Time as a Wicked Problem: A Study of Community College Faculty Experiences with State-Mandated Acceleration

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ABSTRACT: California legislation (AB705, signed 2017) mandated accelerated community college writing education and implementation to begin just before the COVID-19 pandemic. This study captures faculty experiences with mandated pandemic-era acceleration via analysis of 131 open-ended faculty survey responses representing 60 of the 116 California community colleges. Using an activity system framework to analyze responses, we find that while faculty navigated a new simplified acceleration activity system due to legislation focused on accelerating writing education, their commentaries suggest that a more complicated, dynamic acceleration activity system emerged in which time became a determinate force that pushed and pulled on actors, objects, and outcomes. We argue that acceleration and basic writing both require a more inclusive conception of time to be leveraged as the tools of educational equity and open admissions they aspire to be. We advocate learning from faculty, holistic and contextual assessment of the initiative, fuller funding of the initiative to include support, and appreciation for the multiplicity of student experience and purpose.

KEYWORDS: acceleration; ALP; AB705; basic writing; developmental education legislation; time; writing in the two-year college

Community college acceleration has been legislated into effect across the country, including Texas, Florida, Connecticut, and, recently, our home state of California (Scott-Clayton). Elements of the acceleration movement were introduced decades ago in California, when in 1997 the California State University system was mandated to reduce the number of students held for remediation from 45% to 10% by 2007 (Goen-Salter). In 2010, the California Acceleration Project propelled the acceleration movement forward, presenting it as an educational reform movement (Henson and Hern) that prioritized student completion of community college in the largest community college system in the country—particularly for students from historically underrep-

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DOI: 10.37514/JBW-J.2024.43.1.03

resented minority groups. Focused on writing and math "preparatory" or developmental education, these state-level efforts are described as a remedy for educational inequity with time to college completion as the ultimate metric of student success. In 2017, California Assembly Bill 705 (AB705) mandated that California community colleges accelerate writing coursework by directing them to "maximize the probability that the student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and mathematics within a one-year timeframe" (AB705; AB1705). Proponents of this legislation cite equity concerns because students of color are overwhelmingly placed into lengthy developmental course sequences—what we would call basic writing courses—and as a result are less likely to complete college (Henson and Hern). However, developmental education specialists have questioned the efficacy of legislated changes in writing education that do not account for the lived experiences of community college students nor the expertise of community college faculty and other scholars in the field (Armstrong; McGee et al.; Suh). For many of the 116 colleges in the California community college system, work implementing this bill came to fruition in the Fall of 2020, moments before a global pandemic forced higher education institutions to transition to online spaces. Therefore, questions about AB705—and the recent additional AB1705 that extends legislative reach to placement processes for writing and math—are tied in practical terms to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mandated acceleration and the pandemic impacted California basic writing courses simultaneously, profoundly influencing the ongoing debates about what students need, how existing systems can be adapted to meet stu-

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dent needs better, and the markers of student success that should be used to measure acceleration's effectiveness. Given the scale of the California community college system that serves 1.5-2 million students per year, the most readily available metrics of student success thus far have been quantitative data about student retention rates, course completion, and transfer to four-year colleges [see California Acceleration Project (CAP), Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), California Education Lab, and Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research as well as national perspectives from Complete College America (CCA), and Brookings Institution]. These data sets and analyses (e.g. Li) provide invaluable macro-perspectives about the impact of postsecondary education acceleration legislative efforts.

Nonetheless, the day-to-day classroom happenings of acceleration remain less known, suggesting a need for richer qualitative research to provide contextualization of this datum to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of two-year college writing circulating within and across cohorts of students, faculty, curricula, and pedagogical practices. As California writing program administrators working at postsecondary four-year institutions, we pursue two questions with this study:

- What are community college faculty experiences navigating AB705?
- What are the most pressing issues or factors—from curriculum to institutional systems and legislative frameworks—shaping their curricular and pedagogical decisions in response to acceleration?

In pursuit of these questions, we launched a qualitative study in April of 2022 that captured California community college faculty experiences and mindsets. Faculty voices were, and remain, absent from many of the quantitative reports on community college student success; however, we argue that faculty experiences and dispositions toward acceleration in the post-AB705 system help us understand implementation, particularly the pedagogical approaches and impacts on students as well as faculty and curriculum. We use an activity systems framework, one that accounts for more dynamic understandings of how actors and systems interact, to analyze survey responses and explore how faculty represent the acceleration mandates in their responses. In viewing this more complex system of acceleration, we find that while models like the corequisite course structure have proven effective when removing pre-transfer basic writing options for students,

California community college faculty responses expose larger, unresolved questions about the community's conceptions of time and its impact on definitions of student success and preparedness.

We argue that acceleration models, which change the speed and intensity of basic writing courses, need: 1) more dynamic paradigms of time and 2) more robust definitions of both student success and student preparedness if we are to leverage acceleration legislation as opportunities for building more writing education equity capacity in and across our college systems. These measures of success must evolve past a singular metric of time to completion and transfer, instead holding space for different types of student success that are defined by students' purposes, which can be varied and diverse. Doing so will bring us closer, as a field, to the equity goals we share.

BASIC WRITING REFORM: THE ACCELERATION MOVEMENT

Scholarship documents a long history of basic writing being used as gatekeeping mechanisms in higher education (Ritter; Soliday; Stanley) and the reforms designed to improve, reduce, or eliminate reliance on basic writing classes and programs (Melzer; Otte and Mlynarczyk). Recent reform movements have come in a variety of forms, including changes to admission, placement, course structure, and curricula (Hassel et al.), all in a response to disconcerting statistics that demonstrate how basic writing students are less likely to attain a degree (Adams "ALP FAQs;" Cho et al.; Henson and Hern; Nastal). For example, Jessica Nastal used survival analysis to find that only 12% of students who placed two levels below college-level (transferable) writing "survived," i.e., passed college-level writing. Of those students, Black students were least successful in the three-course sequence, only 9% completing the college-level writing course (Nastal). Further studies confirm that placement mechanisms and lengthy course sequences disproportionately impact students of color and students from historically underrepresented backgrounds (Henson and Hern; Ihara). Leslie Henson and Katie Hern found that when students enter community colleges in basic writing courses, they complete community college at a rate of 41%; in contrast, students placed directly into transfer-level courses complete community college at a rate of 71%. These statistics are similar to Nastal's findings. Henson and Hern further demonstrate that placing basic writing students directly into transfer-level writing resulted in students passing at higher rates (except Black students, whose pass rates stayed the same) (Henson and Hern). As a result, they argue that placements using standardized test scores caused a "disparate impact"

to disadvantaged students, highlighting that only 50% of students at Butte College, a California community college, who started one course below transfer level completed college in two years (Henson and Hern).

