

A QUESTION OF ONLINE INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES  
AMONG ADMINISTRATORS, FACULTY,  
ADJUNCT FACULTY, AND STUDENTS

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ONLINE LEARNING  
ADJUNCT FACULTY

RESEARCH TOPIC



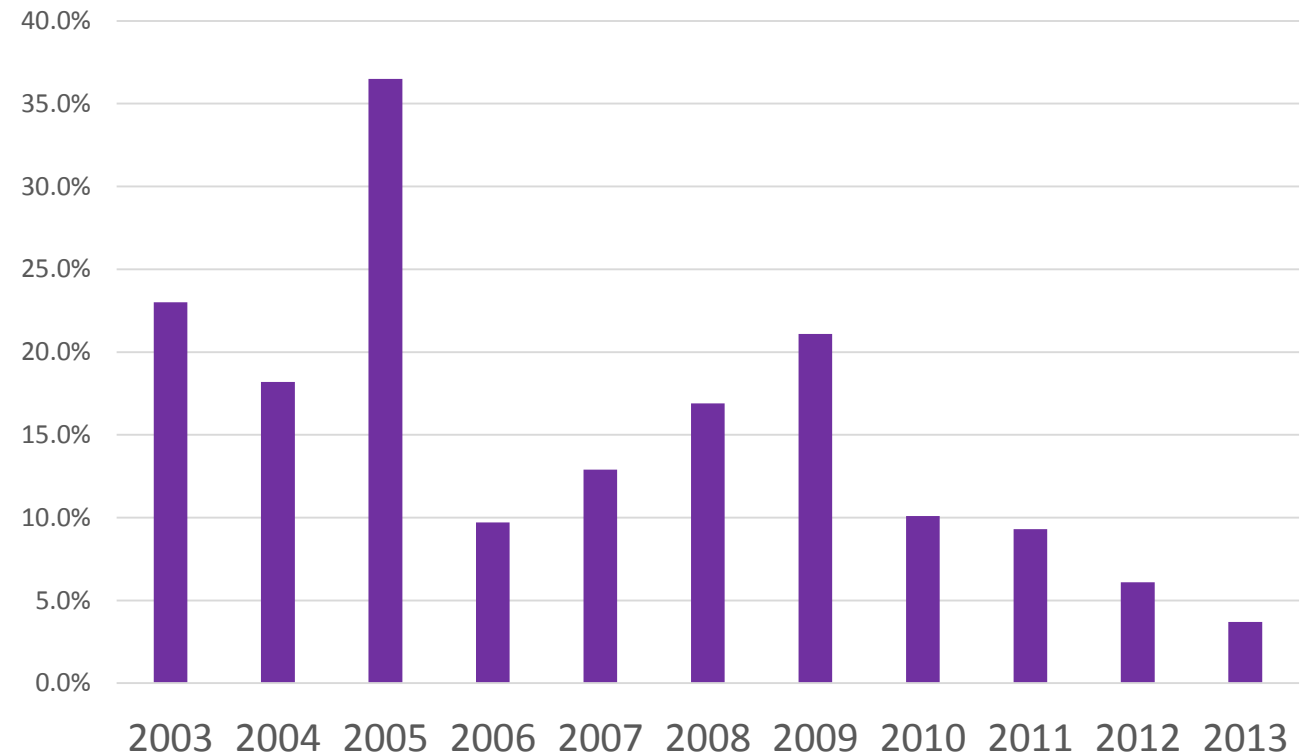
## Private Christian University (PCU)

- Private, non-profit, liberal arts university located in the Midwest of the United States of America
- 197 full-time, traditional faculty
- 431 post-traditional adjunct faculty members
- 1,837 online students

# Growth of Online Learning

- 70.7% of all higher education institutions offered a form of distance education in 2014 (Windes & Lesht, 2014).
- 70.8% of schools said that online learning was strategically critical (Allen & Seaman, 2015).
- In 2014, only 28% of faculty agreed that on online learning was legitimate. In 2002, that number was 27.6% (Allen & Seaman, 2015).

