participant described how the continuity plan was really designed to communicate with faculty and students. The CAO noted, "It was not designed to move all academic activities online, and so in a sense that kind of continuity plan was missing, and so we wrote it in that week in March 2020 and we did it." Prior to COVID-19, they had a large document called a continuity of operations plan (COOP), which came out of the campus safety department. It was designed to assign individuals to carry out critical functions of the college from continuing payroll to what if the incident happens at the time that grades need to be posted. It also included "how to preserve and protect databases." The document was focused on security and communicating the next steps. Thus, the participant explained,

> So, we rewrote; we really made a separate plan during COVID, and it was for the first time, very much based around instruction because to keep it going; we had to come up with protocols from how many people could go in a room to sanitizing everything to use of equipment to sharing equipment.

In addition to developing a separate COVID-19 plan, the CAO explained that they needed a large amount of technology training in a short amount of time.

Participant G. Participant G explained that during that time he served as vice provost. Additionally, he noted that the institution was familiar with emergencies, having an ACP in place which is available on the college's website. The participant noted that they did not contemplate the length of the emergency in that while they had previously been out for hurricanes or other emergency situations, even a week was a long period of time for such an event. Thus, the CAO explained that no matter the modality, every class had a shell in the LMS so that in the event of a hurricane or if an entire county was without power, then academic continuity would wait until power was restored. The CAO described how COVID-19 was different in that it was going to be significantly longer, considering how the institution would be able to "quickly pivot." The participant described how the "academic continuity plan was helpful in bringing people together quickly to make decisions." The participant engaged with faculty leadership throughout the process, working together with the provost to address the reality that the crisis was going to last longer. He explained that the situation was different in that the institution did not have "buildings down or the lab swamped with water or anything like that." Rather, the situation was people could not leave their houses. Thus, the participant noted that "it's good because it helped us rethink some of those things." As a result, they revised the plan and have done so a few times since, given the fact that "we just keep changing." Furthermore, the CAO described how the institution annually evaluates the emergency preparedness plans and that those plans live under the Office of Campus Safety and Security. The Office of Campus Safety and Security prompts

the other offices, including the Division of Academic Affairs to review it annually and make sure the plans are up to date. Additionally, the participant noted that with multiple campuses and centers, it can be tough, as one has to adjust for a crisis at one particular location while another might be alright.

Additionally, for those participants who indicated that they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, participants were one of two follow up questions.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 3

1. *In your response, you noted that you created an ACP as a result of COVID-19. Could you describe what that process looked like?*
2. *If you did not have an ACP in place and chose not to draft one, could you describe how you came to that conclusion and what efforts were done to ensure the continuation of instruction?*

Because the researcher only asked this question to participants who noted they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19, only participants who indicated that they did not have a continuity plan in place prior to the pandemic are captured below.

Participant A. Participant A noted on the survey that the institution did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 and did not draft a continuity plan in response to the pandemic. When asked to describe how the college came to that decision, the participant explained "We were just keeping our heads above water. We didn't have time to document anything. We were just sort of trying to get the students to be able to continue their academic progress." When asked if the institution had tried to capture any of the information since the pandemic, the participant stated that they had not. Rather, the CAO stated, "we do have a plan, but I couldn't put my hands on it. It exists mostly in the experiences of the people who have been here."

Participant B. Participant B on the survey noted that they did not have a plan in place prior to the pandemic. However, in following up with the participant on an earlier question, it

was revealed that while the institution did not have a specific pandemic plan, they had planned for multiple contingencies, including earthquakes, wildfires, active shooters, airplane crashes, and so on. The institution had multiple contingencies plans and well-established crisis response teams. They responded to the pandemic by modifying existing plans, and thus the researcher chose not to ask this question to Participant B as it was no longer applicable given earlier responses.

Participant D. On the survey, Participant D indicated that the college did not have an ACP in place prior to the pandemic but indicated that the institution created a plan as a result of the pandemic. When asked to describe what the development process looked like for the creation of the ACP, Participant D explained that they did not have a singular thing called ACP. Rather, the CAO stated, "We had a template that came out of the system office that led us through scenario building." The plans were determined by case counts and governor legislation. Essentially,

> If this, then we would do this, and I know we filled out that matrix so that probably would be one of the starting points of completing an ACP, and then we supplemented that with communications of our own. We developed safety guidelines for fall 2020.

The safety guidelines included technology solutions as well as definitions of delivery modes to be clearer in schedule building and so that students would understand what kind of course they were taking. The CAO explained that as they are a technical college, they were only closed for about two months. The institution's district is a "very low income, first-generation county." With their population and being a technical school, the leadership recognized the importance of returning to class whatever it took from a safety standpoint. Thus, the college planned accordingly, developing a series of scenarios and responses as determined by case counts and had students back in the building by June 2020.

Participant F. On the survey, Participant F noted that they did not have a plan in place prior to COVID-19. With that said, in discussing the planning with the participant, they indicated that they did have an old plan created for swine flu. However, the plan was not useful, so they created an ACP as a result of COVID-19. In describing that the plan creation process looked like, the participant explained, "We built the plane [while flying it]**.** In fact, we had two weeks to do the initial and we wrote things down and we did a lot of communication but to call it a formal plan would be stretching it." They had many people working on the plan, including the director of Distance or Online Learning and his team. Additionally, they hired another person for faculty support to make it a team of three. The Academic Committee assisted in answering questions and developing guidelines such as should a student have to have their camera on in a Zoom session. Ultimately, they decided that having the camera on is good and should be encouraged, but it was not something they would demand. The plan has continued to be amended. For instance, "Last week the system deans were making an amendment to that saying in some courses like oral communication where you have to give a speech, you have to have the camera on." Thus, they have amended the policy on camera use for various situations.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The second research question was designed to identify the extent to which community colleges had an ACP in place as part of their emergency management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19. As such, the researcher asked a number of follow-up questions crafted to identify if the institution had a plan in place prior to the pandemic, and if not, what the process looked like for creating an ACP. The following themes emerged from the interview phase of the study.

MAJOR THEMES

- *The lack of an ACP did not mean a lack of planning.*

    - Of the interviewees, three of the seven participants had indicated on the initial survey that they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19. However, when asked follow-up questions to the three participants who had indicated they did not have a plan, two of the three noted that they had a plan in place, but it was not designed for anything like a pandemic. Hence, Participant A noted, "we've always had an emergency plan; we were planning for things like earthquakes, wildfires, and active shooters." In the same manner, Participant F described how they had an old plan for swine flu. Both participants noted specifically they had not planned for a long-term emergency such as COVID-19.

- *The existing plans created prior to the pandemic were severely inadequate. Existing plans were rewritten or adapted for the current emergency situation.*

    - Participants indicated that the plans they had in place were severely inadequate or even "inaccurate." Participants described how the previous plans were built for short-term emergencies such as hurricanes or active shooters and typically did not consider the duration of the emergency. Participant E described how their "continuity plan was very much based on getting past short times of very interrupted operations at the college." One participant noted that the plan was created in order to appease accreditation bodies and the state, and thus, it was severely lacking. In the same manner, existing plans were often focused on security, communication, facilities, moving classes, and partnerships. Participant E explained how the ACP "was not designed to move all academic activities online." As a result, most participants described rewriting the plan to fit the long-term scenario presented by COVID-19.

- *Academic continuity efforts focused on multiple scenario planning and creation of operational guidelines.*

    - Six of the seven participants created an ACP or rewrote the existing plan as a result of COVID-19. Participants emphasized they did not have a single plan, but rather had various contingency plans built around specific situations. Hence, Participant B described how they had multiple contingency plans with crisis response teams in place: finance team, logistics team, communications team, etc. Participant B described how the leadership team came together to create operational guides for employees and students. Similarly, Participant D described how they had a "template that came out of the systems office that led us through scenario building." The plans were determined by case counts and state regulations. Thus, participants indicated creating multiple plans based upon various scenarios and accompanying operational guidelines.

- *Academic continuity plans have continued to evolve based upon changing guidance and lessons learned throughout the crisis.*

- Participants described how the situations continued to evolve and guidance continued to change, plans were updated based upon the changing circumstances. As an example, Participant F noted how they have continued to amend their plans and procedures, noting they were now requiring web camera usage in certain classes.

- *As institutions sought to maintain academic continuity, individuals and institutions came together to seek solutions and maintain mission-critical activities of teaching and learning.*

  - Throughout the interviews, participants spoke about the importance of collaboration. While the academic continuity planning process itself was not always collaborative in nature—one participant referred to the plan as coming "top-down" given the speed of the crisis—many participants spoke to the importance of collaborating to make it through the pandemic together. As example, Participant B stressed that collaboration with their sister colleges was incredibly useful. Similarly, Participant F described how "COVID really brought out the community in the community college. People really helped each other." At the same time, Participant G described how "the academic continuity plan was helpful in bringing people together to make decisions quickly." Thus, multiple participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and collaborating with various groups or individuals to maintain academic continuity.

- *Academic continuity efforts and preparedness differed greatly as many institutions gave faculty multiple ways to transition to remote learning.*

  - In maintaining academic continuity, institutions' individual plans and preparedness efforts differed greatly as in various situations the onus was placed upon the faculty member. Participant F spoke of giving faculty "multiple ways" of maintaining academic continuity, including purchasing Zoom courses, or running asynchronous courses. As faculty were given "multiple ways of doing it," the participant noted that some people ran courses through email which did not "work well at all." In the same manner, Participant C asked every faculty member to provide them with a plan of what they were going to do to ensure the continuation of instruction. As a result, the CAO described it as a "free for all" and "the wild, wild west." At the same time, Participant E described experience with other emergency situations and already having plans in place for other crises. Thus, the Participant described how they developed a separate COVID-19 plan with specific protocols and guidelines for faculty, staff, and students. These incorporated a significant amount of technology training in a short amount of time.

Lastly, it is important to note that one participant noted that they did not have a plan in place, nor did they proceed to draft an ACP as a result of COVID-19. While this situation was not common among the interview participants, there was a population of survey participants that did not have a plan in place nor chose to draft a plan as a result. On the survey, 16 institutions

noted they did not create an ACP as a result of COVID-19 despite not having one already established. When the researcher asked the participant to help them better understand that decision, the participant responded, “We were just keeping our heads above water. We didn’t have time to document anything. We were just sort of trying to get the students to be able to continue their academic progress.” Thus, while only one interviewee noted they did not create an ACP as a result of the pandemic, 16.66% of the 96 survey respondents did not create an ACP after the crisis occurred. The researcher highlights this exchange as one possible reason plans were not created in response to the crisis.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How did the institution’s ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?

For the third research question, the study examined how the ACP evolved as a result of COVID-19. The researcher sought to identify how the institutions responded to the crisis and continued to adapt and evolve in keeping with the evolving, dynamic situation.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3

In the survey, respondents were asked a couple of open-ended questions as well as to identify if they had proceeded to capture the changes to their written ACPs. As such participants were asked to describe how their ACPs evolved because of COVID-19. In reviewing the open-ended responses, the researcher categorized the various responses by frequently used terms and topics. Then, the researcher further refined the responses into various themes. In reviewing the primary considerations in the creation of an ACP, the researcher discovered the following themes.

SURVEY ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

- *Participants described the primary evolutions occurring to the manner that courses and services were delivered.*

    - The primary evolution participants identified was the modification or adaptation of course and service delivery, as institutional leaders identified alternative modes of delivery to ensure the continuation of not only teaching and learning, but also instrumental student support services such as advising, tutoring, test proctoring, and financial aid. As one participant described, "It forced us to look at course delivery in ways that we had not before. Some of the things that were put in place will continue at some level in the future." This sentiment was repeated throughout the responses, as academic leaders considered how to alternate course and service delivery in order to ensure continuation of instruction. As the situation changed, course delivery methods were continually updated and refined based upon the changing situations and learning what worked.

- *The institutions' ACPs continued to evolve based upon updated/changing county, state, and federal guidance.*

    - In evaluating how to best continue teaching and learning through the adaptation of alternative course and service delivery options, academic leaders also considered how to comply with the changing county, state, and federal guidelines. Thus, the changing guidelines and mandates were a primary impetus for modification of the ACP evolution.

- *Institutions continued to adapt and remain fluid in planning efforts, updating academic continuity plans each semester to be responsive to the ever-changing situation.*

    - In reflecting on how their plans evolved as the pandemic wore on, CAOs consistently stressed the importance of adaptive, dynamic planning. As one CAO described,

        > Being in hurricane country, we have always had to remain nimble in the case of a campus closure due to a storm. The COVID-19 continuity plan addressed the subject of safety more thoroughly. As regulations evolved, the plan was adjusted accordingly. Flexible learning options were also included for students who would test positive and need to move in and out of either hybrid or in-person learning.

      Another CAO described evaluating and revising the plan every semester as the situation and guidance changed. This fluidity reflects best practices in emergency management planning, adapting the plan and response as the situation evolves.

- *ACPs continued to be updated to include clear communication strategies.*

    - As the pandemic continued, many CAO identified how the plan evolved to include specific, more detailed communication plans and strategies. As such, one participant described how at first, the planning focused on quickly transitioning to alternative

modalities for instruction, considering technology and necessary training. However, as the crisis continued, the planning evolved to include more specific communication and the adoption of a pass/fail policy for spring 2020.

- *The safety of the campus community remained a priority as the situation and plans continued to evolve.*

    - While academic continuity plans continued to evolve, the safety of the campus community continued to be a priority for campus leaders. Thus, several participants addressed creating a "safe return to campus" plan (or something similar) as part of their evolving academic continuity planning process.

- *Institutions continued to develop policy, procedures, and processes to support the plan.*

    - In the survey, participants addressed how the plan evolved to include the development of specific policies, procedures, and processes to support new practices required by the pandemic. As such, participants discussed the creation of pass/fail, remote work, placement, and grade policies. As an example, one participant summarized, "We constantly reviewed and revised our procedures and processes."

- *As the pandemic wore on, emphasis evolved from training for faculty, staff, and students to other considerations, as addressed above.*

    - In considering how the ACP evolved, many participants noted the importance of training for faculty, staff, and students, as well as faculty, staff, and students having access to vital technology resources (i.e., laptops, broadband, etc.). At the same time, participants noted that while these considerations were primary at the beginning of the pandemic, the ACP evolved to focus on other considerations as outlined above: continued course and service delivery; changing county, state, and federal guidelines; adaptive and fluid planning; clear communication; continued campus safety; development of policies, procedures, and processes to support changes.

- *Many participants attempted to capture changes to their written academic continuity plans as those plans evolved.*

    - Participants were asked if changes occurred to their academic continuity plans if the written ACP was updated to capture those changes. The study found that 59 participants (63.44%) indicated that they did update the written ACP to reflect the changes while 34 participants (36.56%) noted they did not update the academic continuity plan. As one participant described, "I do not think we have done a good job with writing down the process and steps to replicate in future—so much of time is crisis management, communication, and survival." This sentiment is reflected in the data, as while many participants updated their ACPS; at the same time, many did not update the plan to reflect the changes.

Moreover, as participants reflected upon the crisis, they were asked what they would do differently or include in any future plans. In reviewing the participants' responses in reflecting upon the crisis, the researcher identified the following themes.