Despite these studies that show how multiple levels of basic writing create barriers for many community college students, there are many developmental education scholars who challenge this wide sweeping reform as part of a one-size-fits-all approach to basic writing curriculum because students come with different backgrounds, experiences, and educational goals reflective of their cultural and linguistic diversity (Armstrong; McGee et al; Suh). Further, equity drives these reforms. Equity is a shared goal of many, if not all developmental educators just as it is a goal of many, if not all, writing educators. However, a shared definition of equity among basic writing faculty may not exist (Suh). Drawing upon recent scholarship, Emily Suh defines equity as "parity of outcomes across groups distinguished by race, with the additional interaction of other socioeconomic, linguistic, gendered, ability or other markers by which one or more groups has been systematically oppressed or disadvantaged" (249). Parity of outcomes, as Suh defines it, has not been fully achieved by the reforms, based on current data. As a result, criticisms from developmental educators remain significant especially if these reforms move community colleges and its faculty and students further away from the mission of access and support for all students (McGee et al.; Suh) and into a scenario where implementation happens without critical reflection (Armstrong).

These opposing views highlight a critical discussion around the reform movement that often provokes binary-driven questions about the changes: is it better to give students additional time to acquire college-level literacy skills through basic writing courses, or is extra time a barrier to marginalized students' timely progress (Ihara)? Existing models of basic writing reform—stretch and paired courses—change the nature of the relationship between time and success by extending preparation time (Glau). Some models attempt to answer this question by stretching time across multiple terms to allow students more time to develop as writers (Davila and Elder; Glau; Peele). At the same time, most college systems have decided that extra time is a barrier to equity, especially for students of color (*Complete College America*; Henson and Hern; Nastal; *Time is the Enemy*). In response, accelerated course models—studio and corequisite courses—have become a frequent strategy for shortening the length of time students spend completing required writing course sequences (Jaggars and Bickerstaff; Nodine et al.), effectively accelerating coursework to push students toward completion.

The Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) of the Community College of Baltimore County made this expedited course model famous. The ALP program, pioneered by Peter Adams and currently co-directed by Haleh Amizi and Elsbeth Mantler, utilizes a corequisite course model in which students may be placed into an additional 3-credit support class alongside their 3-credit first-year writing course (Adams et al.). The model's success in Baltimore, according to the most recently available data, saw student pass rates shifting from 38% to 75% (Adams "Giving Hope"). The success of the program may be attributed to the contextual nature of the curriculum that explores life and affective issues, small class size, more time in a cohort with an instructor who knows how to integrate reading and writing, and shortened time to completion (Adams "Giving Hope"). ALP is a strong model for corequisite implementation in its emphasis on small cohorts and curricular reform; however, as AB705 has revealed, through its silence on classroom size and curriculum, the ALP is only one particular, context-driven way that people have approached acceleration. Like most curricular innovations, ALP is successful at least in part due to its contextual responsiveness. Its success is tied to its situatedness, designed for a particular teaching and learning community set in a specific institutional context. The strengths of ALP, therefore, are also some of its transcontextual limitations, making it difficult to easily transplant the approach to another situation without context-driven adaptation.

The success of ALP has been well documented; however, the correlation of success and shortened time and other factors like curriculum or class size is less demonstrated. Rachel Ihara's study of placement and assessment changes in the ALP program at Kingsborough Community College, CUNY highlights these difficulties. She found when the college moved basic writing students into an ALP-model classroom, with 17 non-ALP and eight ALP students in a classroom together, ALP students performed better on a collaborative portfolio assessment than non-ALP students, raising more questions than answers. As Ihara points out, "pass rates alone don't tell us *why* students pass, or don't pass, when assessed via portfolio" (100). Ihara questions whether these findings demonstrate issues in placement processes, assessment irregularities, or curricular non-standardization because in basic writing programs, like Ihara's, there is often more standardization and collaboration among faculty. As post-secondary institutions reduce reliance on and availability of basic writing instruction, it offers opportunities for scholars to research the effects of these reforms, like Adams, Ihara, Henson and Hern. However, collectively, these studies already highlight that one

significant consequence is a narrowing definition and role of time as the singular metric of two-year college writing success.

TIME AND ACCELERATION

The legislative decisions driving the acceleration movement, like AB705/1705, rely on time as a primary measurement of success. Studies overwhelmingly indicate that the length of the basic writing course sequence correlates with a lack of student persistence, though scholars still question what causes such correlations to occur (Ihara). By using acceleration as a reform for this problem of persistence, basic writing is not necessarily erased; it is changed in terms of time and delivery. It shifts from elongated or distributed time (across multiple terms) to additional concentrated time (extra time dedicated to writing in a single term). Typically, the same number of units is ultimately earned, but 6 units completed in a stretch model of basic writing, for example, takes two terms while 6 units completed in an accelerated model takes one term. In all the reforms of placement (Henson and Hern; Ihara), curriculum (Adams et al.), and assessment (Ihara), students who may have previously placed into multiple levels of basic writing still experience more instructional time than other students. What changes, in these two different models of basic writing instruction (stretch and corequisite acceleration), is the speed, intensity, and saturation of that teaching and learning time in each iteration. However, time itself is not neutral—some students have more than others, a difference that is steeped in issues of racial and class privilege.

Writing studies scholars have shown how time and equity are connected by challenging normative time. "Crip time" acts as a challenge to normative considerations of time by critically evaluating conceptions of "how long something should take" and bending "the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds" (Kafer 27). "Crip time" disrupts normative paradigms that ask those with disabilities to adhere to normative conceptions of time and, instead, requires that we reconsider time as a tool for accommodating all students who also have their own perceptions and experiences with time in classes. Tara Wood argues that the use of normative time in classrooms disenfranchises some students and suggests that "cripping time" in the writing classroom allows faculty to accommodate all students with perhaps the most impact in basic and first-year writing courses (264). Andrea Venezia, Kathy Reeves Bracco, and Thad Nodine found students who were placed into basic writing courses were upset by what they then deemed as time lost—time in high school classes that left them needing to take basic writing classes—and

retrospectively viewed as "wasted time." For other students time operates as a spatial metaphor, becoming something we move—or speed—through (Margolies and Crawford). Metaphors of time also relate to commodification—something that can be saved, wasted, spent. These inequities around time became apparent in accelerated writing models during a pandemic, a moment in history when time was flattened by shelter-in-place orders, online living (for work, for school, etc.), and the perpetual calculation of risks and loss. Time, often marked by memories of new or special activities or, at least, a variety of stimuli and experiences throughout the days, lacked such distinction and definition. At the same time, educators and students were confronted with the fractures of asynchronicity—where time is experienced as individual and perhaps solitary phenomena.