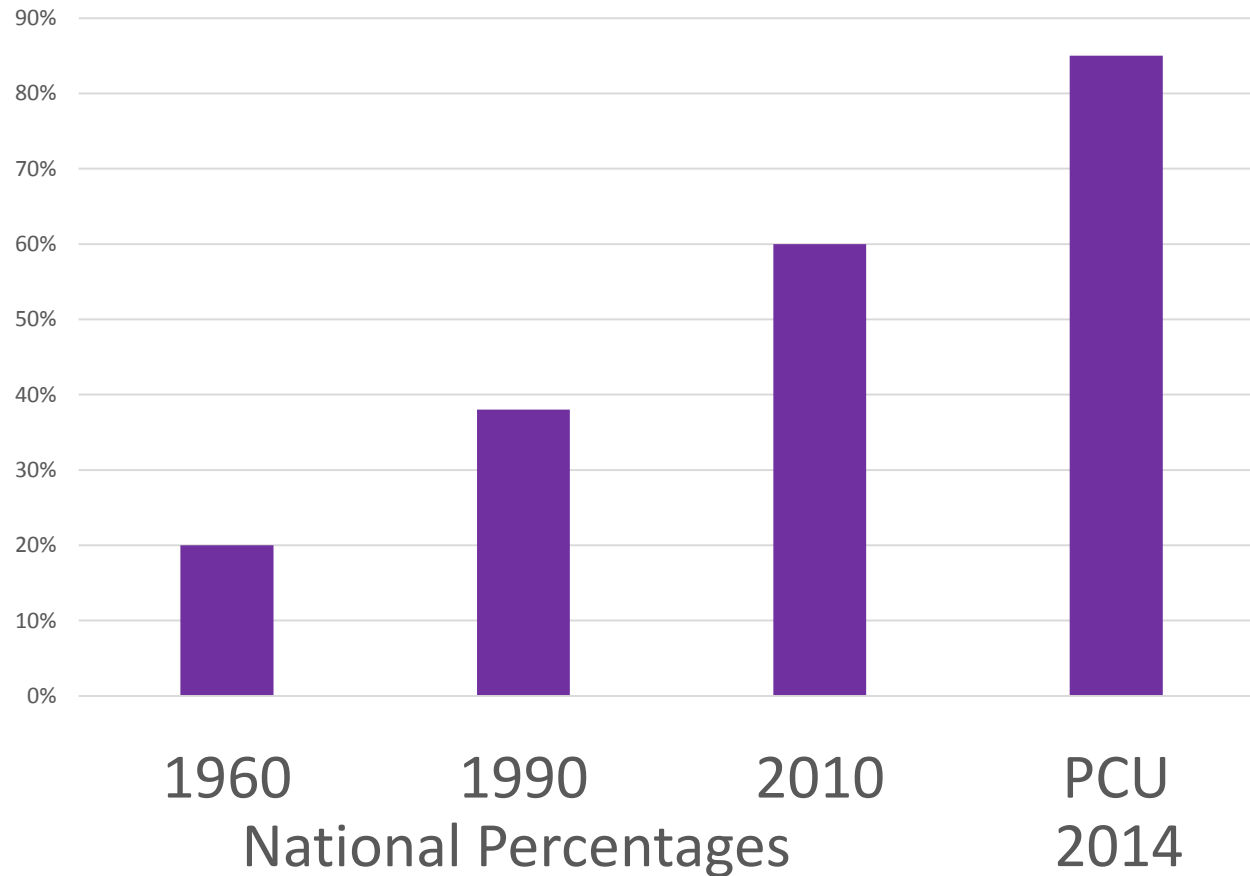
## National Online Enrollment Growth



(Allen & Seaman, 2015)

# Adjunct Faculty

## Instructional Use of Adjunct Faculty Members



(Dreyfuss, 2014; Goldstene, 2012; S. Rattin, personal communication, January 14, 2015)

# Problem Statement

Adjunct faculty are the new majority of faculty with 40-60% of 4-year college and university instruction being supported by adjunct faculty (Bettinger & Long, 2010; Meixner, Kruck, & Madden, 2010).

Some researchers have correlated lower student learning outcomes and grade inflation to the use of adjunct faculty, in comparison with full-time faculty, and researchers recommend additional faculty development support as a solution (Baldwin & Wawrzynski, 2011; Mueller, Manderlach, & Sanderson, 2013).