MAJOR THEMES

1. **Training for faculty.** Participants expressed the importance of ensuring that all faculty are trained in the LMS and online teaching pedagogy. One participant noted, "have more online faculty professional development opportunities available on a consistent basis." Another CAO stated, "More faculty training on online student engagement techniques." Consistently, CAOs expressed a need for additional training for faculty on the LMS and online pedagogy in order to be better prepared for the next long-term emergency.

2. **Training for students.** In the same manner, CAOs also expressed that students need to be familiar with using the LMS and prepared to utilize it in the event of another crisis. As such, CAOs noted that students also need to be trained in use of the LMS. Hence, one participant noted, "require online learning orientation." Another participant expressed, "I think we would have had more trainings for both faculty and students."

3. **Required Learning Management System (LMS) course shells with a minimum amount of established content.** While many participants noted that their institutions required a course shell be established in the LMS, participants also noted a wide degree of use of these course shells. Hence, one participant stated, "All classes have shells auto generated but faculty use them to varying degrees from none to quite extensively." Hence, consistently CAOs expressed a need to have all courses have a corresponding course shell in the LMS with a minimum amount of established or required content. For instance, one CAO maintained, "require course shells with minimal content (syllabus, required textbooks, contact info, gradebook)." Similarly, someone else stated "have all faculty use the LMS for grading, for posting things like the course syllabus and presentations (videos, power points)."

4. **Inclusion and establishment of communication strategies**. Participants also noted the importance of clear and consistent communication in the event of a long-term emergency. As example, one participant indicated they would have a "notification process to both students, faculty, and staff." Another noted they would "develop a system for faculty to communicate their own needs or a student's needs more quickly. This would require us to have a process to respond quickly to any concerns or needs." While types of communication expressed varied, participants regularly reported a need for clear and consistent communication for both faculty and students.

5. **Alternative modalities**. Participants noted a desire to continue to utilize or expand offerings in alternative modalities to be better prepared for the next crisis and to

continue to meet students' evolving needs. Thus, one participant noted they would "provide alternative modalities such as HyFlex, significantly increasing the number of online and hybrid offerings compared to pre-COVID." Another CAO wrote, "We are moving to a more hybrid teaching/learning methodology for fall as a result of COVID. The retention of our students improved, and the labs were more relevant because of the advanced learning from their online/hybrid content." This move to additional alternative modalities was a consistent response among participants.

6. **Documented and easily accessible published plan.** In their reflection, CAOs noted the importance of having an established, documented plan that was easily accessible to all. As one participant put it, "We should have had a plan in place for remote delivery of all coursework in case it was deemed necessary. We did a great job transitioning quickly but that was because of our outstanding dean of Distance Learning." Another participant advised, "Have a written plan so people feel the process was more transparent and less 'spur of the moment.'"

7. **Multiple scenario planning**. Participants also indicated the need to plan for multiple scenarios, taking an all-hazards approach to emergency management planning. Thus, one participant noted, "Our previous plan focused more on if we were not able to use the physical buildings because of an earthquake, etc. Now we are looking at multiple scenarios—loss of physical space, loss of technology, and health-related quarantines."

In their reflection, participants noted various components that they would include in future planning efforts as the themes above identify.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

During the interviews, participants were asked follow-up questions to determine how their academic continuity plans had evolved throughout the pandemic. In considering the evolution of the academic continuity planning process, participants were asked to consider how they adjusted their academic operations, if their written ACP had evolved throughout the pandemic, if there were concerns related to institutional or program accreditation, and if the institution postponed or delayed any elements due to the pandemic.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 6

How have you adjusted your academic operations because of COVID-19 in the continuation of

learning?

The following responses summarized participants' answers to the following question.

Participant A. Participant A began by explaining that they "changed everything." The participant noted that they moved to a pass/fail grading system that first semester. Additionally, they took off academic sanctions. Furthermore, they adjusted the definitions of online classes, and now they have two designations for online classes—online asynchronous and online synchronous. Furthermore, Participant A explained, "We changed our master agreements to allow faculty to teach much more online within their regular load. Now they can teach up to 70% of their load and overload online." Additionally, they waived in-person office hours, and gave faculty an additional stipend of $700, as a token of appreciation (summer 2020).

Participant B. In considering how they adjusted academic operations, Participant B described how the institution established fall 2020 operational guidelines as well as spring 2021 operational guidelines. The participant explained how the parameters for the current semester were new because the vaccine was available. They were building out the fall 2021 schedule, and the cases were going down in the summer of 2021. In June the state reopened, but then the Delta variant appeared. As such, they adjusted their planning, and only required faculty to be on campus one day per week, and a portion of one class had to be on campus, to it was a "sliver of in-person instruction." They did not pull everything back. The participant explained that the district had set a goal back in January or February that "at least 50% of courses" must have an in-person component. Participant B explained that he "took a lot of heat for that requirement" as many of their counterparts had not really resumed in-person instruction. Rather, the participant explained how they have adapted and in fall 2021 have 46% of courses with an in-person section, which is significantly more in-person sections than the sister colleges. In fall 2020, they were running 90% online and 90–95% online in spring 2021. Additionally, Participant B

explained how they "drew up a safety plan for their county health department." As a result, they were able to reopen their fire academy and dental hygiene program. As such, they were "one of few in the state who were able to achieve that."

Participant C. In considering how the institution has adjusted academic operations in response to COVID-19, Participant C also spoke to the various types of classes they were running. Thus, Participant C notes, "we have sustained a much higher percentage of online classes." The CAO said they will have about 200 face-to-face classes in spring 2022, which will put them about 50% online. Prior to the pandemic, they were running at about 25% online. The participant explained that they plan on decreasing the number of online courses in the summer and then again in the fall. With that said, they aim to continue to offer at least 30% online.

Additionally, Participant C noted that in spring 2022 they are "becoming a vaccination required institution" so they want to ensure they have online options available for the students who neither want to receive the vaccine nor apply for an accommodation. At the same time, the participant noted that community members were not allowed on campus, and that it is such a "conflict with our mission in restricting who can come in."

Furthermore, Participant C noted that they have developed a new rubric for online learning and common standards for faculty developing courses. In the process they have redeveloped over 800 courses. Participant C describes it as a "great opportunity for folks to rethink their classes." Overall, Participant C maintained they have made tremendous strides, noting that "it is really striking to me how innovative we've been in the face of all this."

Participant D. The researcher did not ask Participant D this question.

Participant E. In describing how their institution adjusted academic operations, Participant E described how they adjusted classrooms in response to the pandemic. At the

beginning of the pandemic, they only used large rooms and social distanced at 6 feet (1.83 m). Later classroom assignments and set up evolved from 6 feet (1.83 m) social distancing to 3 feet (0.91 m) of social distancing. Additionally, they instituted a HyFlex model, where half the students came one day, and the other half watched it live online. Participant E explained, "Now that's a challenge to teach and so some faculty teach an extra section for no pay." Participant E went on to explain that faculty did not have to teach HyFlex if they taught an additional section without pay and got at least close to their original numbers of students.

In the same manner, protocols in the classrooms and labs changed particularly with shared equipment. Science labs went and stayed online as the space was pretty tight. Participant E explained,

> I don't have a real good sense of how well that went. I don't think it went that great. I did try very hard to have a few hard parameters like if you're teaching online, you cannot be at home.

The participant explained that they did make some exceptions and allow faculty to teach the class fully remotely but live synchronously and not from their house. Hence, the participant explained,

> I love the faculty. I love them but I don't want them teaching A and P from their kitchen table. We just tried to set those parameters up as we went along so that you know here are your options.

Participant E explained that they went home on March 13th (which was the week of spring break). As a result of the crisis, they extended spring break one week, and by May 4, 2020, they had vocational students back.

> I was really worried about law enforcement and fire and some of those programs. Before, the [state] Department of Law Enforcement would not allow any instruction online. We were beholden to the accreditors, so they just came to a full stop, and I think they realized we can't stop law enforcement academies at this time because then, of course, here comes the whole George Floyd incident. They allowed online instruction but even then, only synchronous, so we're back and reteach two weeks of class. We finally got there.

Participant F. The researcher did not ask Participant D this question.

Participant G. In describing how the adjusted academic operations, Participant G referenced the changes to modalities and courses. Participant G also described how professional development changed. Participant G explained, "We instituted a lot more requirements. We want to ensure that things like curriculum and that cycle are largely the same except instead of meeting in a big room or we're meeting on Zoom." Thus, prior to a person could change a modality, they had to do some professional development in order to keep the curriculum largely the same.

Participant G noted that they still have advisory meetings, but we have a mix now with some people on campus and some online. Moreover, they moved from an online live format to a more structured online format. The participant explained that they had students on campus regardless of modality of instruction and so they wanted the students to have access to those supports. Additionally, they gave away notable quantities of laptops and hotspots to students. The participant noted that it didn't mean that the students did not have Wi-Fi, but they might not have an environment conducive to learning. As such, academics took the lead to come back to campus to be there for students. Thus, they "made a decision for staff, people working in the departments supporting the academic mission, will be going to be in the offices, because we can support students who are remote from our offices." Participant G explained that they still had people sitting in their cars, taking classes. Hence, they explain,

> We really had to be creative, and we continue to try to find more and more spots where you can sit down comfortably and work and speak to someone on a Zoom class without someone yelling in your ear a foot away.

As of fall 2021, the college has about one third of classes back on campus, one third asynchronous, one third online live. These figures vary by program in general, as the hands-on

experiences like nursing, the police academy, aviation, and automotive are fully back. At the same time, the participant noted that a lot of students are questioning the online live modality, as they wonder why they would sit in Zoom instead of doing it on their own time. The participant noted that they spent a lot of CARES/HERFF money outfitting physical classrooms to broadcast lectures. Participant G explains that some great opportunities exist, but that learning is "not a one size fits all approach."

INTERVIEW QUESTION 7

If you had a written ACP, how has it evolved because of COVID-19? What changes occurred to the plan?

Additionally, in order to determine how the institution's ACP evolved in response to the COVID-19 capture, the researcher wanted to determine if the institution had a written ACP in place and if so, did the institution update the plan as it evolved.

Participant A. Participant A indicated they did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID-19 nor did they write one as a result. Thus, this question did not apply to the subject.

Participant B. Participant B explained how they continually adjusted the operational guidelines, revising them for each semester. Hence, they have their fall 2020 operational guidelines which were revised for spring 2021 based upon "the parameters for the current semester." This resulted in a number of changes as addressed above. These changes were captured in the updated operational guidelines for the upcoming semesters.

Participant C. In reflecting upon how the written ACP has evolved throughout the pandemic, Participant C responded, "I don't know that we did the best job of capturing everything. It feels like we are in constant motion and so I don't think we've chronicled everything." Instead, Participant C explains that probably the best chronical is in their leadership

notes. The participant also noted that capturing those details and putting it into the actual plan could be a good project for students as it could be helpful if there's another event like this. At the same time, Participant C noted that they did design a new iteration of the plan in preparation for people to come back to campus in summer 2021. Starting in July 2021, people came back in a couple days. They were completely remote from March 2020 to July 2021. In summer 2021, they felt like it would be a good time to return as there were fewer classes. However, they revised the plan for Iteration 3.0 for FA2021, with very limited face-to-face classes in the fall. They continued to include social distancing, and mask-wearing. Furthermore, COVID-19 testing was required every two weeks for those specialized programs. Participant C expressed, "It was a rocky time, and I must tell you it was horrific on the staff."

Additionally, Participant C noted that the pandemic really changed people's jobs. For many people at their institution, the first time back on campus was in spring 2022. The interviewee explained that faculty were afraid and wanted to know if they can "throw out people who are not vaccinated." Participant C went on to explain,

> So, part of the dean's role is going to have to be to try to allay their fears and be very present on campus during the first month or so of the semester, but also to be ready, because we hear a lot of people say, 'oh, I think, I might retire.

Thus, the deans may need to be reassigning classes.

Participant D. In considering how the ACP evolved, Participant D explained that they were "always be in contact with the systems office and peers across the state to see what changes need to be done." Then based on the guidance and feedback, they made slight adjustments. Hence, Participant D explains the situation.

> I don't know that it was written beyond perhaps communications that came out from our HR office or our president saying okay now this is what's going to happen. It did evolve when you think back on it all; it was such a moving target and such a time of ambiguity.

> Still is really. I think people are reaching their tolerance level or non-tolerance level of ambiguity. People just want normalcy.

Participant D continued to explain that they thought that is why the president was ready to bring everyone back to campus. They noted that there are schools in the system that are just now bringing people back and it's hard when you have been teleworking for a year and a half. Recently, they lost a 27-year veteran because of the vaccine mandate. At the same time, Participant D noted that they have 40% of employees testing weekly.

Participant E. Participant E noted that they did not officially update that document. They describe, "Instead we have just created a whole world of other documents specific to COVID-19." Participant E described how the continuity plan has a section on massive weather events and active shooters, but no section on a pandemic. Participant E qualified that statement saying, "It might have had, but no one's paid any attention to it if it did. We were just focused on guns and hurricanes." At the same time, the participant recalled their experience in another state and how they had a section on toxic cloud emergencies in their continuity plan. Thus, the participant concluded that they thought they should go back and edit the continuity plan, adding in a section for pandemic.

Participant F. In considering how the ACP has evolved because of COVID-19, Participant F stated, "Now we have written standards." The participant proceeded to elaborate that those standards include how to put a face-to-face class in Brightspace, how to use Brightspace in a synchronous online course or hybrid. The participant explained that they are offering significantly more hybrids now and that previously they did not offer any synchronous online courses before. Additionally, the institution has developed a collection of documents on how to run a synchronous course. Participant F notes, "It is much better than the smattering of policies we had before." Furthermore, the participant explained that they now include how to

pivot courses to online in faculty development days. Thus, they explained that before they had not done much online training. Now they include how to use Brightspace to the pedagogy of teaching online in professional development. Moreover, Participant F noted that in order to teach online, faculty have to either go through a set of training or have previous experience teaching online. They can meet with the director of online and he will figure out if they will receive prior learning credit for teaching elsewhere. Thus, Participant F explained that since the pandemic, they have intentionally developed standards and increased training opportunities.

Participant G. The researcher did not ask this question to Participant G, as the participant had previously explained that the institution has a Campus Safety and Security department which takes the lead on continuity planning. Through this department, all other divisions and departments are prompted annually to review and revise their continuity plans.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 8

Were there any concerns related to institutional or program accreditation during the pandemic? If so, how were those handled?

In considering how the institution's ACP evolved in response to the COVID-19 crisis, the researcher also wanted to determine if there were any institutional or programmatic accreditation concerns that would have prompted the changes or evolution of the academic continuity plan. Thus, interview participants were asked to consider:

Participant A. When asked to consider if there were any concerns related to institutional or programmatic accreditation, Participant A indicated that they did not have any concerns. While Participant A mentioned healthcare programs, they also noted that "every health care program in the country was in the same position." In response, Participant A noted that they used virtual simulation until students could go back to hospitals and dental clinics as soon as they

were able. The participant explained that accreditors were well aware of limitations institutions were facing.

Participant B. In the same manner, when Participant B was asked to identify if there were any concerns related to institutional or program accreditation, the participant noted they had concerns surrounding programmatic accreditation, specifically for the EMT, fire academy and dental hygiene programs. Thus, the participant noted that there were issues with prerequisites for the dental hygiene program. They noted, "The Dental Hygiene Board would not accept or qualify biology or chemistry at first." The participant went on to explain that it took a great deal of lobbying to the dental hygiene board as well as a call to the commissioner. The programs lobbied to allow a waiver for spring of 2020 and were granted it. However, the waivers expired in spring 2021. At that time, the science faculty stepped up to do in-person labs. Participant B described the situation, "It's kind of scary, but they did it even in the midst of huge surges of COVID cases; last winter was horrible." Additionally, the participant noted that the fire academy lobbied for hybrid and were allowed to continue doing hybrid instruction largely due to their highly successful pass rates. Thus, Participant B identified several programmatic accreditation concerns regarding specific programs requiring hands-on and clinical instruction.