Changing conceptions of time in accelerated writing classes were further distorted by a switch to online instruction, forced by the pandemic. Before the pandemic, research found completion of developmental education courses was negatively impacted by an online course structure (Sublett). In the community college system, researchers have found students were almost 7% less likely to complete an online course (Hart et al.) and success rates for online courses were almost 14% lower than students in face-to-face classes (Johnson and Cuellar Mejia). These findings align with research on online developmental classes across the country and point to the very precarious position many students and faculty found themselves in during the Spring of 2020 when, at least in the California community college, the acceleration of basic writing programs intersected with COVID-19 and its alteration of our experiences of time itself.

These conversations highlight the complex equity concerns affecting basic writing. Placed into the context of California, the largest and most diverse community college system in the United States, a monolithic approach to addressing these complex problems lacks promise. Studies show that a return to the previous model of multi-leveled basic writing sequences would harm our most at-risk students (Henson and Hern; Nastal); however, studies also show that successful reforms cannot ignore context in a sweeping mandate, provoking this study to better understand faculty experiences and pedagogical insights after AB705/1705 to contextualize the mandate.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

In the past several decades, activity system analysis has been used to capture complex learning systems and theorize humans and their environ-

ments as holistic systems, making it a useful framework to analyze accelerated writing courses. As demonstrated in figure 1, the first-generation theory visualized

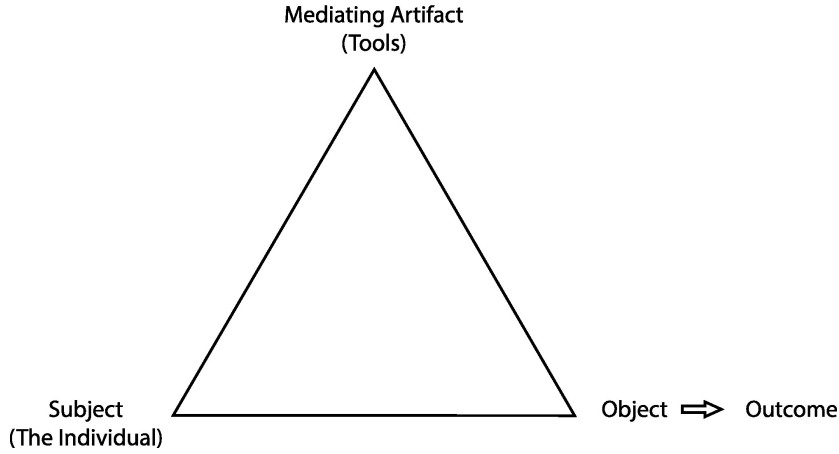

Figure 1. Vygotsky's First-Generation Theory of Mediated Action (1978)

Lev Vygotsky's well-cited conception of how humans interact with their world with a simple three-pointed triangle listing tools, subject, and object, leading to an outcome.

Later, Yrjö Engeström expanded the mediated triangle to account for subjects, or those who participate in an activity and work toward a common outcome. In this often called "second generation" of activity theory, Engeström's triangle details specific, transactional aspects of human activity. As shown in figure 2, each activity system representation includes: tools, or the material resources used by subjects; object, or the goal of the activity; rules, or regulations that might constrain the activity in some way; community, or the group the subjects belong to; division of labor, or shared responsibilities determined by the community; and outcomes, or the consequence of the activity.

Sociocultural theories of learning have added substantially to this representation of activity systems over time (e.g. second- and third-generation activity theory). Second-generation activity system models (see figure 2) have become popular in 1) understanding dynamic human interactions in educational settings like classrooms in particular (Barab et al.), 2) examining issues of social justice in school organizations (Sumbera), 3) making improvements to school systems (Yamagata-Lynch and Smaldino), among other applications. This iteration of

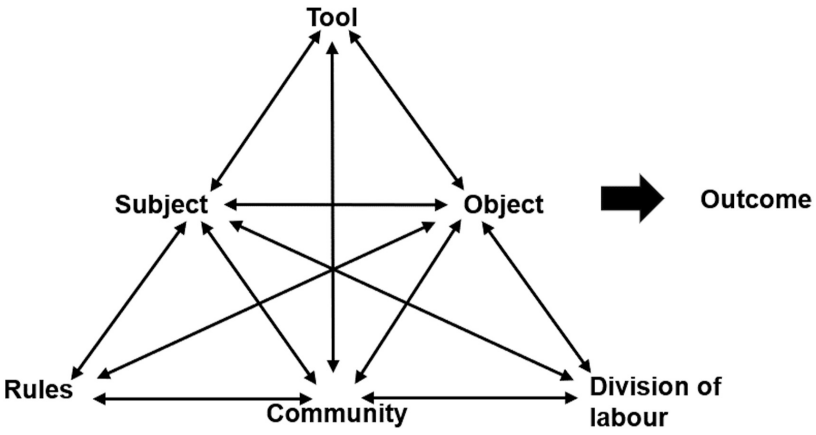

Figure 2. Second-Generation Activity system model as presented by Engeström (1987).

activity system theory is a productive theoretical framework for understanding shifts in educational institutions. This propensity to understand educational change led us to activity systems as a model for understanding this mandated acceleration. Specifically, we use both the first-generation and second-generation activity system models to understand the competing notions of time and mediated activity made apparent through the analysis of our data.

METHODS

Survey

The study included a Qualtrics-based survey with 35 Likert, open response, and rating-scale questions.[1] Respondents were asked to describe curricular models implemented as a result of AB705, how new models impacted assessment and pedagogy, and how faculty responded to these changes. The survey was sent to faculty listservs, faculty directory emails from the ~70 most highly attended community colleges in California, and relevant social media groups from April 7 to June 15 of 2022, making it difficult to know the exact number of faculty invited. The survey garnered 216 responses, 189 of which were considered complete; responses came from 66 different community colleges, representing 57% of the 116 total community colleges.

Our analysis focuses on the responses from a singular open-ended question (Question 19): "Has the pandemic impacted these curricular and pedagogical concerns (class size, instructional time, reading and writing assignments, activities assigned to students, assessment strategies, etc.)? Please elaborate below." While the survey prompted participants to respond to a number of different questions, we focused on this question in our analysis because it was the only one that allowed participants to speak to AB705 implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. As with all qualitative work, we understand this study to capture only a portion of the narrative around AB705.

Participants

A total of 131 responses were collected for Question 19 from participants at 60 different California community colleges. Respondents overwhelmingly identified as female (65%) compared to male (21%) and non-binary or transgender (3%); respondents were more likely to be white (73%) and heterosexual (66%). Further, 10% of respondents identified as a person with a disability, 50% were former community college students, and 36% identified as first-generation college students. Only 23% of respondents identified as contingent or part-time faculty and 95% of respondents had over seven years of teaching experience. Further, 20% hold a doctoral degree and almost 60% hold master's degrees in varying fields.