Colleges and universities are underserving their adjunct faculty, particularly in the area of professional development (Smallwood, 2002).

Adjunct faculty development should include the clarification of expectations between the university and the adjunct faculty around adjunct faculty roles and responsibilities (Garii & Peterson, 2006).

# Research Purpose Statement

The purpose of the current study was to:

- evaluate the differences in expectations among
  1. administrators,
  2. full-time residential faculty members,
  3. online adjunct faculty members, and
  4. online students
- related to online instructional behaviors at PCU
- in order to improve PCU's adjunct faculty development program.

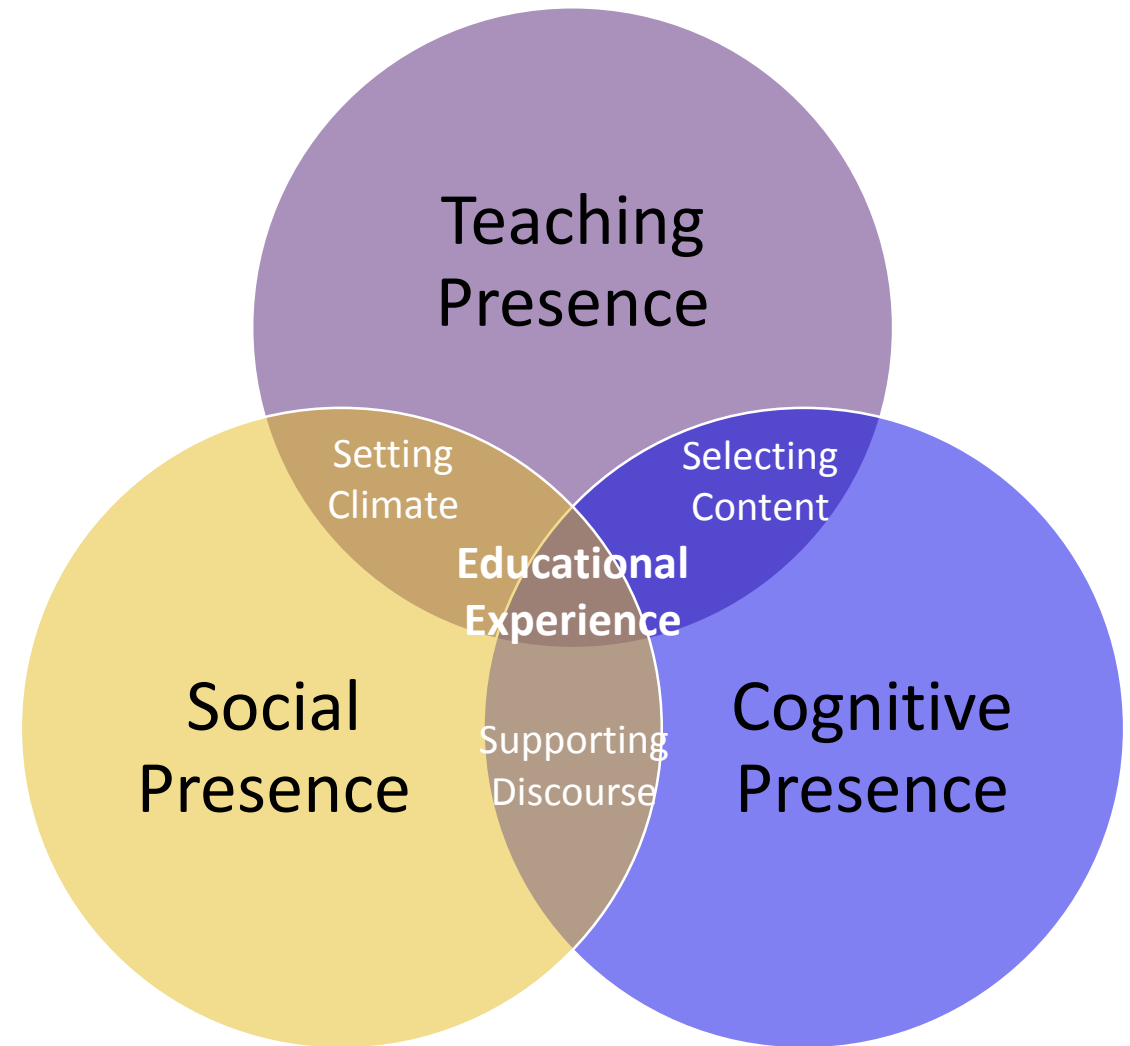
# LITERATURE REVIEW

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# Factors of Quality for Online Learning