Participant C. In a similar manner, Participant C identified that several of the institution's health care programs experienced challenging accreditation requirements in the midst of the pandemic. For instance, Participant C stated, "the clinical piece was really quite challenging. We had to find a way to do face-to-face clinical work, and for some of our students, they couldn't graduate because they had to finish their hours." Participant C described how it was a "horrible situation" where people were being exposed and having to quarantine. Whole classes were forced to cancel and call the hospitals. Additionally, Participant C described how

another challenge was programs that required internships. As such, they tried to do internships online, but many of them were not very successful. At the same time, they were able to work through it with a lot of communication with accreditations.

Furthermore, they had to put some programs completely online but could not claim them as completely online with the accreditors. The participant noted that they still needed to do the formal process with the accreditation body to make them officially online programs. Lastly, the participant noted that the regional director did not give too many parameters about who is qualified to teach. While some of the other regional accreditors note that a person has to have so many graduate hours, they have more flexibility. As a result, they changed a lot of the job descriptions to try to "attract candidates who have more of a skill set of what we need … people that had experience teaching online, experience developing online classes." Hence, Participant C described program specific accreditation challenges with those programs requiring clinical and internship components. They also noted how they have taken the opportunity to rewrite job descriptions to attract more experienced instructors with familiarity teaching in an online environment.

Participant D. When asked if there were institutional or program accreditation concerns as a result of the pandemic, Participant D noted that they did not really have any. Rather, they stated, "We had put all those measures into place to ensure that the rigor was still there." Participant D described how the state had a policy that said an institution can consider and close out a term as long as they have completed through two thirds of the semester. It was spring break and then we took another week to allow faculty to prepare. As a result, the CAO did the math to see if they could complete another two and a half weeks (or whatever the math was) of instruction. Participant D noted that they did receive pushback from some of the automotive

students who were upset that they were paying for 16 weeks of instruction but that it was being cut short. Hence, they offered the students the opportunity to come back the following semester to pick up where they left off, but no one took them up on the offer. During this time period, they were also bringing back lab classes such as automotive, welding, and gunsmithing in order to finish one more project before they were graded out.

Participant E. Participant E noted having doubts about a couple of specific programs, namely law enforcement and firefighter. They noted how these programs were at a "full stop" as the state would not allow any online instruction. Participant E stated, "They just came to a full stop and then I think they realized, we can't stop the law enforcement academies at this time." Participant E noted that this decision was also at the height of the George Floyd incident. As a result, the state allowed online instruction, but only synchronous instruction.

Additionally, Participant E described how the governor issued an executive order and then extended it twice. They stated, "I think that that lifted the requirements for clinicals in nursing, so we were fine because we had already had a higher ratio than some places in terms of clinical hours versus simulators." At the same time, the participant described how another hurdle was dental hygiene because they run an on-campus clinic and they were not willing to open the clinic up right away. Yet, students had to have those hours in the clinic, but they had nowhere else to place them. As a result, they did reopen the clinic. Thus, as Participant E summarized, "There was a lot of disruption in that."

Participant F. When asked about institutional or programmatic accreditation concerns, Participant F responded, "No, the accreditors were pretty flexible." They proceeded to note, "We had already done a substantive change years back for offering distance education courses, so we were already accredited for that." Participant F described how they were flexible on numerous

items. For instance, the nursing accreditors allowed them to do more simulation than normal. Hence, the CAO stated, “We did spend a lot of money, expanding simulation.”

Furthermore, Participant F described the challenges that have arisen out of meeting the social distancing and various requirements set forth as a result of the pandemic.

> One of the problems I have right now is not enough classroom space if we came back full face-to-face because the sim lab expanded from one room to four. The power medicine moved out of their building which wasn’t conducive to social distancing and are now taking up four classrooms that were general purpose classrooms. We started a new music program which has taken over the classroom that power medicine used, and it’s a little out of the way place so you can bang drums and play guitars without disturbing other classes.

As the institution has evolved to meet the accreditation requirements and academic program standards, additional challenges have also arisen. Hence, Participant E described the shortage of classroom space which developed out of the expansion of sim labs.

Participant G. In responding to this question, Participant G noted, “The big piece was clinicals.” They described how they have a large nursing program and other allied health programs, including EMT, emergency medicine, teacher education, and a police academy. Participant G captured how all of those programs require clinicals or onsite teacher education. Hence, they stated,

> You have to be in the schools, you have to be in the hospitals, you have to be at the fire station, whatever it is, and so that was huge. It’s required by accreditation; there are state requirements; and on top of programmatic accreditation.

Moreover, Participant G noted, “Hospitals have their rules too, so that immediately became a challenge. We met some of it through simulation. We have a sim center, so we invested heavily in simulation and the state gave us some leeway.” The state let them use simulation and clinical sites allowed people in, but everyone had to be vaccinated. At the same time, the college did not require vaccination per the state, but the hospitals do. They require

vaccinations, so they would have students despite intensive efforts to communicate, go to their clinical site but have not been vaccinated. Participant G stated, “Then they can’t go through the program, and they’re upset and angry and all those things.”

Similarly, when thinking about accreditation, certifications, and licensures, Participant G described also considering their core success. They reviewed their capstone certifications and portfolios, concluding that “learning was not happening in the same way.” Participant G noted that while no one was surprised by it, “it definitely didn’t jive.” Faculty were like, ‘What do you mean? People are still passing and we’re saying ‘yeah, but no one’s learning.’” The nursing exam pass rates are the lowest they have had. Thus, Participant G described accreditation challenges with the nursing programs and on-site clinical requirements.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 9

Were there any other components that have been postponed or delayed due to the pandemic such as faculty contracts, evaluations, course evaluations, assessment, accreditation, state reports?

Participant A. Participant A described how they delayed various evaluations during the pandemic. For instance, they did not administer student evaluations that first semester in spring 2020. Additionally, they also did not administer adjunct evaluations which was “difficult as adjuncts must be evaluated for their raises. It was disappointing for them.” In the same manner, they did not do any full-time faculty evaluations that first year. Since then, they have gone back as brand new faculty must be evaluated each year. Yet, Participant A notes that they have stopped doing things, saying, “There’s a lot of things I wouldn’t be doing if I wasn’t working on COVID almost every day all day. Our momentum for teaching and learning has shifted and you know it makes me really sad.”

Participant B. Participant B described how the dental accreditation was postponed for a year. Participant B also noted that they postponed speaker series and performing arts series during this time.

Participant C. When considering if there were any components that had to be postponed or delayed due to the pandemic, Participant C responded, "All things had to be postponed. We've done so because of union relations." The participant noted how they have one union contract for the entire state. As a result, they "tried to offer things that didn't cost us money, and we did negotiate a statewide MOU every semester." Additionally, Participant C described how they had two semesters without student or faculty evaluations. Similarly, they rolled over chairs and coordinators for a second year. Participant C stated,

> So, the concessions from them [faculty union] on process was really about delaying things, but it's hard because even though we have deleted some things we have made great strides in curriculum and online learning. It's just ironic that we've moved some of our innovation forward, despite the fact that we have been in this situation.

Participant D. In response to this question, Participant D noted that they did not delay particular components. Hence, they stated, "I can honestly say no—our faculty contracts are bargained by as an entire system, so we don't have that responsibility. We just have to live to the terms of them which is hard out here." Furthermore, Participant D explained how although they did not do faculty observations that spring, they did catch up on them the following fall, so while they were "postponed, but not canceled entirely."

Additionally, they noted that the Higher Learning Commission did not care and that they still had an institutional report to submit by March 30. They noted that "for the most part, we really tried to move on." At the same time, a couple of initiatives at the state level like guided pathways had the reporting requirements postponed. They continued reporting on IPEDS, financial aid, Cleary reports, and those core compliance reports.

Participant E. Participant E described how they skipped faculty student evaluations of instruction for the spring and summer 2020 semesters. Additionally, the participant also issued guidance to chairs (who are faculty themselves) to "go easy on whether they (the faculty) did their professional development this year." They continued, "Their PD has been to keep us afloat." Furthermore, the participant described how they have an annual assessment day for every department where they look at completion, retention, and equity gaps. While they have continued those days, they have been so with a "big asterisk because everything was so disrupted."

Participant F. In considering what components were postponed, Participant F identified peer evaluations. They stated, "We practically just dropped the peer evaluation process the past few years. We are way behind." The participant noted that the full-time faculty have peer evaluation every five years as part of their contract. Adjuncts, on the other hand, do not have a schedule, but department chairs or a designee can go in and observe. There is an observation form and those should be done every three years.

Additionally, Participant F identified how they have dropped enforcing some of the training for teaching online and that, overall, they have offered less faculty development. Hence, they stated, "In some things faculty development is easier ...on one Zoom call we can have 150 people." However, he noted that a book club meeting "goes much better over lunch in the culinary arts dining room than it does over Zoom." As a result of these challenges, they have not bought as many books for faculty development, as "It's just hard to do remotely."

Participant G. Participant G described how they delayed evaluations and observations in the spring. At the same time, they have a huge adjunct population, so they picked it back up in the fall, particularly as observations are used to inform evaluations. Additionally, graduation

moved to a virtual situation. At the same time, Participant G described how they had no summer dual enrollment.

> It finished with the spring. We actually have traditional dual enrollment where high school students come to our campus and take courses. We also have dual enrollment where we're offering college credit classes on high school campuses. And then on two of our campuses we have the college academy, where kids earn their high school diploma as well as an associate of arts…. So now you have students negotiating two systems (learning management systems) and that was a challenge.

Hence, Participant G described how they delayed course observations and evaluations, as well as how they did not offer summer dual enrollment courses.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 12

Is there any advice you would like to share with future community college CAOs concerning this type of emergency?

Participant A. When asked to consider what advice the CAO would give to future CAOs regarding this type of emergency, Participant A responded that they would recommend requiring all new faculty to have online instruction as part of onboarding. Additionally, they recommended honoring "everybody as part of the solution when there's an academic continuity break." As example, Participant A described how the faculty received a stipend for their work, but the staff did not, which "set a negative tone that faculty transition was harder than everyone else's." They explained how staff also had to change everything they did and adapt as well. Hence, they recommended honoring everyone as part of the solution during the crisis.

Participant B. In providing advice to future CAOs, Participant B stated,

> Consistency is really important. Flexibility is as well. I know that is contradictory, but we are dealing with humans, not machines. The human element is very important; you have to acknowledge people's anxieties and reassure them that you have their best interests at heart.

Furthermore, Participant B recommended practicing good self-care as well.

Participant C. Participant C identified that "building and using your leadership team is critical." They advised really thinking about the role of the dean and how it is a change process. Hence, they stated,

> I know it's about emergencies but really what we are talking about is incremental and long-term change with the unfortunate situation of not knowing. Many of us are experiencing low enrollments and that's a concern but what we do in the decisions that we make are going to be critical for attracting students back to the community college and sustaining it.

Participant D. In a similar manner, Participant B responded,

> I can't emphasize enough the importance of consistent communication because in the void of communication, people will make up their own stories and people will do their own things, not because they want to be naughty but because they need to, and so we, we had a very clear line of communication as things were unfolding so fast.

They described how first the governor would speak, then the chancellor would react to that for the state. Then the college president would send out the communication to the campus community. The participant explained that the communication did not happen immediately, but the college president would communicate about 24 hours later because things were happening so quickly. Participant D proceeded to explain, "It's an art to not inundate, not cause fear, but just that communication is absolutely critical, even in the ambiguity of it, just communicating and saying 'this is what we know, this is what we don't know.'" They noted how it helped them "maintain a sense of calm" as well despite the crisis.

Furthermore, Participant D also recommended staying on top of technology. They advised that the CAO makes sure the institution has cutting-edge technology and that people know how to use it through ongoing and regular professional development. Participant D concluded,

> Lastly, I can't emphasize enough the power of culture and relationships. To help navigate extreme circumstances, whether it's active shooter or global pandemic, if you have trust in your team, and especially in your senior leadership team, because that will unravel

> really quickly and make everything fall apart and at all levels of the institution if your senior leadership team isn't absolutely tight.

Thus, Participant D recommended future CAOs maintain consistent communication, stay on top of technology, and provide training on how to use it, and invest in relationships and the college's culture.

Participant E. When asked about advice for future CAOs, Participant E reflected on the pandemic and how it was impossible to imagine something like COVID-19 would ever occur. They stated, "it's just been incredible. No, I never imagined. The long-term impacts for all of us are just really going to be profound… It's a whole new world."

Participant F. When asked what advice they would have for future CAOs regarding this type of emergency, Participant F laughed and responded, "Don't become a CAO." They continued to explain their philosophy in responding to the pandemic.

> The successes we've had, and I'm not saying it was a total success, was our ability to work together. A broad swath of people supporting each other. I kind of have a mantra that I've been telling faculty for a while now: give yourself some slack and cut them [the students] some slack. You know, forgive these transgressions, and more importantly forgive yourself. You can't do it perfectly.

Additionally, Participant F noted that throughout their many years of experience, they could not remember "any other time in my career that I've dropped so many balls, as I have, in the last year." They described how there are so many things to accomplish, but it sometimes happens late, so they concluded that sometimes they have to forgive themselves for that happening.

Furthermore, Participant F noted the importance of communication, saying, "Communicate, communicate, communicate. I think communication is the most important thing in a crisis like this." They explained how they host Zoom meetings where the president and other executive leaders are there to just listen and answer questions. In the same manner, they send out emails and try to communicate as much as they can in different mediums. Hence, Participant F

emphasized the importance of teamwork, allowing yourself and others grace, and communication.

Participant G. In response to this question, Participant G took a moment to consider community colleges as a sector and what the pandemic has meant to the community college and the people served by the community college. They noted that "marginalized populations took the biggest hit" as a result of the pandemic and then not surprisingly so did community colleges. Hence Participant G offered the following advice to new or future CAOs

> Understand the students we serve and the great mission we have as community colleges. Online and all those things are great, but there are deep, as we know, there are deeper issues. And so, proximity is something we think about a lot, how are we getting to our students and the answer isn't always, we'll just take it online. Students particularly our students really benefit from getting on to a campus so if it's not a campus can we maybe use the YMCA and then municipalities. Can we offer courses and learning environments even in the communities? I think as a chief academic officer, you are always meeting students where they are, really thinking carefully about that.

Participant G discussed how learning environments can be leveraged, knowing that some of our students are hanging on by a thread. The participant explained how the surveys show that their students are all working, typically providing for their families. They explained that "there's a myriad of struggles they're going through." Students have so many challenges, including transportation challenges, and some of their students are taking a two hour bus ride to classes. Hence, they explained how "if one thing goes off, it can really interrupt the progression." They explained that these fundamental struggles remain and are in fact exasperated during an emergency such as the pandemic. Participant G stated, "The inequities are all over the place in this pandemic and that's something that has to be on the community college administrators, and quite frankly any education leader's, mind. In terms of inequities, the impact is drastic."