Data Analysis

To better understand the open-ended responses of this question we took a grounded theory approach where we qualitatively coded responses. The 131 complete responses were anonymized; three researchers then open-coded the responses in separate sheets and memoed, identifying possible themes and articulating descriptors for themes. We later met to reconcile emerging themes and build a beta code sheet of descriptive codes (Huberman and Miles). We then selectively coded using the beta code sheet and met again to refine the codebook, building a final codebook containing 23 individual codes (see Appendices A and B). Each researcher then coded the 131 responses using simultaneous coding to where codes overlapped to identify a single piece of datum (Saldaña); over several meetings, we then rectified codes for three-way agreement.

Final codes were a combination of attribute/descriptive codes (Saldaña 70) we had defined, marking the presence of a word or phrase; value codes,

capturing beliefs of faculty (Saldaña 110); or holistic codes, which capture overall themes (Saldaña 142). In rectifying, the three readers noted a "1" for a present code and a "0" for non-present code. We then followed a tradition of quantitatively analyzing categorical data for a different perspective (Young 358), helping us to identify pieces of a larger system at play. Once we rectified our individual codes via consensus-driven code decisions, the frequency of each code and relationship between codes was analyzed via statistical correlation analysis conducted in SES. Table 1 details the highest correlating codes with "Time."

Table 1. Pearson Correlation of Select Codes with Time

	Changed Assessment Practices	Student Support	Reading	Pedagogical Impact	Life Issues (Student Struggle, Obstacles)
Time	.305**	.432**	.291**	.336**	.523**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

It was through this quantitative analysis of the qualitative coding that we could see the impact of *time* on changes made to assessment practices ("Changed Assessment Practice"), perceptions of missing student support ("Student Support"), integration of reading activities into instruction ("Reading"), shifts in pedagogical thinking ("Pedagogical Impact"), and instructor perception of external student issues impacting classrooms ("Life Issues"). These were the highly significant correlations, meaning these codes were very often likely to overlap with each other; however, other codes ("Plagiarism," "Modality," and "Teacher Agency") were also significant in correlation with "Time" at a higher p value ($p \leq 0.05$). We then examined these codes again, coding these correlating codes for a fourth time for how *time* as an influencer appeared in each of these categories. This re-examination revealed many moving pieces, or a more expansive definition of the players and components of the system of acceleration, than we had originally anticipated, which resulted in our analytic framework.

Through the analysis, we were able to see how time was a binding concept that impacted all manners of this complex system that clearly reached beyond subject, object, and outcome, and recognize how the system was

pushing and pulling on each other as denoted in the arrows in figure 2. As we organized our codes to consider their correlations, an activity systems approach was key to seeing how they interacted. In our analysis of Question 19, an activity system framework allowed us to understand how codes related and, most importantly, what mediated faculty sentiments.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

How the Pandemic Impacted Accelerated Pedagogies

Overall, the rich and varied responses highlight the complex activity system created by the intersection of the pandemic and AB705 legislation. The many players, from faculty to students to administrators to legislators, converge in ways that complicate the acceleration model's reliance on a "commonplace pace" (Wood 261). Before the pandemic, a shared conceptualization of time (instructional time, time students devoted to preparation before entering transferable courses, time students had to devote to a course to be successful, etc.) was normalized across seemingly similar levels of basic writing courses. Prior to legislation, many schools shared similar basic writing class sequences; while many of these sequences were problematic and troubling in how they impacted students, they provided a shared sense of how basic writing would appear over time. The pandemic exposed the divergent experiences and navigation of time in basic writing classrooms depending on student—and instructor—context, demonstrated in technological access and literacy inequities, availability of time and resources beyond the classroom, and different approaches to corequisite models. Thus, while reforms like AB705 have proven effective at reducing lengthy basic writing sequences for students, faculty responses also expose larger ongoing questions about the conceptions of time itself, particularly in terms of time's impact on definitions of student success and preparedness.

Acceleration Model is Contingent Upon Traditional Conceptions of Time

New conceptions of time infiltrated many instructor responses, their elaborations emphasizing time as a key factor in their changing and challenging pandemic-era, post-AB705 professional lives. Thirty-six (27%) of our faculty respondents included time, implicitly or explicitly, as a significant or complicating factor in their COVID-era professional lives. Time—the shortage of time, the differentiated experiences of time, the distribution of time,

the socio-economic impact of time, the lack of shared time—wasn't just a frequent concern of our respondents but pointed toward a new conception of time as a crucial resource or currency of faculty-student life during the pandemic.

Several faculty participants described a shift in how their own time was spent. They described how time historically spent in the classroom instructing students was repurposed as time preparing curricular materials that would have to live outside of shared instructional time, identifying and recommending supports students needed to survive during the pandemic (counseling services, technological support, special accommodations or arrangements to account for the student's new navigation of COVID-19 time, etc.), and helping students to "catch up" and "get prepared" for the course to account for the instructional time they missed earlier in the pandemic. One faculty respondent described this issue with instructor time: "More of my time is spent 'catching' students who don't turn in assignments on time or at all, developing remediation plans for plagiarism, and teaching the basics that were previously covered in up to three levels below. This would leave little time for actual preparation, instruction, and grading; however, I have sacrificed my mental and physical health to keep these standards up." Faculty were asked to do more, do it faster, and do it with less time for pedagogical preparations, professional development, or personal wellbeing. This respondent is also detailing time spent on student surveillance and a perceived need to address citation and source use practices that they believe would have typically been developed in basic writing classes.

Faculty participants also described changes in student attitudes and use of time; COVID-era students not only reported to faculty that they had less time but faculty perceived students as also less willing to dedicate their time to traditional academic activities (like attending class sessions, meeting deadlines). Students were described as "less responsive" to sharing their time, "less willing to use their time for class purposes," and unable or unwilling to do things "on time." Several respondents described students' decisions to not engage the classroom material, something that happened pre-pandemic but not as often, as a conscious choice made due to the pandemic. Some respondents noted students' intolerance for completing assignments that students perceived as of little value: "the lower stakes scaffolding assignments were often perceived as 'extra' or 'unnecessary' by students, so they wouldn't engage as much." Students seemed less willing to "give up" their time, which became more precious during the pandemic, perhaps due to financial pressures: "Yes, as more students experience financial burdens,

they have less time to devote to the additional study needed. Plus, they invest minimal time in online classes." As perceptions of time were influenced by pandemic living, student and faculty time was also no longer synched or shared—not in actual time spent together regularly or in understanding of the roles that time plays in postsecondary education. Socioeconomic issues like these have always been present for students but were highlighted in new ways and reflected in choices about time for the faculty.