- Teaching online requires different skill sets and techniques in comparison to teaching in the F2F classroom (Buckenmeyer, Hixon, Barczyk, and Feldman, 2013).
- Satisfied students persist through the program and dissatisfied students disengage and drop out (Bailie, 2014).
- Community of Inquiry, applied to online learning by Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000)
  1. Cognitive Presence
  2. Social Presence
  3. Teaching Presence



Adapted from Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000)

# Online Adjunct Faculty

- Few full-time faculty have wanted to teach online (Bedford, 2009).
- One-third of full-time faculty have taught an online course (Seaman, 2009).
- Institutions rely on adjunct faculty to fulfill their missions (Martinak, 2013).
- The professional adjunct faculty member
  - Made a career of adjunct teaching
  - Often taught simultaneously for two to four institutions
  - Entrepreneurial professionals (Bedford, 2009)
- Concerns over quality of adjunct faculty may be due more to the working conditions than to academic learning outputs (Maynard and Joseph, 2008; Mueller et al., 2013)

# Significance of the Study

- The majority of studies related to online adjunct faculty were conducted at community colleges or within traditional student populations.
- Only Bailie (2015) addressed expectations for online instruction between faculty and students. Bailie was interested in whether those groups could arrive at consensus about instructional expectations.
- No study considered online instructional expectations among administrators, full-time faculty, adjunct faculty, and students in a post-traditional population.
- No study sought to understand the expectations for online instruction for each of those groups.
- Without understanding expectations for online instruction, it is challenging to ensure student satisfaction in online classes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS  
DESIGN  
DATA COLLECTION  
ANALYTICAL METHODS

# RESEARCH PROCESS

# Research Questions

1. What differences exist in expectations of online instructional behaviors among administrators, full-time faculty members, online adjunct faculty members, and online students?
2. How do adjunct faculty members' perceptions of administrator priorities for online instructional behaviors differ from administrators' actual priorities?
3. What is the relationship between one's past experience with online learning and one's expectations for online instructional behaviors?

# Research Design

- Quantitative, non-experimental, fixed design methodology utilizing a survey instrument created by the researcher for cross-sectional data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Salkind, 2012)
- Population: 25 administrators, 197 full-time faculty, 431 adjunct faculty, and 1,837 online students. The population represented a convenience sampling from one university.
- To support validity, the survey instrument was created based on institutional criteria for online instruction, which had been developed by a taskforce that reviewed industry best practices, accreditation standards, professional organizations, and the community of inquiry theoretical framework, which provided construct validity (Salkind, 2012).
- The survey instrument was created in Snap Surveys, contained 29, six-point Likert-style questions related to online instructional behaviors, and contained demographic questions.
- Snap Surveys ensured the anonymity of participants, thereby protecting validity.

## Survey Pilot

- Piloted at a peer Midwestern, private, nonprofit university
- IRB approval from the was received on September 4, 2015
- Pilot conducted on September 16, 2015
- Reliability was verified by a Cronbach's alpha score of .868, which indicated good reliability (Yockey, 2011).
- 12 suggestions were made to improve the survey, but none were substantive

## Sample Survey Item

Online instructors should provide an orienting post at the start of each week that provides students with guidelines on what she or he expects for their forum posts.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Neutral    Agree    Strongly Agree

# Data Collection

- The survey was distributed November 2, 2015 to the entire population of 2,490 recipients by institutional email. This date avoided peak work times for faculty and students, thereby supporting validity.
- To reduce a sense of coercion and to support validity, the survey was sent in a routine manner from the student help desk, the faculty help desk, and from the office of academic affairs.
- The response rate was 24.6%, or 613 of 2,490 recipients.
- Chronbach's alpha for the survey was .957, which indicated excellent reliability (Yockey, 2011).



# Research Question One: Analytical Methods

What differences exist in expectations of online instructional behaviors among administrators, full-time faculty members, online adjunct faculty members, and online students?