Interview Analysis and Conclusions

For the third research question, the researcher sought to determine how the ACP evolved over the duration of the pandemic. As such, participants were asked to consider how they adjusted their academic operations, if their written ACP was updated throughout the pandemic, if there were concerns related to institutional or program accreditation, and if the institution postponed or delayed any elements due to the pandemic.

Major Themes

- *Course modalities and classrooms were significantly adapted in order to continue to meet students' needs.*
    - Participants described how they adapted course modalities in order to continue to offer remote learning opportunities. Hence, Participant A described how their academic operations evolved to offer two designations of online classes. In the same manner, Participant E described how they instituted a HyFlex model where half the students came one day, and half the students came on a different day. At the same time, participants discussed updating classroom technology in order to offer various course modalities, including HyFlex. Similarly, Participant G described how they used CARES/HERFF funds to outfit physical classrooms to broadcast lectures. Making technological updates to classrooms and adapting course modalities was a common theme among participants.
- *Operational guidelines and plans were frequently revised based upon the changing guidance from the states.*
    - Participants described how they would frequently adjust their operational guidelines and plans based upon guidance from the state. As example, Participant B noted that they revised their fall 2020 operational guidelines for spring 2021 based upon the "parameters of the current semester." In the same manner, Participant C explained how they designed a new iteration of the plan for people to come back to campus in summer 2021. They then created a third version of the plan for fall 2021 including social distancing and mask wearing. At the same time, Participant D explained how they made slight adjustments to their plans based upon guidance from the systems office and peers across the state.
- *Yet not all changes were captured in the written ACP(s).*
    - While participants strove to update their operational guidelines based upon changing guidance, participants also noted that it was difficult to capture everything. Not all participants consistently updated their operational guides and plans. Hence,

Participant C noted, “I don’t know we did the best job of capturing everything. It feels like we are in constant motion.” Similarly Participant D also noted, “ I don’t know that it was written beyond perhaps communication that came from the HR office or our president.”

- *The academic continuity planning process evolved to include the development of additional policies, procedures, and standards.*

    - Participants spoke about how they developed new policies, procedures, and standards in response to the pandemic. Hence, Participant A described how they implemented a pass/fail grading system and removed academic sanctions that first semester. Similarly, Participant C explained that they developed a new rubric for online learning and common standards for faculty developing courses. Also, Participant F explained that now they have written standards for online teaching. Finally, Participant G also noted how they have “instituted a lot more requirements.” They now require professional development before a faculty may teach in a particular modality.

- *Institutions experienced challenges related to programmatic accreditation around programs requiring clinicals and experiential learning, specifically around nursing, dental hygiene, EMT, fire science, and police academy programs.*

    - Participants frequently described the challenges that arose from programs requiring clinicals or experiential learning. Specifically, participants identified programmatic accreditation concerns around healthcare programs, specifically nursing, EMT, and dental hygiene, as well as fire science and police academy programs. Participant B explained how “the Dental Hygiene Board would not accept or qualify biology or chemistry at first.” Similarly, the fire academy would not allow for online learning. Participant E described a similar experience with their law enforcement and firefighter programs. They described the programs coming to a “full stop,” as accreditors would not allow for virtual or remote learning. Participants also discussed the challenges that surrounded the nursing programs as hospitals had their own requirements and were significantly restricting access given the heightened situation with the pandemic. Many institutions responded by expanding simulation labs and opportunities for students. In regard to the police and fire science programs, participants responded by calling their state legislators and lobbying on behalf of these programs. Participant E noted that requirements for the academies began to change with the racial tensions and concerns surrounding the police forces. Accreditors began lifting requirements on these programs as demand increased.

- *Course and faculty evaluations were often delayed due to the pandemic.*

    - In response to the pandemic, many participating institutions delayed or canceled their course and faculty evaluations. As example, Participant A noted that they did not administer student evaluations or adjunct evaluations during spring 2020. Similarly Participant D also noted that they did not complete any faculty observations that first semester but postponed them to the following fall. Furthermore, Participant E also

skipped faculty student evaluations in the spring 2020 and summer 2020 semesters, and Participant F noted that they had dropped the peer evaluation process for the past couple of years.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?

The final research question asked: What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19? As such, participants were asked a series of questions, designed to identify what components they included in their existing academic continuity plans or in the design of the ACP as a direct result of the pandemic.

SURVEY RESULTS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4

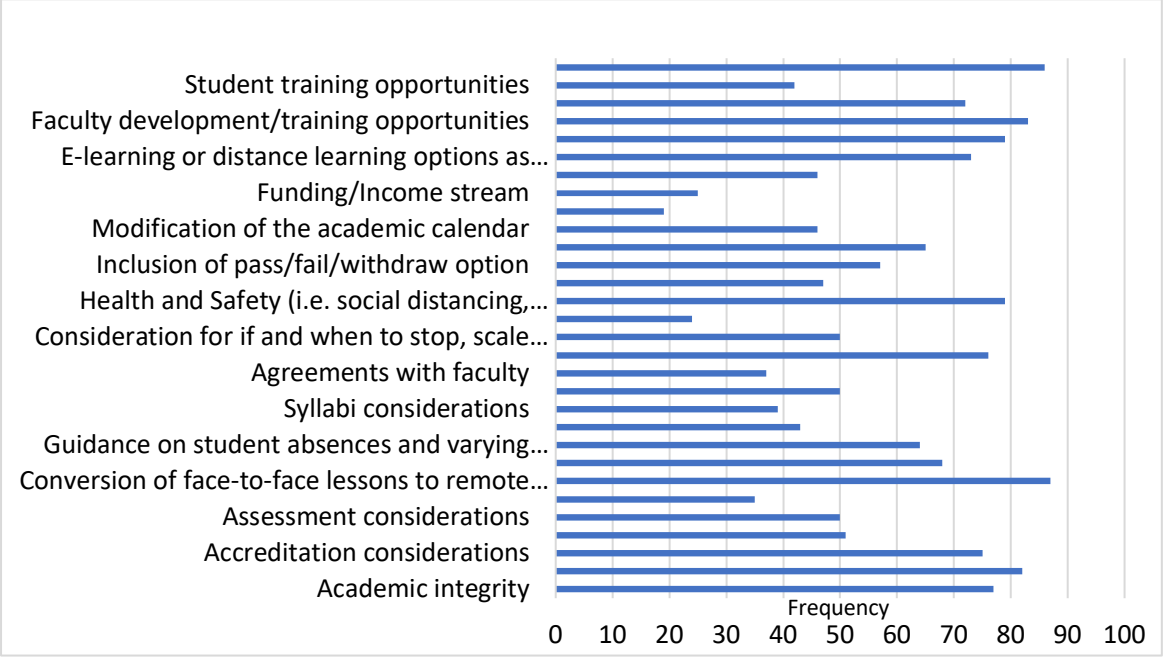
As part of the survey, respondents were asked what components they built into their academic continuity plans. Respondents were given a number of choices based on recommendations from the CDC, REMS, and other established models of ACPs, as outlined in Chapter Two. Respondents also had the option of including additional components they believed were not reflected in the various choices. Respondents most frequently addressed the following components in their ACPs:

1. Support & Guidance for converting face-to-face lessons to remote instruction
2. Addressing student and employee lack of access to computers and internet
3. Faculty development or training opportunities
4. Accessibility
5. Maintaining student and employee health & safety
6. Maintaining academic integrity
7. Inclusion of communication strategies
8. Addressing possible accreditation concerns

9. E-learning/distance learning as feasible and appropriate
10. Multiple formats for distance learning or online delivery.

Figure 10 reflects the frequency of their responses as well as the full list of possible components.

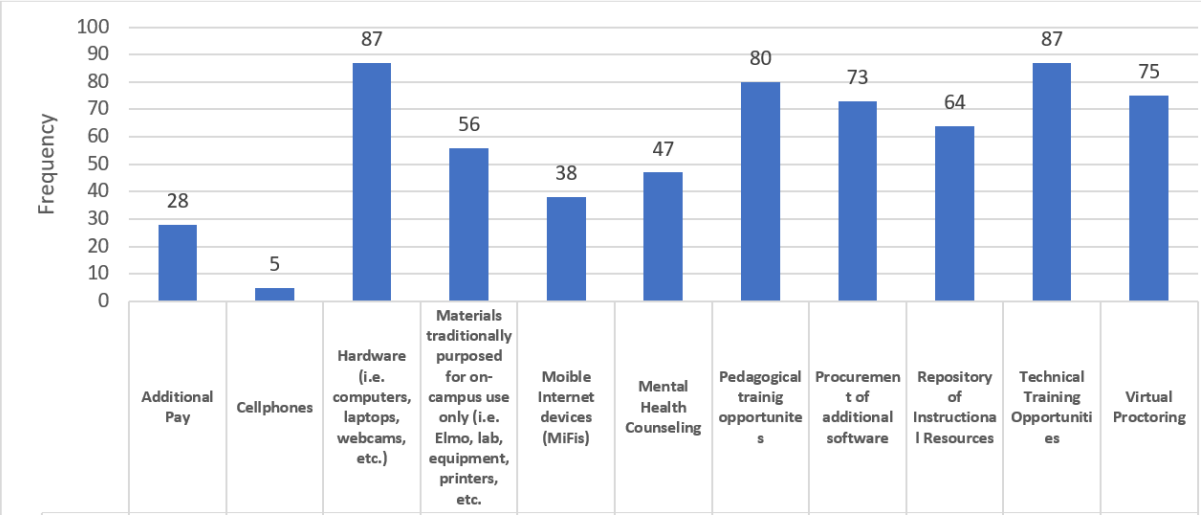
Figure 10. ACP Essential Components



Additionally, participants were also asked to identify supports offered to faculty and to students in response to the pandemic. Choices were determined by best practices from the literature and the author's own familiarity with the various options available in serving in an academic administrative support role. While the choices were by no means exhaustive, participants were given the option of including additional or other supports they provided. In determining supports offered for faculty, participants were asked to choose from additional pay, cell phones., hardware, materials traditionally purposed for on-campus use only, mobile internet devices, mental health counseling. pedagogical training opportunities, procurement of additional software, repository of instructional resources, technical training opportunities, virtual

proctoring, and other. Of the 96 participants, 87 offered both technical training opportunities to faculty and 87 also offered hardware (computers, laptops, webcams, etc.) to faculty. Moreover, 80 participants offered pedagogical training opportunities to faculty, and 75 institutions offered virtual test proctoring services. In the same manner, 73 institutions procured additional software and 64 participants offered a repository of instructional resources. The full list of faculty supports provided by the number of participants is depicted in Figure 11.

Figure 11. Faculty Supports Provided as a Direct Result of COVID-19

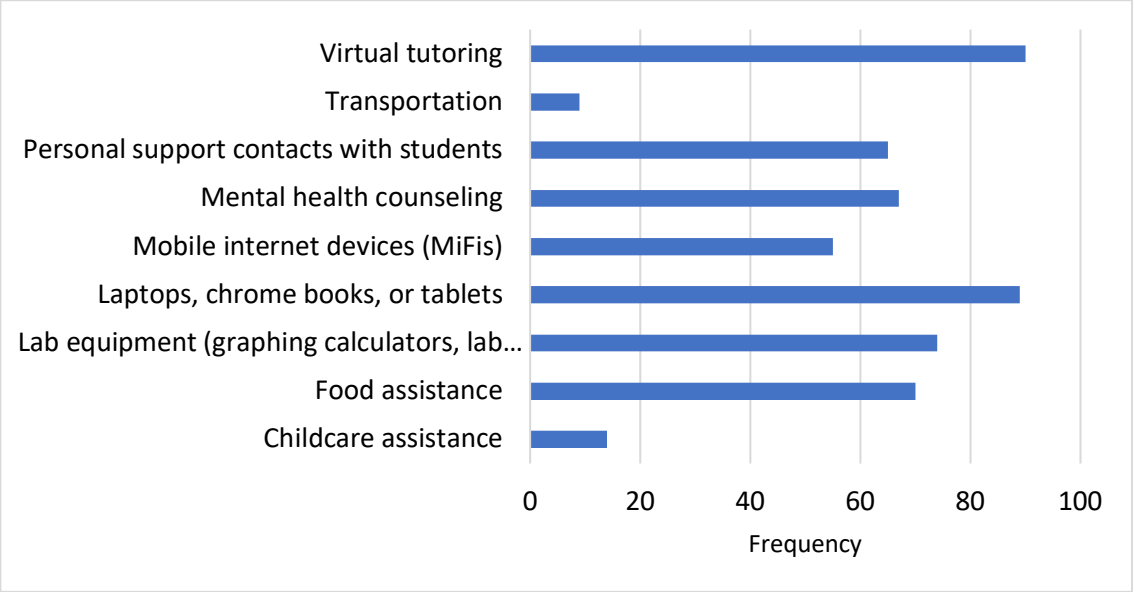


Participants also identified the following additional resources provided to faculty: PPE, plexiglass, virtual office hours, flexible work schedules, virtual simulation software and instructional technology licenses, virtual phone numbers, communities of practices, direct ship of supplies from Amazon, cameras for recording labels, courier to homes, implementation of digital workflows, VPN access, and financial bonuses. In identifying what components are essential for an ACP, the researcher believed it was important to identify the various supports provided to both faculty and students during the current crisis.

Thus, participants were also asked to identify additional support provided to students as a direct result of COVID-19. As such, participants were asked which of the following supports

they provided to students: childcare, food assistance, lab equipment, laptops, Chromebook or tablets, mobile internet devices, mental health counseling, personal support contacts with students, transportation, or virtual tutoring options. Participants were also given the opportunity to note other services provided to students not listed. Of the 96 participating institutions, 90 provided virtual tutoring options for students; 89 provided laptops or similar devices; 74 provided lab equipment; 70 provided food assistance; 67 offered mental health counseling; 65 supported students through personal support contacts; 55 provided mobile internet devices; 14 offered childcare options; and nine provided transportation alternatives to students. Additionally, individual participants also noted providing access to computer labs or internet on campus by appointment, virtual clinics, advising, and financial aid sessions, coaching sessions, housing assistance, and extra financial or emergency aid. These supports provided to students are captured in Figure 12. One individual noted that all of the identified supports were already in place at their institution.

Figure 12. Student Supports Provided



In considering the chronic nature of the crisis, the study was designed to assess supports provided to both faculty and students to continue teaching and learning over the period of a long-term shutdown.

Survey Analysis and Conclusions

In considering the essential components for an effective academic continuity plan, participants identified a number of critical components for the plan to be effective. The following themes emerged.

Major Themes

- *Most frequently participants identified that the primary purpose of an effective ACP is to offer support and guidance for converting face-to-face lessons and coursework to remote instruction.*
    - Eighty-seven out of 96 participants identified that the most essential component of an effective ACP was the conversion of face-to-face lessons to remote instruction. Many of the identified components work to support this initial goal of converting the coursework to remote instruction.
- *An effective ACP addresses student and employee access to necessary equipment and internet.*
    - Eighty-six out of 96 participants identified students' lack of access to the internet or computers as a primary concern. Similarly, 79 participants also identified faculty and staff lack of access to key equipment and internet as another primary concern. This component was further reinforced by the various supports institutions provided to faculty and students. Thus, institutions most frequently provided faculty with access to critical hardware, including computers, laptops, and webcams. In the same manner, institutions frequently provided students with laptops, Chromebooks, and tablets, as well as lab equipment and mobile internet devices to support students' access to remote instruction.
- *Participants frequently identified faculty development and training opportunities as a critical component of an effective ACP.*
    - Of the 96 participants, 87 offered technical training opportunities to faculty and 80 participants offered pedagogical training opportunities to faculty in preparation to transition and continue face-to-face coursework to remote instruction. Additionally,

83 participants identified faculty development and training opportunities as an essential component of an academic continuity plan.