An additional, notable shift in faculty time paradigms manifested in their commentary about grading and assessment. Approximately 33% of coded mentions of time correlated with grading and feedback. Faculty described grading during the pandemic as "taking more time," reporting that their typical assessment methods like contract grading and conference grading became both more difficult and "more essential to student success." Therefore, faculty reported spending more time on teaching than ever before: "Teaching online takes the actual contact away and adds so much time to the instructor's grading (at least it did for me)." Here, time has shifted in use; depending on the grading scheme, this could mean more time evaluating students compared to instructing and coaching.

The intersection of AB705's acceleration of student writing instruction and the COVID-19 pandemic makes the crucial, yet messy and complex nature of time in required writing courses especially apparent. On top of other real-world concerns, students and faculty had to also determine how to use their time including when to share their time with each other, when to yield their time in service of the course/learning, when to seek synchronous experiences, when to retreat to asynchronous engagement, and when to refuse to yield their time to the course altogether. Instructional time, as the course itself, was no longer contained to specific meetings in physical spaces, but expanded and dispersed into the crevices of both student and faculty life. While the pacing of community college writing courses changed via AB705, the pandemic simultaneously brought about cultural shifts in how conceptualizations of time and experiences of work (working at home, asynchronous expectations of work, etc.). Changes in both time and work brought with it new challenges for equity that faculty responses deeply reflected.

Faculty responses about how COVID-era challenges impacted their pedagogical and curricular life after AB705 make two things abundantly clear: 1) AB705 and the acceleration of student writing education is premised upon traditional, linear time that is containable and shared by faculty and students in predictable ways and 2) the pandemic has altered how we perceive, understand, make decisions, and utilize time in writing courses. We

need new paradigms of time that can account for the entire system of required writing courses (different kinds of students, faculty, institutional contexts, etc.), not paradigms that privilege just one part or iteration of the system.

Definitions of Student "Success" via Completion Prove Problematic

Responses suggested that understanding student success was also deeply impacted by the pandemic and AB705, wrapped up in the centrality of time as a metric. Thirty-seven (28%) of the responses to question 19 mentioned success in terms of student learning and, most saliently, in terms of retention, where success is defined as keeping students in their class. As one respondent commented, "I would argue that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to differentiate between AB705 impacts/causes and those of the pandemic in each circumstance due to the extreme impact the pandemic has had on student behavior/performance." The inability to detangle impacts of AB705 from the pandemic was a salient theme across responses that touched on success, even though respondents were aware of this and even worked to try and distill AB705 from the pandemic.

Specifically, faculty pointed to a conflict between their own definitions of student success (i.e., learning) and administrators' or legislators' definitions of success (i.e., time to graduation or transfer, speed of completion, retention). As scholars have pointed out, the narrative about developmental education is being driven by policy groups (McGee et al.) to the exclusion of community college faculty. As a result, some faculty felt that the legislation—and the course goals it seemed to forward—was forced upon them, asking them to "play the retention game, so pedagogy is not so much a concern as retaining students." The faculty who were dealing with changes to course sequences due to AB705 and modality due to the pandemic seemed to suggest that their definitions of success rubbed up against the mandated administrative or legislative definitions of success. Many faculty responses to this question highlight the deep frustration emerging from AB705 implementation that Armstrong describes as policy without pedagogy, reform without evaluation, and mandates without expertise. One respondent wrote, "At the same time, there has been an immense amount of pressure from my campus to pass every student and there is a lot of shaming that happens if you have low pass rates." Another claimed, "Well, many teachers are teaching at a lower level and grading more easily to increase pass rates and the chancellor acts like the data proves the accelerated model works best, but the statistics

are flawed." Faculty responses reveal that AB705 tries to legislate not only placement, curriculum, and student learning but also success itself; through AB705's declaration that "the student will enter and complete" English coursework "within a one-year timeframe," it conveys the erroneous idea that learning happens in regularized, predictable, and controllable patterns that are experienced in inherently equal ways for students and faculty alike. Critical faculty comments that express their frustration with assumptions about success were the dominant sentiment in our survey results, exposing the misalignment of writing skills developing over time, an accepted premise in basic writing scholarship, and AB705 which flattens time—and therefore paradigms for writing development and student success.

At the same time, these pressures of student success affected the pedagogical approaches and therefore opportunities faculty pursued. For example, in one instructor's explanation of these pressures to pass students, to maintain retention numbers and therefore maintain data needed for administrators, they noted changes in pedagogical approaches that were intended to align with best practices in the field for accessibility among students: "We talked about this when AB705 forced its way in the door and added to it during COVID. It included being flexible about late work or work not handed in. But more important included action, recommendations, and urgings to pass papers that would have marginally failed before (some encouragement to give more A's)." While this respondent shares frustration at some of the consequences of heightened flexibility, this new goal of flexibility also provided an opportunity for faculty to reconsider the inequities apparent in time as both a finite and relative resource. New awareness of time, for example, allowed faculty to more fully utilize what disability experts have recommended for years—cripping time in classes: "Crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time" (Kafer 27). The challenge, according to respondents, is that in this pandemic-era accelerated system, *all* students must crip time—with individual guidance and support from faculty or not—to succeed. Success and time become interdependent in complex ways that student support structures and pedagogies, particularly those legislated by AB705, cannot yet accommodate.

The acceleration pressure faculty felt at the time of the survey has been further exacerbated by the flexible pedagogical accommodations made throughout the pandemic: "The 'hand holding' heavy support that started with the pandemic has continued. There is a strong sense that we must get unprepared students through." In all cases, faculty felt expectations and

criteria used to measure student success had changed, regardless of the class. Whether this is the impact of AB705, the pandemic, or some combination of the two, there is apparent tension among faculty and administrator or legislator expectations, especially when student success is determined via student throughput data which equates educational success with speedy course completion. Faculty responses highlight how definitions of success as primarily *temporal* created new pressures for faculty. Faculty respondents, in this acceleration paradigm, must play "the retention game" and felt a need to "hand hold" their students as definitions of success in their classrooms shifted, changing how pedagogy, assessment, and classroom time were approached as well.