- Welch's variant of the one-way, between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) due to violation of the homogeneity of variance assumption among many items (Yockey, 2011; Welch, 1947)
- A Bonferroni post hoc test was used to identify where differences existed among the groups (Newsom, 2013)
- A Hochberg procedure was used to control for Type 1 familywise error.

# Research Questions Two and Three: Analytical Methods

RQ 2: How do adjunct faculty members' perceptions of administrator priorities for online instructional behaviors differ from administrators' actual priorities?

- ***t*-test for independent means**  
(Salkind, 2014)

RQ 3: What is the relationship between one's past experience with online learning and one's expectations of online instructional behaviors?

- **Pearson product-moment correlation** (Salkind, 2014)

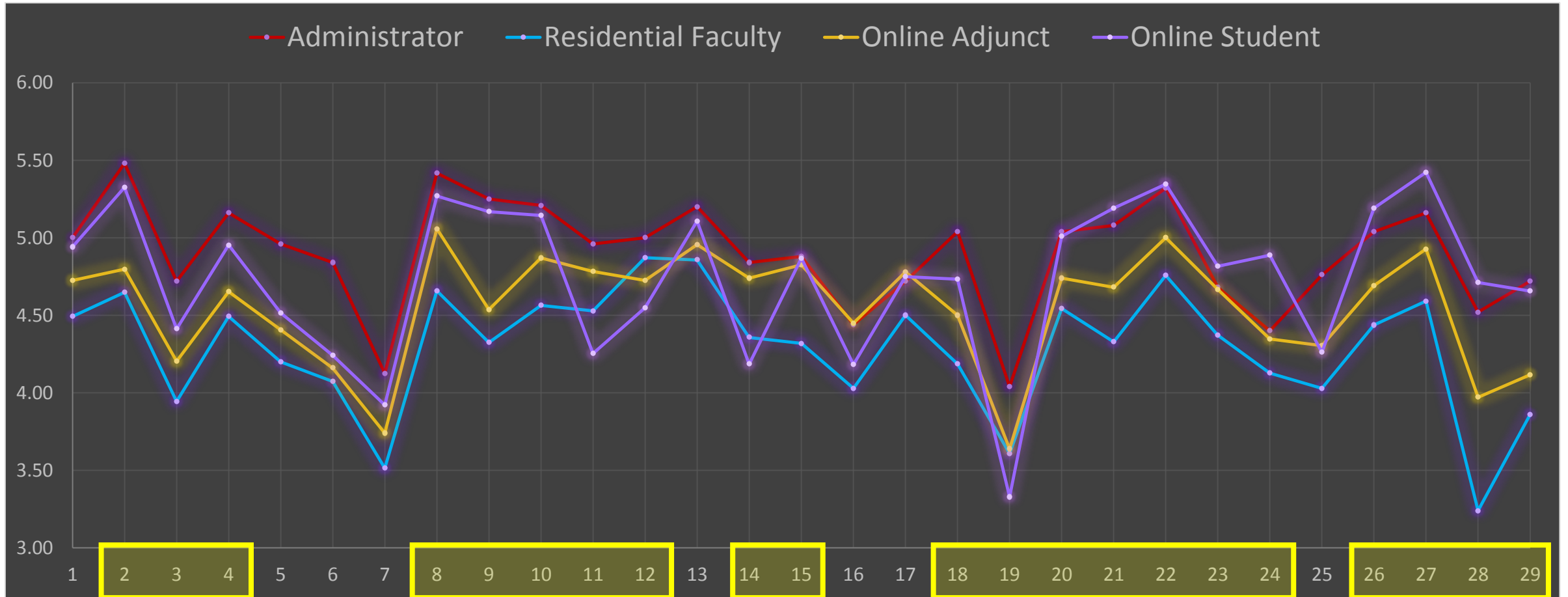
# Limitations

1. One online learning model: asynchronous
2. Convenience sampling
3. Instructional standards from one university
4. Self-created survey instrument
5. Small administrator sample size ( $n = 25$ ) limits criterion validity
6. Confounding variables: prior student exposure to stronger or weaker online instructors, academic disciplines, online class sizes
7. Adjunct use of institutional email
8. Residential adjunct faculty receipt of the survey

# FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

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# Comparison of Means for Each Item



# Research Question One - Administrators

What differences exist in expectations of online instructional behaviors among administrators, full-time faculty members, online adjunct faculty members, and online students?