- *Participants identified health and safety considerations are an essential component of an effective ACP.*
    - Seventy-nine of 96 participants identified that maintaining health and safety, including social distancing, temperature checks, etc., is an essential part of building an effective ACP. This theme was reinforced as participants identified additional supports they provided to faculty in the form of PPE, plexiglass, the ability to hold virtual office hours, flexible work schedules, virtual simulation software and instructional technology licenses. Many of these additional supports were designed to minimize time spent on campus and limit the number of people on campus in support of the health and safety of the campus community.
- *Communication strategies should be planned in advance and included in the ACP.*
    - Seventy-six participants of the 96 respondents identified the inclusion of specific communication strategies as an essential component for an academic continuity plan. In the same manner, 65 institutions supported students through personal support contacts designed to facilitate communication. Thus, participants frequently recommended including the design of communication strategies into their ACP.
- *Participants identified incorporating distance learning strategies as feasible and appropriate and including multiple formats for distance learning or online delivery as vital considerations for effective academic continuity planning.*
    - Seventy-three participants identified incorporating distance learning options as feasible and appropriate in the ACP. Additionally, 72 participants identified including multiple formats for distance learning or online delivery.
- *Participants noted the importance of maintaining academic integrity in effectively planning for academic continuity in the event of a crisis.*
    - Seventy-seven participants out of 96 respondents identified that maintaining academic integrity should be a primary component of the ACP. In the same manner, 75 institutions ensured that virtual proctoring was in place and available to faculty in the transition to remote teaching and learning.

INTERVIEW RESULTS

In the interviews, participants were asked a series of questions, created to identify what components they believe are essential for an effective ACP. In doing so, participants were asked to consider how the ACP helped faculty adapt to the challenges presented by the pandemic. In

this question, the researcher sought to identify if there were common components leaders included in the ACP that were designed to help faculty throughout a crisis situation.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 5

How does the ACP help faculty adapt to challenges?

Participant A. During the interview, Participant A identified a number of supports built in for faculty. These supports included pop-up workshops through their academic technology group. For instance, the participant described how the instructional designers and instructional techs gave a crash course on specific topics (i.e. how to do a discussion, how to upload content, how to do a synchronous session through Zoom, how to record, etc.) Furthermore, the participant described how all science paraprofessionals worked with science faculty to return to labs even though the college was closed. The science paraprofessionals helped with taping live labs and uploading them to the LMS. The CAO explained, "It was like it was cramming for exams. We just got in as much learning for our faculty as possible, and you know they did the best they could for the end of that first semester." At this time, the participant described how they are more thoughtful about planning and responding now. Thus, at the beginning of the pandemic, they had 30% of faculty trained in online learning; now they have over 80% of faculty trained in online learning. Thus, the participant concluded, "we have upped our game a lot in high quality online teaching."

Participant B. In describing how the ACP helps faculty adapt to the challenges presented, Participant B stated, "To be brutally honest, I think, more than anything, it was emotionally supportive." The participant noted that they were not sure how many read through the document, but it was reassuring for them to know the college had one. The plan directly

quoted state and federal guidelines and OSHA requirements. The interviewee explained that it was reassuring for people to know that the college was following all the established guidelines.

Participant C. Participant C described how the ACP provided clear definitions of options for online learning. It also developed clear pathways for faculty to have their online course developed and reviewed. Additionally, the participant emphasized communication, noting that they had done "tons of communication," including email, department meetings, and college town halls. Moreover, specialized training sessions were provided (i.e., how to use office hours, how to teach a hybrid course, etc.) In the end, the participant stressed how it included "lots and lots of guidelines and policy development."

Participant D. When asked about how the ACP supported faculty, Participant D explained that there are several pieces that help faculty navigate the challenges. First, he noted that equipment, "making sure they had the equipment they needed." As such, faculty were sent home with laptops, additional monitors, headsets, etc. The American Sign Language instructor took a 60-inch monitor home like she had in her office so she could see her students. Secondly, the participant noted the importance of training in the plan so that instructors had "tools in their toolbox to use." Lastly, the participant noted the ACP should include planning guidance. Thus, at the fall 2020 in-service, they had faculty complete three planning templates. One was for scenario building in case they would get sent home. The CAO described,

> If we all get sent home and have to deliver something different, what's next? Do you know how you are going to do that? How are you delivering now and how would you do it if we could no longer do it that way?

A second template was coverage. So, if a faculty member is unable to complete their assigned duties because they or a loved one is sick, what is the plan B? What's the contingency? Thus, the template prompted faculty to find a buddy or identify some potential substitutes. The third

template was on safety protocols, asking how an instructor would keep their classroom safe. The template asked them to think about if they wore a face shield or face mask lab. It asked them to consider if they were going to split their classes. The participant explained,

> I asked them to think through that piece prior, so I really think that helped them navigate changes that came to be. Now we never did get sent home, so we didn't have to implement those, but we did need to implement coverage plans because people did get sick, we did implement safety.

Then the institution put out safety guidelines. They put up flyers for classrooms noting rooms had been sanitized. That process was developed through the faculty shared governance mechanism as they asked how they would know if a classroom had been cleaned. As a result of that question, they developed a process through the shared governance mechanism. It included a syllabus blurb so that they could communicate consistently with their students. In reflecting upon the planning process, the participant noted the following:

> I feel like we provided them with a lot of tools to help them navigate and just stay calm. And that prevented like rogue stuff from happening. Faculty had a lot of choice (within reason). There were certain non-negotiables: masking, social distancing. Had discussion with them on how they wanted to achieve their social distancing—did they want to go HyFlex? Did they want everyone on campus but in two rooms? Did they want an A, B schedule? Where it was possible to ask and make a change, we did so.

In considering ways the ACP was designed to support faculty, the participant highlighted the importance of equipment, training, and scenario-planning, giving faculty as much choice and freedom in the decisions as possible.

Participant E. In responding to how the ACP supported faculty during a crisis, Participant E identified, "I think the biggest anxiety producing part of this for faculty was the lack of certainty." In response, the participant, with the help of others and in consultation with the president, created A through G plans. Plan G covered if COVID was really bad, and everyone was online and campus access was restricted. Plan A was COVID was not too bad. The

participant explained that the president thought that there were still too many plans so they whittled it down to A, B1, B2, and C at which time, the participant stated that was the fewest number of plans they could develop.

Additionally, the plans identified categories for traditional lectures. They had 10 categories from science labs to large equipment labs to music. The participant explained, "I had never thought before that you can play drums before you can play brass because you can't be blowing through the instruments." In the same manner, they reviewed singing and moved the whole orchestra outside. The interviewee explained how faculty wanted parameters on what would move the institution to the next level of the plan, so "that was a very important piece of it." At the same time, the participant noted that it "worked a lot better before vaccines." The continued, "Before vaccines, we could say if the community positivity rates are above this amount for seven days rolling average (it was that specific), then we move from D to C or something." The participant indicated the challenges that exist with the vaccines.

> Then the vaccines came and then came the state itself which has a giant federalism battle with the Biden administration. I don't even know what's going to happen next, because our legislature went into a special session, and we can't mandate anything to anybody so once all that happened, it was a lot harder to say.

Thus, in planning, the participant noted that they tried as best they could to give assurance to the campus community. They explained that for faculty "it is more the assurance that we could give them, that we had a plan, that we had a faculty FAQ page, that we have definitions, and we just did our best." The participant described how "it wasn't perfect at all, but I did my best to just keep that communication up."

Furthermore, the interviewee noted that they did not negotiate with the faculty, but they frequently brought deans and chairs together to describe what they were thinking and ask for feedback or if deans and chairs saw a potential problem with it. The participant described how

deans and chairs were definitely a part of coming up with proposals because they know what's even going to work in the classroom. They created a lot of details for it. In the same manner, the vocational programs were put in smaller groups, and the whole flow of the class changed, as they were coming in a specific entrance and checking in every day. The participant noted that it was the faculty and chairs that came up with the plan for the vocational programs.

In reflecting on how the ACP supported faculty during a crisis, the participant emphasized providing assurance to faculty, developing multiple contingency plans, and collaborating with deans, chairs, and faculty in the development of solutions and plans. Additionally, the participant also noted the challenge of developing contingency plans and metrics with the conflicts that exist between local, state, and federal governments.

Participant F. Participant F identified several ways that the ACP supports faculty during a crisis. First, he noted that every course has an established shell within the LMS, Brightspace. Furthermore, everyone must use the gradebook, post their syllabus, and assignments in Brightspace. As a result of the pandemic, they have pivoted from "a face-to-face to a Brightspace core." Participant F explains, "It [the pandemic] put us light years ahead of where we were." Additionally, the CAO noted that they created system-wide policies which went through the board of trustees. As a result, individual deans could say, "it is a systems-wide policy that they can shut their camera off." Furthermore, the participant explained how they also set a lot of online policies through their governance committee which is system wide as well. The director of Online Learning worked with the faculty group. They developed policies and procedures which were sent to the Academics Committee which reviewed it. It went to the College Council, and back and forth. Finally, the policy came up to the CAO. The participant noted, "A smart administrator takes suggestions not lightly." Thus, the participant identified that their ACP

supported faculty by establishing policies and procedures to be followed. These were developed through the established shared governance system and process.

Participant G. Participant G described how the ACP supports faculty, stating, "The first piece of the ACP is it engages faculty to create a plan with their students, so I like that there's somewhat of a decentralized approach in terms of instruction." The participant explained that the college offers about 4,000 sections per semester. Thus, the interviewee noted that it is important to understand that a nursing class is significantly different from an English class or an aviation maintenance class. The participant proceeded to explain that an ACP is first establishing with faculty that in the event of an emergency what modes of delivery are going to work first and foremost. The first part is establishing what it is going to look like and then the second part is to communicate with students. Participant G summarized how the ACP(s) support faculty.

> Ultimately, you've got to empower faculty to kind of say, in an emergency, how are you going to make this work with students. There is a hurricane in the middle of the fall, and we talk about things like that, and during the season what will you do, particularly if you're faculty and you happen to miss a scheduled class where you've already missed the Labor Day holiday, so you already lost a day and we're going to lose another day—what does that mean to you and what does that mean for finals and all of those other course-level logistics. So, I do like that about our plan—that ultimately it has to happen at the classroom level.

In addition to asking participants about how the ACP supports faculty during a crisis, the researcher also asked participants about what components they believed were necessary for an effective ACP.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 10

Based upon your recent experience with COVID-19, what elements do you believe are essential for an effective ACP?

Participant A. In considering essential components for an academic continuity plan, Participant A stressed the importance of equipment stating, "We would never have faculty

without laptops again. We had a real problem because so many of our faculty had desktops, and so I think that is something we learned." Additionally, Participant A noted,

> We would never hire a new faculty who wasn't interested in learning how to teach online. Even if they didn't end up teaching online, they have to be prepared to do that, and I think that would never have occurred to us in the past.

In the same manner, Participant A explained that previously the institution had no science labs online because science faculty were very certain that students could not learn science online. While the participant expressed that certainly it may not be ideal, they have shown it is possible, and thus people need to be prepared to transition. Moreover, Participant A explained, "We're a lot more flexible." Students are allowed to quarantine and take classes over Zoom. Faculty teach over Zoom through quarantine. People work from home. While Participant A noted the college has become significantly more flexible, they do need to revisit the work from home policy which has not been updated. Thus, in considering the essential components of an ACP, Participant A noted equipment as well as the importance of flexibility.

Participant B. In reflecting on what elements are essential for an ACP, Participant B identified that training students is the number one component. The participant discussed how critical it is to develop resources for supporting students in an online environment. For instance, the institution had student workers call other students and connect with them, letting them know resources available, and the students were grateful for the calls. Participant B also identified mental health counseling as a key component as well as training for faculty. The participant discussed the need to train faculty on devices. Participant B also emphasized that they would be investing in laptops for faculty instead of buying desktop computers and monitors. Thus, in the case of an emergency, employees could work remotely, picking up their laptops. Finally, participant B stressed the importance of being flexible.

Participant C. In a similar manner, Participant C noted the importance of reminding people that "more change is going to come." Participant C noted that it is important for people to remember that "we will get past this." Thus, the participant recommended a change or shift in mindset. In considering the essential components of an ACP, the participant advised that leaders, "give consideration to details." Thus, they described how the original continuity plan did not have any details, and faculty wanted to know the details. Finally, the participant highlighted the importance of having the support of the union. Participant C stated,

> In the beginning when we started doing our continuity planning/reading, you are with the union. We learned quickly that if we did not engage them [the union] that we were going to have problems. Then it's a dance. It's not something we were required to do, but if we don't do it, there is a price.

Participant C emphasized that academic leadership should involve and collaborate with the union from the beginning to avoid issues arising later.

Participant D. in considering the essential components of an ACP, Participant D noted that it is important to make sure the plan is complete, addressing all the components that make up academics: academic rigor and quality, technology, safety, and contingency plans. With the development of contingency plans, Participant D indicated that scenario planning would be part of that contingency planning. The participant noted that scenario planning allows the institutions to "move quickly." Hence, the Participant summarized,

> So, I think it has to be complete and it has to be thought out ahead of time. And then let me add that to be effective, it's got to be communicated and it's got to be communicated regularly and be accessible.

Participant D reflected,

> I remember people talking about it (swine flu) and should we put together a pandemic plan. I mean you can't even wrap your head around it; I mean we tried it at a couple of my other institutions, say let's put a plan in place just in case the sky falls, and until honestly, we can say having lived it until you live it you just cannot even wrap your head around what would be required.

The participant noted how things are so different now, having Zoom technology. Participant D noted that they could not imagine going through the pandemic without Zoom technology. Thus, the participant concluded, "You know that is just one major example; we wrote something in 2001 for the swine flu, but it totally would not make sense now." Lastly, Participant D noted that another component of an effective ACP would be to review the plan annually to make sure it is still relevant.

Participant E. In response to what components are essential for an effective academic continuity plan, Participant E responded,

> Setting clear expectations and definitions is critical. That was one thing I felt like I spent a lot of time on was clarifying what we meant by certain things, and it helped to say, this is what we're going to call online; this is what we mean by office hours.

Participant E also explained that it is important to identify appropriate supports—many of them in technology. Participant E gave the example of a faculty member or student who did not know who to call. The participant explained, "We have a Faculty Innovation Center but it's really a support center for faculty teaching online and suddenly everyone was online." In the same manner, the participant also noted that the college has a 45-hour required training to teach online. While they waived the training initially with the pandemic, they again required the training. By spring 2021 faculty had to be enrolled in it and complete it by the deadline. The training was designed to help them navigate teaching online. Finally, the Participant noted,

> I think it was also very important to identify what sources of information we were going to use to make the decisions. We picked the CDC and the local [state] department of health. And there's so much data as you know there's a million things you can be looking at, so we just sort of tried to settle on these two or three standards and identify them and widely distribute them.

In their reflection upon academic continuity planning, Participant E identified the importance of setting clear expectations and definitions, including appropriate supports for faculty and students, and establishing sources of information and standards.