Perceptions of Academic Preparedness during the Pandemic Must Expand

Throughout the coded responses, faculty indicated students were struggling in accelerated classes for a variety of reasons: academic unpreparedness, online learning issues, and emotional and financial trauma. Academic unpreparedness was the most often cited issue with the accelerated model during the pandemic; 38 (29%) of the 131 faculty respondents identified a lack of student preparedness. Initially, the lack of preparedness could be seen as deficit-model thinking, whereby writing faculty view basic writing students as not prepared for a transfer-level writing course. That deficit model was certainly evident with 19 out of the 38 respondents who claimed students were not ready for the content of the accelerated class. For example, one respondent said, "Students are less content prepared than ever." However, with most of the 19 responses, the academic struggles were more nuanced. For some, the issue was the newly accentuated differences in ability, which would happen in any accelerated class where students who would have been in a basic writing class are now mainstreamed: "We now have more time in class (we added a unit)—but it's all I can do to cover the existing material/activities now that student abilities vary so dramatically." For others, the academic struggles would not have existed pre-pandemic, but did now because of the difficulties students encountered in online high school classes: "[students are] extremely unprepared for even my simplified content. How much of this is that they really would have benefited from a dev ed class, and how much is that they lost out on quality teaching these last couple years?" In this and other responses, respondents note a matrix of issues, from high

school instruction to learning differentiation to administrative pressures that raise concerns about student preparedness.

Another oft-cited reason for students' lack of success in the accelerated classroom during the pandemic was online learning issues, with 12 of the 38 respondents identifying some struggle with succeeding in an online classroom environment: "The pandemic has amplified the effects of the digital divide—students who are comfortable in self-guided online instruction have been more successful while students less comfortable/adept have done poorly and/or disappeared." The extra time and support accounted for in accelerated pedagogies did not easily translate for students into asynchronous pedagogies because many students did not have the skills needed for independent learning and needed more time to develop online learning and teaching skills. Complicating this issue further, for students, the digital divide was amplified by the lack of choice in modality: "In the past, students would self-select to take an online class, and during the pandemic, many students who did not want to be online were forced to." This faculty respondent, along with others, highlighted one of the issues with agency we saw throughout this survey question. Students did not make the choice during the pandemic to take an online accelerated course. So, students who need the community and accountability of in-person instruction did not succeed in the online environment. Ironically, many faculty also claim students continue to opt for online courses, even when in-person ones are available, and even when they continue to drop out of online courses.

These issues of student preparedness—academic and online learning—are exacerbated by student's financial and emotional trauma during and after the pandemic. Sixteen of the 38 faculty respondents described the economic and mental health issues causing instability for students. As one respondent explained: "Not only are the classes more difficult because of the lack of preparatory courses, but now the apathy and anxiety of a pandemic—not to mention the dependency on technology and remote learning—teaching often feels more like therapy than actual instruction." The issues of student preparedness are an overdetermined mix of emotion, motivation, capability, and technological adeptness. The ALP curriculum from CCBC includes reading and writing about the financial issues facing students and other affective issues that help faculty and students connect the classroom to their lived experiences (Adams, "Giving Hope"). Similar curricular reforms are not included in AB705/1705 legislation; instead, colleges are left to decide curriculum on their own, with the only limit being time to completion. Students and faculty are moving through an accelerated

curriculum in a time of extreme crisis, marking a highly complex curricular moment. One respondent summed up this complexity effectively:

> Thus, we are not only working to support students of varying levels of skill, but also, managing students in crisis. In strict curricular terms, this manifests in absences, missing assignments, and students performing far below their potential. In human terms (the most important terms), the trauma of the pandemic manifests in heart-breaking ways for both the student and instructor. I spend much more time in office hours helping connect students with services than pre-pandemic, or simply listening to challenges of their lives. As a result, the emotional labor in teaching first year English has increased dramatically— in some cases, leading to 'compassion fatigue,' a phenomenon we've been talking about on campus.

Faculty described economic upheaval, issues with childcare, competing commitments, housing instability, mental health crises and more. The extra support of an accelerated curriculum does not account for these other upheavals that force students to choose how to spend their time in the new paradigm that defines success narrowly as *speed*. When success is defined by speed, students cannot error and bounce back; accelerated courses cannot accommodate this kind of developmental learning. Likewise, traditional conceptions of time and definitions of success, filtered through the acceleration movement's goal of quick completion of transferable coursework, does not allow for nuanced understanding and, therefore, response to such complex challenges.

IMPLICATIONS

Accounting for Time in the Activity System of Acceleration

Faculty responses to our survey make their mediated position clear; faculty shared their pandemic-era acceleration experiences and reactions through the lens of their interactions with the larger activity systems where students, technology, institutional demands, learning outcomes, and more are present. The activity system that faculty responses broadly reflect is a complex one with negotiation and exchanges between actors at the heart, reminding us of figure 2 depicting the second-generation conceptualization of an activity system where many actors are accounted for.

We created figure 3 (below) as a manifestation of AB705/1705 legislation and the values and priorities it establishes. It points us toward the first-generation Vygotskian activity system (recall earlier figure 1) that can only account for part of the system. AB705/1705 legislation only accounts for three factors: students (subject), acceleration legislation (rules), and transfer for college completion (object), all governed by two significant forces: student success as defined by retention and student success as defined by completion of a college degree.

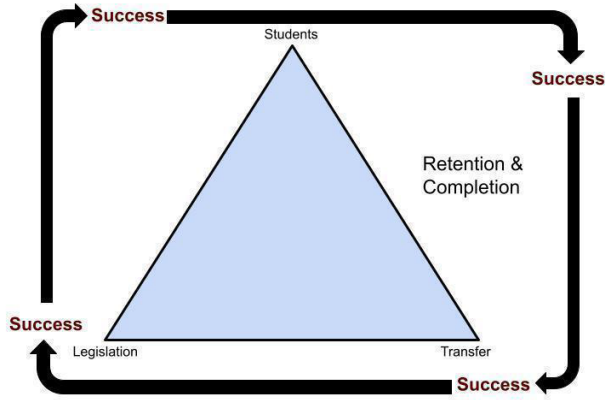

Figure 3. A Simplified Acceleration Activity System (e.g. first-generation) that legislators perceive has only three factors (student subject, legislation rules, and transfer to a four-year college) acted upon by the singular outcome of retention and completion as student success.

Figure 3 captures the simplified AB705 activity systems that legislators believe faculty would navigate, highlighting how the singular definition of student success as retention and completion of a four-year degree governed all. In this simplified acceleration activity system (see figure 3), faculty, institutional communities, tools, and labor concerns are removed from the landscape as well as any sense of multiple conceptualizations of student success.