Item	Administrator	Full-Time Faculty	Online Adjunct	Online Student	
2	5.48	4.65*	4.80	5.33	Cognitive Presence
8	5.42	4.66*	5.06	5.27	
10	5.21	4.56*	4.87	5.14	
11	4.96	4.53	4.78	4.25*	
18	5.04	4.19*	4.50	4.73	Social Presence
21	5.08	4.33*	4.68	5.19	Teaching Presence
28	4.52	3.24***	3.97	4.71	Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

# Research Question One – Full-Time Faculty

Item	Administrator	Full-Time Faculty	Online Adjunct	Online Student		
2	5.48*	4.65	4.80	5.33***	Cognitive Presence	
4	5.16	4.49	4.65	4.95*		
8	5.42*	4.66	5.06	5.27***		
9	5.25	4.32	4.54	5.17**		
10	5.21*	4.56	4.87	5.14***		
15	4.88	4.32	4.83*	4.87**		
18	5.04*	4.19	4.5	4.73**		Social Presence
20	5.04	4.54	4.74	5.01*		
21	5.08*	4.33	4.68	5.19***		
22	5.32	4.76	5.00	5.35***		
23	4.68	4.37	4.67	4.82*		
24	4.4	4.13	4.35	4.89***		
26	5.04	4.44	4.69	5.19***	Teaching Presence	
27	5.16	4.59	4.93	5.42***		
28	4.52***	3.24	3.97**	4.71***		
29	4.72	3.86	4.12	4.66***		Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Research Question One – Adjunct Faculty

Item	Administrator	Full-time Faculty	Online Adjunct	Online Student
2	5.48	4.65	4.80	5.33**
10	5.21	4.56	4.87	5.14**
11	4.96	4.53	4.78	4.25**
14	4.84	4.36	4.74	4.18*
15	4.88	4.32*	4.83	4.87
21	5.08	4.33	4.68	5.19**
24	4.40	4.13	4.35	4.89**
26	5.04	4.44	4.69	5.19**
27	5.16	4.59	4.93	5.42**
28	4.52	3.24**	3.97	4.71***
29	4.72	3.86	4.12	4.66*

Cognitive Presence

Social Presence

Teaching Presence

Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$



# Research Question One - Students

Cognitive Presence
Social Presence
Teaching Presence
Institutional Presence

Item	Administrator	Full-time Faculty	Online Adjunct	Online Student
2	5.48	4.65***	4.80**	5.33
4	5.16	4.49*	4.65	4.95
8	5.42	4.66***	5.06	5.27
9	5.25	4.32**	4.54	5.17
10	5.21	4.56***	4.87**	5.14
11	4.96*	4.53	4.78**	4.25
14	4.84	4.36	4.74*	4.18
15	4.88	4.32**	4.83	4.87
18	5.04	4.19**	4.5	4.73
20	5.04	4.54*	4.74	5.01
21	5.08	4.33***	4.68**	5.19
22	5.32	4.76***	5.00	5.35
23	4.68	4.37*	4.67	4.82
24	4.40	4.13***	4.35**	4.89
26	5.04	4.44***	4.69**	5.19
27	5.16	4.59***	4.93**	5.42
28	4.52	3.24***	3.97***	4.71
29	4.72	3.86***	4.12*	4.66

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

# Research Question One: Conclusions

What differences exist in expectations of online instructional behaviors among administrators, full-time faculty members, online adjunct faculty members, and online students?

- There was a difference in expectations of instructional behaviors among the four groups.
- Administrators held the highest expectations for online instructional behaviors.
- Online students tended to have higher priorities for online instructional behavior than did full-time faculty and online adjunct faculty members.
- Adjunct faculty have as high or higher expectations of online instruction as full-time faculty.
- Full-time faculty and students differ more dramatically than any other group combination. Of those differences, 31%, or five of 16 items, related to the cognitive presence of the instructor.

# Research Question Two

How do adjunct faculty members' perceptions of administrator priorities for online instructional behaviors differ from administrators' actual priorities?