Participant F. In response to the question, Participant F identified a number of key components to be included in the ACP. These included infrastructure, training, planning in advance, and identified supports. Hence, Participant F responded, "Having the infrastructure in place. Having people trained in that infrastructure as a part of the normal." As example, Participant F noted the importance of infrastructure:

> Everybody having a Brightspace shell. Everybody knowing how to use it so that when you have to pivot you don't have to tell them the real basics of how you upload a file. If they have to do that, it's going to be the chaos that we've gone through.

The participant emphasized, "Having that type of infrastructure is really important and being able to ramp that up quickly."

The participant also stressed the importance of having a plan before the crisis occurred. In doing so, the plan should include how to provide support. For instance, the institution created a text plan to support students and keep them from falling behind. The participant explained how everybody took a group of students to text regularly:

> Every two weeks, you get on there and say how are you doing, have you filled out your FAFSA yet; did you see the scholarship application came out; did you fill that out; did you know there's money; midterms are coming up...

Finally, Participant F noted that the institution is still loaning out laptops, hotspots. While they do not require students to have a laptop, in reality they cannot do the course without one. As such, they bought many laptops through federal funds. Additionally, the participant noted that they have had "connectivity problems given our rural location." As a result, the participant noted they put Wi-Fi in their parking lots. Moreover, in the state there is a network of libraries and

colleges that students could look at on a map and see where all of the hotspots were free. Thus, the participant noted the importance of infrastructure, planning in advance, and building out support structures for students as critical components of the ACP.

Participant G. In reflecting on what components are essential to an effective ACP, Participant G responded,

> Collaboration—when you think that would be a given, bur really engaging all the deans and all the different programs, all the program managers which are faculty in the programs because one thing we learned is, it certainly wasn't a one size fits all.

Additionally, Participant G noted the importance of communication. Participant G explained,

> Even in this modern era we would try to be very clear on communication, one thing we did during the pandemic was hold a town hall live meeting, thousands of employees, to communicate things. Every Friday was a live meeting—you know what's going on with remote learning; what are the requirements; what are these things; what should I do about this: what if this happens. So, it is a continual challenge.

Furthermore, Participant G explained how in the ACP they intentionally communicate that "you have the responsibility to try to know something too." Hence, Participant G described,

> Even if decisions are made and they're the right decisions and we've collaborated with everybody, how are we communicating these and making sure it really gets to everyone, and it goes down to the department level getting the information. I think that's an essential element of it.

Moreover, Participant G also emphasized the need to build in adaptability. The participant explained they applied a decentralized approach, to empower faculty to make some plans with their students. Thus, the CAO noted. "really thinking about things you wouldn't think about." The participant explained that some campuses are next to major highways so they might need to consider chemical spills. At the same time, the ACP is a subset of the RMA. In doing so, they make sure to identify the stakeholders and the decision makers and have them in the room, "bringing together the facilities folks, the information technology folks." The participant explained, "We formed a cross functional team led by the risk management department." The

cross functional team included academic leaders (although not the participant). The participant explained that the cross functional team really handles what is going to happen with graduation, provides weekly updates, positivity rates, and where you can get a vaccine. The participant identified that risk management is part of it. When the Risk Management department identifies a risk, the participant will go to the academic area with the identified risk. The Risk Management department assisted in the implementation of the academic continuity planning. Thus, Participant G identified collaboration, communication, and adaptability as key components for an effective ACP.

INTERVIEW QUESTION 11

Based upon your experience with the pandemic, what would you do differently or include in any sort of future ACP?

Additionally, participants were asked to consider what they would include in their future planning or preparedness efforts.

Participant A. In considering what they might do differently or include in future planning efforts, Participant A noted, "I think we will pay much more attention to our technology infrastructure." The participant noted that originally it became clear that they needed to update their hardware and wiring, and they used federal funding to update it. Participant A also described how they have been at four different institutions in the last six years and not one of them had an ACP. Participant A explained, "Would I take the time to write one now? Probably not. I think we showed we didn't need one; that if forced to do it, we would do it." Thus, while Participant A identified the need to update technology infrastructure, they concluded that they would not develop any ACPs in the future.

Participant B. In reflecting on their planning efforts and what the college might do differently or include in any sort of future ACPs, Participant B responded, “Be more aware of how much you don’t know.” The participant described how they developed several contingency plans. The participant described “the nightmare is you go back fully remote.” The participant also speculated that in their lifetime, they did not think we would ever “go back to where we were.” They noted that “a lot of students, especially evening and working students have found that online like this works for me.” Thus, he explained that they wanted to “hold on to the best parts of the disaster.” Moving forward, they would have multiple services. Participant B concluded, “What do they say? Never let a good crisis go to waste.”

Participant C. In considering how they might adjust future academic continuity planning efforts, Participant C responded that they would reconsider what an emergency is. The participant explained, “I think I would go beyond the idea of what an emergency is. I think we tend to think about our ideas and our plan certainly reflected this thinking about an emergency as a short term thing.” At the same time, the participant understood that no one had the ability to foresee that there could be an emergency that would last that long.

Participant C also explained. “I think another piece we didn’t account for is that sort of human piece, and that is the burnout, the exhaustion, people just kind of losing it. The need for mental health attention.” Participant C described how people didn’t take their vacation days because it was a state of emergency, and they could not go anywhere. Yet, the participant noted that there was “all the more reason to take time off and come back with a little bit of fresh perspective.” Furthermore, Participant C stated that the pandemic would change the way the institution hires administrators. Thus, the participant stated, “I’m now looking for administrators that are able to juggle the strategic with emergency. I’m looking for people who can weather the

storm." Participant C described how the deans were most impacted (other than executives). The participant noted how they worry about the deans, as it is an incredibly critical role, and the CAO is "only as good" as their deans. The participant noted there is not a lot of preparation for being a dean. As a result, they have implemented monthly training for our teams during the pandemic. They brought together deans from across community colleges in the state together once a month, hearing expertise and sharing problem solving. The participant noted it has made a "tremendous difference." Again, the participant stressed that deans and chairs are underappreciated. Yet, the deans had to execute 75–80% of the work. Thus, Participant C expressed the need to redefine what an emergency is and how we plan for it, as well as how to account for the human element in the planning efforts.

Participant D. Participant D described how they are "very proud of how we navigated this pandemic. The proof is in the pudding; we are the only Minnesota state college that has positive growth." Participant D explained that the colleges and universities in the state are suffering but students are voting with their feet. The participant noted that the students want to be in person, and they want services in person. Hence, they expressed being able to navigate those desires and utilize various tools like bookings and different software pieces (i.e., proctoring tests). The participant noted that they were able to work through those pieces quickly and effectively. In the end Participant D concluded, "I'm just really proud of that, so I can't think of what we would do differently. It's not me. It took a village and it's really our team."

Participant E. In response to what they might do differently or include in any future academic continuity planning, Participant E explained the following approach.

> I like that we developed stages for the plan that gave us a little flexibility. It was funny because I think a lot of employees here felt that anxiety of uncertainty. They really wanted to know black and white, what is the plan, what are we doing that you can't be

> that tied in. But once we did like there's an ABC, then I felt like I had the flexibility I needed because everyone knew there were going to be some rules.

Additionally, the participant explained that the pandemic was so very different from other emergencies the college had experienced.

> A hurricane—you don't know what the impact will be, but you do know when it is coming. At three days, you're pretty sure this sucker is headed straight for us, so we know we've got to secure things and be ready to not be here for a few days, but this just changed every day and it's still changing every day.

As a result of the pandemic, the NIMS team met every day in the beginning and then moved to three days a week, then two days a week. Then there was the Delta spike, so they moved back to meeting three days a week. At that time, they included the faculty senate president in those meetings, and the participant expressed that they should have done that from the beginning. Faculty were upset because they moved from masks expected to masks recommended, but those changes came at the direction of the state. Thus, Participant E expressed the need to build in some flexibility in the planning, provide as much assurance as possible, and include the faculty senate president in the planning from the beginning.

Participant F. Participant F expressed, "This is what we're going to do; it's really embedded in policy now—a lot of it. Trainings exist that they've been videotaped and put online…They say never let a good crisis go to waste." Furthermore, Participant F noted that they believe that the institution's ability to plan has greatly increased. In the same manner, the institution's policies "take into account multi modes of instruction."

Participant G. In response to what they would do differently or include any sort of future academic continuity plans, Participant F again noted the importance of communication. Thus, the participant said, "I'd be more thoughtful about that (communication) and so maybe in planning really laying out what that would look like and maybe getting ahead—part of faculty

training is emergency preparedness." In elaborating on including emergency preparedness as part of faculty training, Participant F explained that it was helping faculty think about emergency preparedness: "If this happens what would you do, what would be your ideas, your suggestions." The participant noted that it needs to be more accelerated and that science labs need to be online. At the same time, the participant explained "I would wish we would have a stronger mindset going into those areas." At the same time, Participant G noted that many schools were going back, and they were "more conservative." Their local school district was back in the classroom much earlier than the college. Participant G stated,

> Our faculty were really appreciative of that. Thank you for putting health and safety first and that was great, but as time has gone by, it's kind of like 'okay, we need to get back.' Our enrollment is showing that. It's really taken a hit.

Thus, the participant described how they need to get back and provide some of those services. At the same time, there has been some reticence to return to campus. Participant G explains, "We were one of the last ones in the area, not to be back …and we are dealing with it now." Participant G said they came back in fall 2021 with about one third of the classes back in person.

Interview Analysis and Conclusions

For this last research question, participants were asked a series of follow-up questions, designed to identify essential components of an effective ACP. Thus, participants were asked not only what components they believe are essential to planning efforts but also how the plan would help faculty adapt and what they would include in future planning efforts. The major themes identified through the interview process are identified below.

Major Themes

- *An effective ACP would include training opportunities for faculty and staff.*

- Participants repeatedly identified training as the most vital component of the ACP. Six of the seven participants identified training as an essential component and one necessary in the development of an effective academic continuity plan. Over the course of the three questions asked, training was mentioned over a dozen times. Participants most often focused the training conversation on ensuring opportunities existed for faculty, but others included deans and staff in the training conversation. Hence, Participant A highlighted that at the beginning of the pandemic, they had 30% of faculty trained in online learning, but by fall 2021, they had over 80% of faculty trained in online learning. In the same manner, Participant D noted the importance of training in the plan, so that faculty had more "tools in their toolbox to use." While most participants focused the conversation on training requirements for faculty, Participant D also included deans and support staff in the conversation. As example, the participant explained how they were implementing monthly training for all of their teams and state-wide meetings for academic deans. Thus, participants consistently noted the importance of including training requirements and opportunities for faculty and staff in the ACP.

- *Multiple scenario planning or contingency planning is essential for effective academic continuity planning efforts. Plans should be detailed, completed in advance, and reviewed annually.*

  - *Multiple scenario or contingency planning* – In discussing what components are essential for an effective ACP, three of the seven participants noted the importance of developing multiple scenario or contingency plans. Hence, participant D explained how they gave faculty three planning templates for scenario building. These three templates were based upon closure, coverage, and safety. Every faculty member had to complete the templates, outlining what they would do to ensure academic continuity in each of the various scenarios presented. At the same time, Participant E explained how they also developed various contingency plans based upon a number of situations. Hence, the participant described how they created plans A through G, based upon a scale from if COVID-19 is rampant and the college is closed to COVID-19 was "not that bad." These contingency plans were created at the executive leadership level. Thus, while where the contingency plans were created differed by institution, many participants spoke of the necessity of planning for multiple contingencies and having plans specifically adapted to each scenario.

  - *Detailed planning in advance and reviewed annually* – In addition to speaking to the necessity of contingency planning, participants also spoke about ensuring that plans are detailed, completed in advance, and reviewed annually to ensure that they are still relevant. Thus, participant F discussed the importance of planning in advance of the crisis, considering how to build out infrastructure and what supports would need to be embedded in the creation of the plan. Similarly, Participant D noted that the plans should be reviewed annually to ensure that they are still relevant. In the same manner, Participant G explained that they have a Campus Safety and Security department which takes the lead on continuity planning and prompts other departments and divisions to annually review and revise their plans.

- *An effective ACP should give consideration to communication strategies and consistent communication.*

    - In considering essential components of an effective ACP, four of the seven interviewees discussed the importance of frequent and consistent communication. As example, Participant B described how they built in a syllabus blurb, so they could "communicate consistently with their students." In the same manner, Participant C noted it is important to build in communication. They explained how they had done "tons of communication," including email, department meetings, and town hall meetings. Moreover, Participant G also emphasized the importance of communication, stating, "Even in this modern era, we would try to be very clear on communication." Thus, communication continued to be emphasized for consideration and inclusion in planning efforts.

- *Collaboration is vital in the development of an ACP.*

    - In addition to identifying communication as an essential component for an effective ACP, participants also identified the importance of collaboration in the plan development process. As example, Participant F noted how they developed various online policies and procedures through their shared governance committee. The participant explained how the policies and procedures went back and forth between the academics committee and the college council before it came before the CAO. They explained that "a smart administrator takes suggestions not lightly." In the same manner, Participant G explained that the very first piece of an ACP should be to engage the faculty in the creation of the plan through somewhat of a decentralized approach. Finally, Participant C highlighted the importance of having the support of the faculty union and working with them from the beginning in the development of continuity planning. While some institutions took a more decentralized approach to continuity planning efforts than others, many participants spoke about the need for cross-divisional collaboration in order for academic continuity planning efforts to be successful.

- *An effective ACP will establish definitions, guidelines, and procedures that provide clear expectations and common understanding in the event of an emergency.*

    - As identified in the quantitative themes, participants again spoke about how the ACP would include the development or establishment of definitions, guidelines, policies, and procedures to offer clear expectations and guidance in the case of an emergency. Hence, Participant B discussed how the institution established safety guidelines for room sanitation. In the same manner, Participant C noted that their plan included "lots and lots of guidelines and policy development." Similarly, Participant D explained how faculty wanted parameters on when they were going to move to the next phase of the plan, and so they built out those parameters within the development of the procedures and guidelines. In contrast, Participant F spoke about how they implemented requirements for faculty teaching online, requiring that every course have a shell within the LMS with a required minimum amount of content. The participant explained that they created system-wide policies which went through the

board of trustees. While participants spoke to various policies and procedures from those centering around safety and health to online requirements for faculty, consistently participants noted that an effective ACP would include the development of policies, procedures, and guidelines that offer clear expectations and establish a common understanding during a crisis.

- *Providing assurance to faculty and staff is an important consideration as well.*
    - As participants considered what an effective continuity plan looks like, several participants explained that an effective continuity plan would provide assurance to faculty and staff as well. Thus, Participant B explained that more than anything, the ACP was "emotionally supportive." The participant described how it was reassuring to people to know that the college had a plan and that they were directly following (and quoting) state and federal guidelines and OSHA requirements. In the same manner, Participant F discussed how the biggest anxiety for faculty was the "lack of certainty." Thus, they described how the various contingency plans developed were intentionally designed to alleviate some of those fears and provide as much certainty as they could during an ongoing crisis. The plan provided parameters on when they would move to the next level of the plan and included guidance and expectations on what would happen at that time. Similarly, Participant C advised that the plan accounts for the knowledge that "more change is coming." They noted that it is essential for people to understand that "we will get past this." Thus, in order to provide that reassurance, they recommended including specific details into the plan. Overall, participants spoke to how a well-designed ACP will provide reassurance to employees as it establishes clear expectations, standards, and guidance.