Once we attempt to account for our codes and data analysis results in the AB705 activity system model, however, we found that the analyzed survey responses suggested that faculty, after experiencing the limitations of the simplified acceleration activity system (see figure 3), developed and deployed more nuanced practices, captured in our Dynamic Acceleration

Activity System (see figure 4). Figure 4 maps faculty responses onto the more

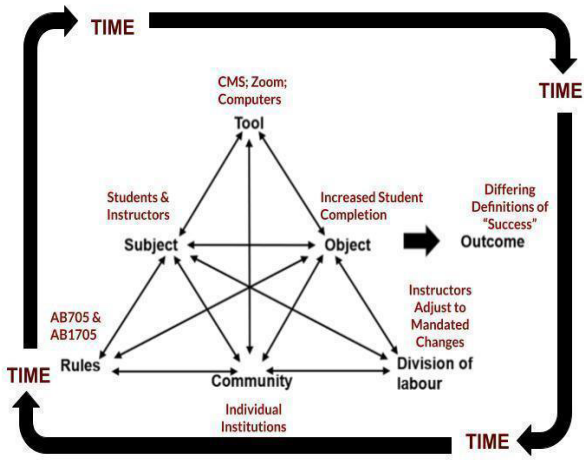

Figure 4. The Dynamic Acceleration Activity System (e.g. second-generation) enacted by faculty who, responding to mandated acceleration and pandemic, grapple with time as an actor itself.

nuanced second-generation theory of mediation and exposes time as perhaps a more meaningful and productive governing concept.

Figure 4 more accurately presents the experiences faculty shared when looking at their responses holistically. In our Dynamic Acceleration Activity System (see figure 4), student success is mediated by the subjects (both faculty and students), by tools like Zoom and the campus course management system, and by the division of labor as faculty adjust their pedagogy in response to mandated changes all the while determined and constrained by time. Participants articulated that a new or even warped definition of success, where faculty felt pressured to pass students and uncertain of the learning goals of the courses they teach, was the ultimate outcome of this activity system. What we find important is that this more complete Dynamic Acceleration Activity System makes the critical role that *time* plays apparent as the constraining and determinate factor that seems to push and pull on the entire system, particularly as it was experienced during the pandemic. Through AB705 and the pandemic, time has become different and more

troubling than ever, while being instituted as one of the most defining factors of successful implementation of acceleration.

Considering How Time is Experienced

Time as a wicked problem is felt acutely in basic writing education—how to use time, scarcity of time, etc. Time intersects with acceleration legislation like AB705 because legislation not only treats time as monolithic but demands accelerated time—speed—as ideal. Faculty survey responses make the problem of monolithic, determinate ideations of time in basic writing courses apparent and troubling.

The singularity of time mandated by AB705/1705 collided with the pandemic as it forced institutions, faculty, and students to confront the complex problems of time by challenging reliance upon and assumptions about shared time. Given the public health emergency, accommodations for the plurality and complex nature of time were baked into pandemic-era pedagogical, curricular, and programmatic responses to student need. It became impossible to ignore the plurality of student experience, need, use, and construct of time. Student experiences of time were inherently individual, even in the same course, impacted by individual student situations outside of school. Meanwhile, faculty's different experiences of time became impossible to ignore; faculty had their own individual time constraints as well as fundamentally different experiences of professional time based upon online teaching preparation levels. Divergent faculty experiences with time during the acceleration-era pandemic created extreme frustration, captured in the classroom experiences faculty shared in their survey responses.

While faculty respondents to our survey seemed to frame their experiences with time as a determinate concept itself, they also described their experiences with time as individual and unique. Thus, faculty and students both experienced the contradictions that time creates; time is an individual resource, experience, and construct for faculty and students, but it is also the one finite constraint that measures success or failure in the monolithic temporal world of acceleration via legislation like AB705/1705. Faculty and students must bend to AB705's construct of time or break.

Pedagogical and curricular traditions of basic writing courses historically wrestle with the limitations of time; acceleration-era basic writing courses face even more intensity once governed by monolithic experiences and understandings of time. Pre-acceleration treatments of basic writing time in California community colleges, where several pre-transfer courses were

sometimes required, extended time in untenable ways, creating a troubling "commonplace pace." Likewise, speed as an essential quality of successful basic writing time creates yet another troubling new "commonplace pace." Simplified acceleration activity systems such as those presented in figure 3 compress time's complexities down to speed of completion. While the old paradigm of time where students languished in lengthy developmental sequences was not equitable or reasonable and ought to be abandoned, the legislated time as standard and fixed is at odds with the lived experiences conveyed in survey responses and perhaps, our participants seem to say, at odds with the ultimate goal of community college. If we assume the premise that basic writing education is a universal, one-size-fits-all endeavor, we also assume that education is only for "normative" or "typical" students.

NEXT STEPS

Our survey sought to understand what was happening in basic writing courses in California community colleges as faculty dealt with both new legislative mandates and the challenges of a global pandemic. We wanted to understand how approaches to teaching basic writing were impacted by these pressures. Analysis of survey responses highlighted several key points: there are different, even competing conceptualizations of accelerated basic writing education at work simultaneously; the approaches faculty reportedly developed or utilized do not easily align with the simplified acceleration framework suggested by legislation; and *time*, as a governing concept and metric, needs more attention.

Basic writing faculty must insert their expertise as developmental education—and basic writing—professionals so they can "mold and take ownership of the narrative surrounding the field" (McGee et al. 9). While faculty may not have control over the amount of instructional time they have, for example, they can change how they think about, talk about, and attribute value to that instructional time. They can premise the acceleration-era basic writing pedagogy on a complex understanding of time and thereby dispel and resist the false narrative of a "commonplace pace" (Wood) that can control and define us all. While more work is needed to understand the complete activity system, our research team suggests several next steps as faculty move forward in adapting accelerated models and shifting from the top-down implementation:

1. *Learn from faculty teaching in classrooms.* Faculty frustration is abundantly clear; legislators need to hear from *all* perspectives

of faculty about the work of acceleration as faculty are the ones doing the work of acceleration. While administrators and faculty who are strong proponents provide insight into the acceleration story, faculty practitioners who implement the legislation across the 116 California community colleges have invaluable observations, feedback, and ideations to contribute.

2. *Meaningfully assess acceleration measures.* Currently, only one metric of success (speed of completion) is used to evaluate the efficacy of this basic writing reform in California and beyond. We advocate for a return to the roots in writing studies of contextualized assessment practices focused on local outcomes that fit the students, faculty, and curriculum (Broad et al.; Huot). These local assessments should be shared, published, and used to understand and revise the reform and to contextualize the quantitative metrics of policy. More holistic assessment measures might include capturing student narratives, curriculum assessment, and more consideration of varying definitions of success in downstream courses.

3. *Fund the change.* Mandated acceleration requires increased funding for continued faculty training, lowered course caps, and wrap-around services (e.g., embedded tutoring). The models on which this legislation is built (i.e., ALP from CCBC) rely on these features, making them not something to strive for, but basic necessities that ought to be provided during implementation. With class sizes still at 30 students and faculty doing more with less, the success of this reform will remain tentative and inequitable for students and faculty. WPAs and allied administrators should advocate for the resources needed to experiment with different kinds of support for faculty and students that refocuses attention on *learning* as a central feature of student success.