Item	Administrator		Adjunct		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1	5	1	4.4	1.48	2.21*
2	5.48	0.82	4.47	1.43	4.13***
5	4.96	0.98	4.39	1.54	2.07*
10	5.25	0.94	4.65	0.94	2.22*

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Cognitive Presence

Social Presence

Teaching Presence

Institutional Presence

# Research Question Two: Conclusions

How do adjunct faculty members' perceptions of administrator priorities for online instructional behaviors differ from administrators' actual priorities?

- There was strong alignment between adjunct faculty members' perceptions and administrators' actual expectations.

# Research Question Three - Administrators

What is the relationship between one's past experience with online learning and one's expectations of online instructional behaviors?

Item	Years at PCU <i>r</i>	Years Comprehensive <i>r</i>	
4	0.334	.413*	Cognitive Presence
			Social Presence
			Teaching Presence
29	-.482*	-0.177	Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$

## Research Question Three – Full-Time Faculty

Item	Experience with Online Education		Experience with F2F Education	
	Years at PCU	Years Comprehensive	Years at PCU	Years Comprehensive
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
5	.309*	.312*	0.187	0.007
6	.251*	0.135	-0.023	-0.079
8	.244*	0.206	0.112	-0.011
9	.258*	0.218	0.112	0
17	.239*	0.201	0.16	-0.071
19	-0.091	-.269*	-0.03	-0.089
22	.244*	.303*	0.107	-0.101
27	.313**	.332**	.242*	-0.06
28	-0.076	-.242*	-0.1	-0.207

Cognitive Presence

Social Presence

Teaching Presence

Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

# Research Question Three – Adjunct Faculty and Students

Item	Years at PCU	Years Comprehensive	Courses Taken
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
1	.136*	0.033	.182**
3	0.073	-0.052	.157**
5	.155**	0.035	0.102
7	.180**	0.006	.136*
9	0.059	-0.069	.119*
10	0.109	0.007	.139*
16	.138*	0.043	.117*
17	0.104	0.006	.115*
24	.116*	0.034	0.101

Cognitive Presence
Social Presence
Teaching Presence
Institutional Presence

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

# Research Question Three: Conclusions

What is the relationship between one's past experience with online learning and one's expectations of online instructional behaviors?

- There was no statistically significant relationship between past experience and current priorities for adjunct faculty members and minimal relationship for administrators.
- For students, there was a relationship in nine of 29, or 31% of items, between past experience and current online instructional priorities.
- Traditional classroom teaching weakly influences one's online instructional priorities.
  - This conclusion confirms prior research findings that different skillsets are required for online teaching (Buckenmeyer et al., 2013).
  - This conclusion may help explain why Allen and Seaman (2015) reported that, since 2002, only 28% of faculty have expressed confidence in the quality of online learning. Without proficiency, confidence would fail to follow.
  - For full-time faculty, there was a relationship on nine of 29, or 31% of items, when the variable was online teaching rather than traditional classroom teaching.



# IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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# Implications

- Full-time faculty members' low priority for online instructional behaviors may contribute to their perception of online learning as lower quality than traditional learning.
- Full-time faculty members may need additional faculty development before teaching online.
- Mandated online instructional expectations are justified based on the differences in expectations between administrators and students, on one hand, and adjunct and full-time faculty, on the other hand (Bailie, 2015).
- Quality online instruction may be more of a factor of the specialization of the instructor in that delivery modality rather than a factor of the instructor's status as a faculty member.
- Heavy reliance on adjunct faculty members for online delivery is not *ipso facto* a liability.
- PCU's faculty development program heavily emphasizes the social presence of the instructor. There were few statistically significant differences in this category, implying that the program is effective within that category. However, PCU's adjunct faculty development program may be improved by better emphasizing the cognitive presence of the instructor.

# Recommendations

- What is the correlation between the priorities that adjunct faculty members ascribe to online instructional behaviors and the success of students in their courses?
- Do the lower priorities for online instructional behavior of full-time faculty contribute to their perception that online learning is of lower quality than traditional learning?
- Duplicate this study in different online models, such as synchronous, adaptive, or competency-based contexts.
- Explore how the confounding variables of class size and academic disciplines influence the priorities for online instructional behaviors.

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Thank you