SUMMARY

Chapter Four presented the results from this sequential mixed method study. The researcher completed a quantitative survey and followed up with subsequent qualitative interviews in order to assess community colleges' level of preparedness and readiness in maintaining the mission-critical function of teaching and learning in response to the long-term emergency of COVID-19. This chapter identified the major themes coming out of the quantitative and qualitative phases. The results of this study will be analyzed and discussed in Chapter Five and the researcher will make further recommendations for practice and future study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of this work, reflecting on the results and implications of this study. The first section presents conclusions drawn from the study's quantitative Phase 1 and the qualitative Phase 2. The second section outlines implications for practitioners in the field and makes recommendations to increase future preparedness efforts. Finally, the last section recommends further research in the study of academic continuity planning and emergency preparedness efforts.

CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing the results of this study, the researcher analyzed the quantitative results from Phase 1 and the qualitative results from Phase 2 together to gain a deeper understanding of the research problem. Both the REMS (2020) and the NCRID (2020) provided a framework to consider and analyze the research questions. Each of these frameworks set forth a model with specific recommendations for planning, preparing for, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the continuation of the community colleges' mission.

Research Question 1: What are CAOs' perceptions of their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning?

The first research question investigated chief academic officers' (CAOs) perceptions of their institutions' level of preparedness and readiness to continue mission-critical activities of teaching and learning as a direct result of COVID-19. The researcher examined the quantitative

data from the Phase 1 survey and the qualitative data from the Phase 2 interviews. When analyzing the quantitative and the qualitative results together, the following themes and trends emerged from research question one.

To begin with, the researcher found that while overall CAOs perceived that their institutions were relatively prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction, they also perceived that relatively low importance was placed upon academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic. Participants in the quantitative and qualitative phases indicated that they believed their institutions were relatively prepared to transition coursework to remote learning options. When participants were asked how prepared their institutions were to transition to remote instruction, 53% of the respondents rated themselves as a 4 or 5 on a Likert scale of 1–5. Similarly, 33% of respondents rated their institutions a 3 on preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction. This perception was reinforced during the qualitative interview phase. Thus, all interviewees rated their institutions a 3 or 4 on the survey. When asked to follow up on this rating and explain the reasoning behind the rating, many participants noted that courses already had shells established in the LMS, faculty had received training, courses already included online components, and institutions had an effective Teaching and Learning Center or Distance Education department.

In contrast, when survey participants were asked to identify the importance placed upon academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic, almost 50% of the respondents (47.91%) rated their institutions a 1 or 2 on a Likert scale. This theme continued to emerge in the qualitative data from the second phrase in that participants spoke of not having ACPs prior to the pandemic or having to completely rewrite an appropriate academic continuity or contingency plan specifically for the long-term emergency presented by the pandemic. As an example,

participants noted that previous ACPs were created to appease accreditation requirements and the state and thus were severely lacking. Thus, while CAOs noted that a significant emphasis was not placed upon academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic, at the same time, CAOs perceived that they were relatively prepared for the crisis.

Furthermore, in examining preparedness and readiness efforts, the researcher asked participants to expand on why they believed their institutions were (or were not) prepared to transition coursework to remote learning. The researcher noted that participants believed courses that already encompassed an online component(s) were more ready to transition to remote learning. Again, in the qualitative interviews, participants spoke of courses already having shells set up in the LMS. For example, Participant A noted that 70% of their classes already had a shell in the LMS, and Participant B indicated that 80–85% of courses had an online component. Conversely, courses that did not have a shell set up in the LMS were often described negatively. For instance, one participant described how they had students complaining that faculty members asked them to use postal mail to send in their assignments. The interviewee described it as "the wild, wild west." Thus, participants positively described courses already encompassing online course components and negatively described courses that had to rely heavily on other mediums (i.e., email, postal mail, Facebook). This description indicated a perception that courses with an online component were more ready to transition to remote learning in the event of an emergency.

In a similar manner, participants perceived that training and development also contributed to the institution's level of preparedness and readiness to transition coursework to remote learning options. When asked why CAOs gave the rating they did on preparedness, many participants noted that their faculty had been trained in online teaching methodology. Hence, Participant E explained that faculty must complete a 45-hour training and apply Quality Matters

standards. In the same manner, Participant F described how they were in the middle of a transition from Blackboard to Brightspace. As a result, not all faculty had been trained on the new platform. As a result, the CAO rated their level of preparedness lower and spoke to the challenges that arose from the timing of the transition. Thus, participants identified faculty training and development as positively or negatively impacting their level of preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction. This perception reflects Ekmekci and Bergstrand's (2009) proposed model of academic continuity planning as the authors maintain that an institution's ability to be agile is highly dependent on its ability to adjust to the speed and direction of change. The authors establish that the level of agility and responsiveness depends upon the level of both faculty and student readiness. Hence, CAOs' beliefs that faculty training and development contribute to their institutions' levels of preparedness are reflective of Ekmekci and Bergstrand's model that agility and responsiveness depend highly on faculty readiness.

Finally, the researcher found that the ability to build off existing infrastructure also contributed to the belief that the institution was more prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction. In assessing CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness to continue mission-critical teaching and learning activities, the researcher continued to delve into the reasoning behind the belief on the level of preparedness to transition coursework to remote instruction. Several participants spoke of having existing infrastructure that allowed them to scale up and respond more quickly. Participant C identified that they had some "structural elements" already in place, including an Academic Innovation and Professional Development department and instructional designers. Similarly, Participant G described how the institution had been through previous crises and already had communication strategies and contingency plans as a result. Throughout the interviews, participants explained how they built off existing systems, structures,

and plans, including professional development and distance learning offices and staff, LMSs, and various contingency planning templates. At the same time, participants spoke of the challenges that arose when existing infrastructure was not developed or in place. Hence, participants described the challenges of faculty and students not having access to reliable internet or equipment.

Research Question 2: To what extent did community colleges have an ACP in place as part of their emergency management preparedness planning prior to COVID-19?

IHEs, including community colleges, are federally mandated through Presidential Policy Directives 5, 8, and 10 to employ emergency management efforts, as outlined through NIMS (Worsely & Beckering, 2007). These principles include having an emergency operations command team (EOC) (or similar crisis response team) and an emergency operations plan (EOP), which is to be tested to ensure successful implementation during an emergency (REMS, n.d.). In the same manner, the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with other federal agencies, outlines a six-step planning process for effective planning and preparedness efforts which includes various departments, including Academic Affairs. They recommend taking an all-hazards approach, addressing a wide range of possible risks and threats, and planning for response and recovery to effectively continue operations, including mission-critical activities of teaching and learning. The researcher sought to build off Mitroff et al.'s research (2006), which found that institutions are "generally prepared only for those crises that they had already experienced" (p. 66). As such, the researcher addressed several best practices in the survey and interview questions for this research question.

The researcher also sought to determine if institutions, specifically community colleges, were more prepared for the pandemic after recommendations regarding academic continuity planning in response to the H1N1 (swine flu) pandemic (Meyer & Wilson, 2011). As a result, the

researcher asked participants if they had an EOC, risk management assessment (RMA), and an ACP in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following themes emerged from this second research question regarding the extent to which community colleges had an ACP as part of their emergency management preparedness efforts.

The first finding is that while institutions had planned for various emergencies, emphasis was not placed on planning for an extended continuation of teaching and learning, as plans were typically built for short-term emergencies instead of chronic emergencies. Hence, in the quantitative study, CAOs reported having EOCs and RMAs at higher rates than having an ACP. Most respondents indicated that they had an EOC or similar crisis management team in place before the pandemic. As evidenced in the data, 81.25% of participants indicated they had an EOC in place prior to the pandemic. Similarly, 58.33% of respondents indicated their institutions had an RMA in place prior to COVID-19, as compared to 37.5% of participants who indicated they had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic.

Additionally, in the qualitative phase of the study, participants described how the previous plans were built for short-term emergencies such as hurricanes or active shooters and typically did not consider the duration of the emergency. Participant E described how their "continuity plan was very much based on getting past short times of very interrupted operations at the college." Participants recognized that previous academic continuity plans often focused on short-term emergencies, security, communications, and facilities. This conclusion echoes the findings of Meyer and Wilson's (2011) landmark study, which found that continuity planning often concentrates on the recovery of business and IT services. Meyer and Wilson found that only one third of researched flagship institutions had any reference to academic continuity

planning. The researcher reached a similar conclusion: a little over a third (37.5%) of the institutions surveyed had an ACP before the pandemic.

The second finding is that the lack of an ACP did not necessarily mean a lack of planning. While only 37.5% of institutions surveyed had an ACP prior to COVID-19, several participants participating in the interviews described how they had planned to continue operations through various scenarios or contingency plans. Academic continuity planning efforts were often incorporated into other contingency planning documents or templates. However, of the contingencies planned for, participants (who had completed contingency planning) did not typically include pandemic planning in their planning efforts. As noted above, most of the contingency plans developed were for short-term emergencies such as hurricanes, active shooters, and mudslides. This finding is reminiscent of Mitroff et al.'s (2006) research, which found that institutions are "generally prepared only for those crises that they had already experienced." Institutions had not previously experienced a pandemic, and thus, it was not easy to anticipate the series of events and plan effectively for them. Participants essentially said as much, noting that they could not even imagine such an event and the scope of its impact.

Finally, the data suggest that existing academic continuity plans were severely inadequate. As noted above, over 60% of the survey respondents did not have an ACP prior to the pandemic. Of the 36 who did, 30 institutions chose to modify the existing plans, and others chose to rewrite the plan entirely. During the interviews, participants noted that plans were up to date, as they did not include references to online learning. Participants described how the plans were focused on security, communications, facilities, and partnerships and were not designed to move academic activities online. Thus, participants frequently described how the plans were severely inadequate, as they could not anticipate the lengthy duration of the crisis.

Research Question 3: How did the institution's ACP evolve in response to the COVID-19 crisis?

In considering how institutions' academic continuity plans evolved in response to the pandemic, participants described employing various strategies in response. At the same time, the following four themes emerged.

The first theme that emerged is that academic continuity efforts and preparedness differed significantly across institutions. As shown in the survey phase of the data, almost 20% of institutions did not have an EOC (or similar crisis response team) in place prior to the pandemic. At the same time, while 58.33% of institutions utilized an RMA, 41.67% did not have such an assessment completed. Moreover, 62.5% did not have an ACP prior to the pandemic. Thus, the study highlighted the sharp variance in planning efforts. In the same manner, as institutions sought to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning, many institutions provided faculty with multiple ways to transition to remote learning. In maintaining academic continuity, institutions' planning and preparedness efforts differed significantly as, in various situations, the onus was placed upon the faculty member. Several interview participants spoke of giving faculty multiple ways of maintaining academic continuity. From purchasing Zoom licenses to walking faculty through multiple scenario planning, several institutions participating in the qualitative interviews asked faculty to determine the appropriate medium and methodology for continuing teaching and learning. As institutions employed a decentralized approach to academic continuity planning, planning and preparedness efforts differed widely.

Additionally, the study determined that the primary evolutions occurring to the ACP often centered around the courses and services delivered. Hence, the predominant evolution participants identified was the modification or adaptation of course and service delivery. Institutional leaders identified alternative delivery modes to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning and instrumental student support services such as advising, tutoring, test proctoring,

and financial aid as a primary evolution within planning efforts. One respondent stated, “It forced us to look at course delivery in ways that we had not before. Some of the things that were put in place will continue at some level in the future.” This sentiment was repeated throughout the responses as academic leaders considered how to deliver courses and services best to ensure instruction continuation. As the situation changed, course delivery methods and modalities were continually updated and refined based on the changing situations and learning what worked.

Thirdly, the researcher found that ACPs continue to evolve based on updated and changing county, state, and federal guidelines. As the guidance and situation changed, institutions continued to develop policies, procedures, and processes to support the evolving plans. Similarly, the researcher also found that institutions continue to adapt and remain fluid in their planning efforts, updating ACPs each semester to be responsive to the ever-changing situation. Siegel (2020) describes how by nature, an emergency is an emergency due to the very unexpectedness and fluidity of the crisis. As a result, he notes that it is essential that planning and managing during a crisis such as a pandemic be dynamic to adapt and change to the circumstances and evolving threats. Siegel’s conclusion is reflected in the study’s findings, as institutional leaders continued to adapt and respond to the changing situation. At the same time, while plans continued to evolve to adjust to the changing situations, the safety of the campus remained a priority for college leaders.

Finally, the researcher found that while the ACPs continued to evolve and administrators developed additional policies and procedures to support those plans, changes were not consistently captured in the written ACPs. While on the quantitative survey, 63.44% of participants noted that they reflected the changes in their ACPs; in the qualitative interviews,

participants often described how they did not do a good job updating the ACP. Instead, they described how it was much more crisis management and survival.

Research Question 4: What components are essential for an effective ACP designed for a chronic emergency such as COVID-19?

Lastly, the researcher sought to understand what components are essential for an effective ACP. The REMS (2020) set forth a guide for essential preparedness and response considerations in response to COVID-19. In their guide, they set forth a model which includes recommendations to review and update existing ACPs, to build from existing resources, to train faculty (and students), to incorporate state policies and resources for online learning, to include the whole school community and to plan for a variety of circumstances. Many of these recommendations are reflected in the researcher's findings which are reflected below. The researcher found that an effective ACP would include the following:

1. Support and guidance for converting face-to-face lessons and coursework to remote instruction.
2. Plans to address student and employee access to necessary equipment and internet.
3. Faculty development and training opportunities.
4. Health and safety considerations.
5. Communication plans and strategies are created in advance and accessible to students and instructors.
6. Distance learning strategies as feasible and appropriate, including multiple formats for distance learning or online delivery.
7. Consideration for maintaining academic integrity during and in continuation of teaching and learning in alternative modalities.
8. Multiple scenarios or contingency planning for a variety of possible threats.
9. Specific, detailed guidance and process for an annual review of established plans.
10. A collaborative process that engages the campus community and creates shared ownership for the continuation of teaching and learning in the event of a crisis.

IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS

This study was designed to determine CAOs' perceptions on their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical activities of teaching and learning. The study also sought to determine if community colleges were prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic almost a decade after the H1N1 scare. The study was designed to determine how institutions may continue to evolve their academic continuity planning processes to ensure greater preparedness and readiness for the increasing likelihood of more-frequent crises. The following considerations were created based on the insights gained from the discussion on the findings, the results of the two-phased mixed method study, and the best practices established by the literature.

First. the study found that while overall, CAOs believed their institutions were reasonably prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction, at the same time, only 37.5% of participants had an ACP in place prior to the pandemic. Similarly, CAOs noted that their institutions did not place a great emphasis on academic continuity planning prior to the pandemic. Instead, the data illustrated that what plans did exist were primarily designed for short-term emergencies and focused continuity planning efforts on security, communication, facilities, moving classes, and partnerships. Continuity efforts were not designed to move academic activities online. However, the U.S. Department of Education (2013), in collaboration with various other federal agencies, recommends that institutions adopt an emergency management framework and contingency planning that addresses a wide range of possible risks and threats. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education recommends that Academic Services be part of the planning efforts to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning. Thus, one possible implication is for community college leaders to adopt an all-hazards approach to emergency management and academic continuity planning, completing an RMA and creating

contingency plans based upon various possible threats. As recommended by the Department of Education, plans should encompass academic continuity planning, considering how to continue mission-critical activities of teaching and learning depending upon the situation. Moreover, the plans should be specific and detailed, helping employees respond to crises.