4. *Embrace multiplicity of student experience and purpose*. Community college was never meant to be a one-size-fits-all experience. As faculty grapple with what is perceived to be a shift in the purpose of their classes, it will be important to further examine the students in these classes, their purposes for college, and how they intend to use their education. As it stands, the goal of transfer denotes a singular kind of student with a particular purpose in mind. It's

more than likely that students arrive with a variety of purposes beyond transfer and these multiple purposes need to be considered in future iterations of acceleration and its definitions of success.

We wanted to understand the faculty experience of state-wide mandated acceleration in the largest community college system in the country. We are honored that the 216 faculty who contributed to our survey trusted us to share their concerns and experiences with a legislated, top-down decision about their teaching. The reform that AB705 provided to basic writing in California was necessary; students should not languish in lengthy sequences of developmental classes and get pushed out of the college system as a result. However, many California community colleges and higher education institutions were already working to address this issue in a way that suited their local student population and context (e.g. Goen-Salter; California Acceleration Project). As a result, we have learned that faculty responsiveness has been impacted in varying ways by a sweeping, broad-strokes reform that erases the ability of faculty to act from their expertise and the research of the field, emphasizing the need to have faculty understanding and action further integrated with matters of policy. Faculty *are* the greatest asset and tool of education reform efforts, yet their perspectives and experiences implementing legislation like AB705 are largely absent from conversations about new goals, assessment metrics, or the supports (for students, for faculty, etc.) necessary to pursue them.

Notes

1. This study was approved by the IRB at University of California Davis, Protocol #1864094-1.

APPENDIX A

Final Codebook Used in Analysis

Faculty Perception & Experience	Code	Working Definitions
	Feeling directed by AB705 or Admin to pass students	Respondents describe (administrative or peer) pressures around implementing co-reqs/passing students despite perceived quality of work
	Differentiated Instruction	Respondents describe needing adjust their teaching/assessments/etc. to fit a wide variety of students/skill sets to accommodate different learning needs esp. in an online environment
	Resistance to co-req	Respondents describe co-reqs with negativity or critique the model; critique that the model doesn't work online.
	"Students are not prepared"	Students are characterized as unprepared for the class (skillset, technologically, etc.)
	Faculty Workload Increase	Respondents describe an increase in instructor labor
	Faculty Impact	Respondents describe an impact to job stability, mental health, professional self-esteem, sense of professional agency, etc.

	Standards/Rigor	Respondents indicate a change in standards or rigorous course content
	Student-Faculty Interaction	The type, quantity, or quality of student-faculty interaction has changed as a result of AB705.
Learning Practices Circumstances	**Code**	**Working Definitions**
	Class Size	They mention class size
	Low Enrollment	They mention low enrollment
	Modality	Respondents discuss how modality (online instruction) impacted their teaching/students/etc.
	Changed Assessment Practices	Respondents discuss shifts in assessment, grading, etc.
	Student Support	Students need more support or they need support they Care not getting: non-academic and academic.
	Reading	They mention reading or reading activities.
	Plagiarism	They mention plagiarism concerns
	Pedagogical Impact	They describe changes in pedagogy or attitudes about pedagogy.
	Success	Respondents describe what is valued/ pursued as success; respondents describe completion or retention as success.

	Teacher Agency	They describe events/changes as happening to them or taking advantage of the changes to make positive changes in their teaching.
Student Characteristics	**Code**	**Working Definitions**
	Life Issues (Student Struggle, Obstacles)	Respondents describe the obstacles students are navigating.
	Student Engagement	Respondents describe changes in student participation, collaboration, completing work, etc.
	Student Agency	Respondents describe events/changes as happening to students or students taking advantage of the changes happening to students. Respondent perception of student choice/agency/ responses to change.
Other	**Code**	**Working Definitions**
	Time	Respondents describe time as an important element; changes in how time is perceived, changes in how time is spent, changes in how time is handled instructionally, etc.
	Data	Respondents describe the quality, reliability, presence, or credibility of data collected during AB 705/ pandemic.

APPENDIX B

Codebook Excerpt

Has the pandemic impacted these curricular and pedagogical concerns (class size, instructional time, reading and writing assignments, activities assigned to students, assessment strategies, etc.)? Please elaborate below.	Feeling directed by AB705 or Admin to pass students	Differentiated Instruction	resistance to coreq	students are not prepared	faculty workload increase	faculty impact	standards / rigor	student-faculty interaction	Class Size	Low Enrollment
The pandemic greatly changed everything.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes. Smaller classes. Students struggling with online learning and the course content	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
The pandemic has made contract grading even more essential to my students' success. Students have needed more time, more opportunity for revision, and more leniency on due dates.	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes. Teaching online takes the actual contact away and adds so much time to the instructor's grading (at least it did for me).	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Honestly the students I've taught have always been scrapping for survival, so the pandemic was just more of the same plus students who lacked digital access or couldn't learn online	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
I switched to a minimal grading approach after first pandemic semester, when we were encouraged to focus on the SLOs for assessment and not worry about the "points." That was really revolutionary for me.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Short-term class size reduction due to low enrollment.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Online teaching is harder with the students being forced into English 1A who would otherwise take prep classes	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

Figure A. Screenshot of the final coding rectification sheet which lists codes 1-10 codes.

Has the pandemic impacted these curricular and pedagogical concerns (class size, instructional time, reading and writing assignments, activities assigned to students, assessment strategies, etc.)? Please elaborate below.	Modality	Changed Assessment Practices	Student Support	Reading	Plagiarism	Pedagogical Impact	Success	Teacher Agency	Life Issues (Student Struggle, Obstacles)	student engagement	Student Agency	Time	Data
The pandemic greatly changed everything.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yes. Smaller classes. Students struggling with online learning and the course content	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The pandemic has made contract grading even more essential to my students' success. Students have needed more time, more opportunity for revision, and more leniency on due dates.	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
Yes. Teaching online takes the actual contact away and adds so much time to the instructor's grading (at least it did for me).	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Honestly the students I've taught have always been scrapping for survival, so the pandemic was just more of the same plus students who lacked digital access or couldn't learn online	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
I switched to a minimal grading approach after first pandemic semester, when we were encouraged to focus on the SLOs for assessment and not worry about the "points." That was really revolutionary for me.	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Short-term class size reduction due to low enrollment.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Online teaching is harder with the students being forced into English 1A who would otherwise take prep classes	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

Figure B. Screenshot of the final coding rectification sheet which lists the last 11-23 codes.

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