Additionally, one theme that repeated throughout the findings was the importance of faculty training and development. Consistently, participants stressed the importance of having faculty trained in the technology and the pedagogy of teaching in an online environment. This recommendation is also captured in the NCRID (2020) guidelines as well as the REMS (2020) framework for response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher recommends establishing policies, processes, and procedures in advance to ensure that all faculty, staff, and students are trained in appropriate technology so that they are prepared to quickly pivot to alternative modalities as necessary to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning. Similarly, training should be consistent and ongoing to keep faculty and staff current with changing technologies and approaches. Thus, Regehr et al. (2017) highlight the importance of having institutional policies and structures that help faculty be prepared in the event of a crisis. As Ekmekci & Bergstrand (2010) note in their study, faculty and student readiness are critical components in ensuring agility and readiness to respond to a crisis. Findings suggest that training and development are essential in preparing faculty and students to be more ready, and thus institutions may take steps to increase readiness through structured, systemic training opportunities for faculty, staff, and students.

In considering how prepared their institutions were to transition coursework to alternative modalities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, CAOs identified several components that seemingly positively contributed to preparedness efforts. These included courses already having

online components, course shells being established in the LMS with a minimum amount of content, faculty training opportunities, and instructional support services such as a Teaching and Learning Center or Distance Learning department. Hence, an implication for community college leaders is to consider the development of policies and procedures to ensure that all courses have a course shell in the LMS, and that faculty are utilizing those shells, inputting a minimum amount of content. In the same manner, existing training should be blended into existing emergency management plans, capturing the importance of such training in long-term crisis preparation and planning.

Additionally, the NCRID (2020) recommends building off existing infrastructure to develop ACPs. This implication was reflected in the findings as CAOs perceived that the ability to build off existing infrastructure contributed to the belief that the institution was more prepared to transition coursework to remote instruction. Thus, in developing ACPs, community college leaders may want to consider how they can build off existing infrastructures (i.e., teaching and learning/professional development departments, technologies, and services). This leveraging and scaling existing infrastructure may include building training opportunities into faculty, staff, and student onboarding experiences, leveraging available technology for alternative modes of instruction, updating existing classroom spaces, or cross-training employees. As institutions and community college leaders build off of existing infrastructures, consideration should also be given to training, technologies, and other associated costs. These costs may be built into the emergency funding account, as categorical expenses underneath emergency preparation.

Another implication for community college CAOs is the consideration of how to empower faculty members and foster collaborative decision-making across the campus in the development of ACPs and preparedness efforts. Throughout this study, participants emphasized

the need for a collaborative process that engages the campus community and creates shared ownership for the continuation of teaching and learning in the event of a crisis. One CAO noted the importance of shared governance: “A smart administrator takes suggestions not lightly.” At the same time, participants noted that in the moment of crisis, decisions may come “top down” due to the urgency and timing of the situation. Thus, the data suggests the importance of collaborating and developing clearly defined roles and responsibilities, policies, and procedures, and plans prior to the crisis occurring. Emphasis was placed upon creating a culture of collaboration and trust, involving the entire campus community in the creation of contingency plans prior to a crisis. These may include (as participants identified) creating syllabus blurbs, walking faculty through contingency planning efforts, and working with them to identify the most appropriate modality for the course. Hence, while building off existing infrastructure and creating structures and systems that enable faculty, staff, and students to be prepared to pivot to remote instruction quickly is essential, it is also crucial for planning and preparedness efforts to be collaborative and empowering for all stakeholders.

Lastly, this study highlighted the equity gaps that exist across socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity. These equity gaps were made much more apparent throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In considering institutions’ ability to support faculty and students throughout the pandemic, CAOs reported being better prepared and able to support faculty than students as 95% of respondents rated their institutions a 4 or 5 on level of support to faculty and 80% of respondents rated their institutions a 4 or 5 on level of support to students. In a similar manner, participants spoke of responding to the crisis by pushing the internet out into their parking lots, loaning students laptops and hotspots, and offering food pantry services. Participants also

discussed how students lacked access to equipment, internet, and private spaces to work. One participant explained,

> Our students are at the lower echelon socioeconomically, even compared to our sister schools in the district, so they were unlikely to have the best internet access, the best devices, or quiet places to connect to the internet. Generational families live in the same living quarters, sharing devices with their siblings. It was a multitude of issues.

Similarly, one participant explained that overall in community colleges as a sector, "marginalized populations took the biggest hit as did community colleges." They noted that community college leaders must "understand the students we serve and the great mission we have as community colleges." Consistently participants noted the equity gaps that were made all the more apparent through the pandemic. Thus, one implication for community college administrators is to always consider how institutions can really meet students where they are, identifying, responding to, and reducing equity gaps. For as one CAO noted, "The inequities are all over the place in this pandemic and that's something that has to be on the community college administrator mind. In terms of inequities, the impact is drastic."

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The following recommendations were made based on the conclusions drawn and insights gained from a mixed methods research approach.

To begin, this study was limited in the scope of its research, focusing solely on the perceptions of CAOs. The study was limited in that it did not consider faculty or students' perceptions of their college's level of preparedness and readiness to ensure the continuation of mission-critical teaching and learning activities. One recommendation would be to continue this research by conducting a gap analysis of perceptions of preparedness and readiness between

CAOs, faculty, and students. While institutions may believe they were adequately prepared to transition coursework to alternative modalities, it is possible that students felt differently.

Secondly, during this research, the author noted that CAOs from larger institutions were more likely to report having an EOC, RMA, and ACP in place prior to COVID-19. The researcher disaggregated the data analyzing by size and region, which groups had these critical preparedness components in place prior to the pandemic. However, the researcher only employed descriptive statistics and did not examine a correlation between perceived preparedness efforts and size or region. As a result, the researcher would recommend additional research examining the relationship between preparedness efforts, including if institutions had these essential components in place, and region and size to determine if there is a correlation.

Thirdly, the research found that of participating institutions 24.21% had experienced an emergency that required campus closure prior to COVID-19. Additional research might be completed to determine if institutions experiencing other emergencies were more prepared for COVID-19. As this study focused on descriptive statistics and CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness, research into correlations between other emergencies and preparedness was beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, while a wide range of community colleges were surveyed, the study did not take into account the diversity of the community or the resources that might be available to them, as the research design was that of a clustered, random sampling method. Thus, it is recommended that additional research be conducted to determine if diversity of community or resources available impacted preparedness efforts readiness.

SUMMARY

This chapter reflected upon the results and analysis presented in Chapter Four and presented conclusions from the mixed methods study, identifying trends and significant themes in the data. Additionally, the chapter examined implications for practice and presented recommendations for future study, including a gap analysis between CAOs' perceptions of preparedness and readiness for the COVID-19 pandemic and the perceptions of students and faculty at those same institutions.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307
www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: May 3, 2021

To: Fredrick Ennis, PhD
From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Re: IRB Application for Review

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Preparing for the Unexpected: Academic Continuity Planning and Covid-19*" and determined that it does not meet the Federal Definition of research on human subjects, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services or the Food and Drug Administration. This project does not meet the federal definition of research on human subjects because the focus is on the institution's operational responses to crisis, not on individual's attitudes/behaviors. As such, approval by the Ferris IRB is not required for the proposed project.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission; it does not apply should changes be made to the project design. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, submit a new request to the IRB for determination. This letter only applies to Ferris IRB Review; it is your responsibility to ensure all necessary institutional permissions are obtained and policies are met prior to beginning the project, such as documentation of institutional or department support. **Note that quality improvement project findings may be published, but any findings presented or published should be clearly identified as part of a quality improvement initiative and not as research**.

Your project will remain on file with the Ferris IRB for purposes of tracking research efforts at Ferris. Should you have any questions regarding the determination of this letter, please contact the IRB.

Regards,

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair
Ferris State University Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B: ACADEMIC CONTINUITY CAO SURVEY QUESTIONS

Directions: Please answer each question based upon your perspective and experience**.** If you are unsure, please answer to the best of your ability.

1. Do you serve as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) (or equivalent) at your institution?
    a. Yes
    b. No

2. What is your official title?

3. Name of Institution:

4. **Prior to COVID-19**, please indicate if your institution had experienced emergency situations that caused the college to close within the following timeframes:
    a. 2018–February 2020.
    b. 2016–2017.
    c. 2014–2015.
    d. 2012–2013.
    e. 2010–2011.

5. Prior to COVID-19, did your institution have an Emergency Operations Command team (EOC) (or equivalent crisis management team)?
    a. Yes
    b. No

6. If yes, did you serve on your institution's EOC (or equivalent crisis management team)?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. Prior to COVID-19, did your institution have an academic continuity plan (ACP) in place as part of their long-term emergency management preparedness planning?
    a. Yes
    b. No

8. If yes, did you:
    a. Follow the written plan.
    b. Revised plan accordingly
    c. Throw out the previous and created a new academic continuity plan

9. If no, did you create an ACP as a result of COVID-19?
    a. Yes
    b. No

10. If yes, who was the lead person(s) for creating the academic continuity plan? (i.e. VPAA, Director of Information Technology, etc.)

11. Could you please describe the primary considerations in creating the ACP as a result of COVID-19?

12. Prior to COVID-19, did your institution have a Risk Management Assessment (RMA) or any other form of risk assessment in place?

a. Yes
b. No

13. On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the least degree and 5 the highest degree), please rate the degree to which the RMA (or similar assessment) was considered in the development and/or subsequent implementation of the ACP during COVID-19?

14. Are you administratively responsible for the implementation of the institution's academic continuity plan?

a. Yes
b. No
c. Partially

15. On a scale of 1–5 (1 being the least ready and 5 being the most ready, how prepared do you believe your institution was to transition coursework to remote instruction to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to COVID-19?

16. On a scale from 1–5 (1 being the least important; 5 being the most important), please rate your institution's level of recognition of the importance of your preparedness activities regarding academic continuity.

17. On a scale from 1–5 (1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive), please rate your institution's ability to financially support your goals regarding academic continuity.

18. How many days were given to faculty to transition to remote instruction as a result of COVID-19?

19. Which of the following components were addressed in your academic or instructional continuity plan? (Check all that apply.)

Instructional Considerations:

- Academic integrity
- Accessibility considerations
- Accreditation considerations
- Alternative Assignment Submission
- Assessment considerations
- Collection and Maintenance of grades
- Conversion of face-to-face lessons to remote instruction
- Fairness to students
- Guidance on student absences and varying circumstances
- Learning Outcomes

- Syllabi considerations
- Other

Leadership Considerations:
- Agreements with faculty
- Assessment and continuation of other key student support services
- Communication strategies
- Consideration for if and when to stop, scale back, or modify support services on campus
- Delineation of duties and responsibilities
- Health and Safety (i.e. social distancing, temperature checks, etc.)
- Importance of the educational mission
- Inclusion of pass/fail/withdraw option
- Local, State, or Federal policies and guidelines
- Modification of the academic calendar
- Other

Funding Considerations:
- Additional compensation
- Funding/Income stream
- Other

Technical Considerations:
- Determination of how to triage technical issues
- E-learning or distance learning options as feasible and appropriate
- Faculty and Staff lack of access to computers or internet
- Faculty development/training opportunities
- Multiple formats for distance learning or online delivery
- Student training opportunities
- Students' lack of access to computers or internet
- Other

20. Could you please describe how your ACP evolved because of COVID-19?

21. If changes occurred to support academic continuity during COVID-19, was the written ACP updated to capture those changes?

a. Yes
b. No

22. On a scale from 1–5 (1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive), please rate your institution's level of support for faculty during the transition to and continuation of teaching and learning in remote instruction as a result of COVID-19.

23. Which of the following supports were offered to faculty in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? (Please check all that apply.)
- Additional pay
- Cell phones

- Hardware (i.e. computers, laptops, webcams, etc.)
- Materials traditionally purposed for on-campus use only (i.e. Elmo, lab equipment, printers, etc.)
- Mobile internet devices (MiFis)
- Mental health counseling
- Pedagogical training opportunities
- Procurement of additional software
- Repository of instructional resources
- Technical training opportunities
- Virtual proctoring
- Other _____

24. On a scale from 1–5 (1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive), please rate your institution's level of support for students during the transition to and continuation of learning in remote instruction as a result of COVID-19.

25. Which of the following supports were offered to students in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Childcare assistance
- Food assistance
- Lab equipment (graphing calculators, lab kits, art supplies)
- Laptops, chrome books, or tablets
- Mobile internet devices (MiFis)
- Mental health counseling
- Personal support contacts with students
- Transportation
- Virtual tutoring
- Other_____

26. Prior to COVID-19, were faculty required to complete training prior to being approved to teach online?

a. Yes
b. No

27. Please describe efforts to prepare faculty to transition to remote instruction.

28. Prior to COVID-19, approximately what percentage of course sections (i.e. ENG-120-12345) had a corresponding course shell created in the LMS?

29. Does the institution require faculty to have a course shell set up in the LMS?

a. Yes
b. No

30. If yes, what is the required content? (Check all the apply.)

- Course overview and introduction (i.e. syllabi, faculty contact info, etc.)
- Learning objectives
- Assessment and measurement

- Instructional materials
- Grades

31. In reflecting upon your experience with COVID-19, what would you do differently or include in any sort of future plans?

32. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview?
    a. Yes
    b. No

33. If yes, please provide contact information for further communication:

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Who is the individual **(position)** designated to ensure the continuation of instruction? Is this individual included on the Emergency Operations Command team (EOC) (or the team responsible for emergency response)?

2. On the survey you noted that the college had/(did not have) an academic continuity plan (ACP) in place as part of the overall emergency management planning.

   - If you did not have an ACP in place prior to COVID, could you describe how the college responded to ensure continuation of instruction? **OR**
   - If the College did have an ACP in place, could you describe how you revised or modified the plan to ensure the continuation of instruction?

3. In your response you noted that you created an ACP as a result of COVID-19. Could you describe what that development process looked like? OR If you did not have an ACP in place and chose not to draft one, could you describe how you came to that conclusion and what efforts were done instead to ensure the continuation of instruction?

4. On the survey, on scale of 1–5 (with 1 being the least ready and 5 being the most ready), you rated the College a # on how prepared the College was to transition coursework to alternative modalities to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning in response to COVID-19. Could you describe why you gave the rating you did?

5. How does the ACP help faculty adapt to challenges (i.e. professional development/training opportunities, technical support, guidelines for communication, etc.)?

6. How have you adjusted your academic operations because of COVID-19 in the continuation of learning?

7. If you had a written academic continuity plan, how has it evolved because of COVID-19? What changes occurred to the plan? (If they respond No to Question 3, skip to question 8.)

8. Were there any concerns related to institutional or program accreditation during the pandemic? If so, how were those handled?

9. Were there any other components that have been postponed or delayed due to the pandemic such as faculty contracts, evaluations, course evaluations, assessment, accreditation, state reports?

10. Based upon your recent experience with COVID-19, what elements do you believe are essential for an effective academic continuity plan?

11. Based upon your experience with the pandemic, what would you do differently or include in any sort of future academic continuity plans?

12. Is there any advice you would like to share with future community college CAOs concerning this type of emergency?