Faculty Evaluation and Instructor Development: Perspectives and Experiences of Tribal College & University (TCU) Faculty

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Introduction

Situating the Researcher

It is not surprising that my view of higher education has been influenced by my own experiences as a college student, especially the experiences that filled my undergraduate years. As a young, single mother, my post-secondary experience was different than many of my peers' and fulfilling basic student expectations—such as being physically present (and on time) for class—required high levels of planning and coordination. Though the college environment I experienced was not one built for single mothers, the support I received from college personnel, specifically my instructors and advisor, was integral to the success I experienced. The trajectory of my life was so strongly positively impacted by my involvement with higher education, that I've chosen to work and study in that area up to the present and plan to continue to do so.

As an enrolled Tribal member with a passion for the power of education, I wanted to serve in a place where my personal and professional experience could be of most benefit, a desire that led me to my role as a TCU faculty member. Working within a TCU allowed me to quickly realize that TCUs fulfill a significant role for both their students and communities and that the challenges they face in helping meet the needs of those they serve—many of whom are "nontraditional" like I was—was even more encompassing than that of their mainstream counterparts.

Through my time spent working at two different TCUs, I have been able to see the integral space they fulfill. As institutions, they work with limited resources to advance both cultural and academic missions that benefit the communities in which they

serve. Those that choose to work at TCUs, do so because they too believe in this mission and want to contribute in the best way they can. For TCU faculty, being effective means being knowledgeable about subject matter, skilled in instructional methods, and aware, accepting, and willing to integrate the historical context of where they perform their work; in other words, TCU faculty must not only have adept content knowledge, but be able to take a place-based approach in attempts to convey that knowledge. My chosen area of focus for this study is influenced by my appreciation of TCU processes and practices that reflect the culture of their place.

Introduction to TCUs and their Faculty

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) thrive on their creation by and connection to their tribal communities. Unique in their missions to advance both academic and cultural goals, TCUs play a vital role in facilitating the success of those they serve (American Indian Higher Education Consortium [AIHEC], 2021). With a focus on place-based education informed by local tribal traditions and knowledge, TCUs are well-positioned to create learning environments that recognize, embrace, and sustain the history and identity of their students (Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2019). Though the importance of TCUs has been well demonstrated, they have been chronically underfunded since their inception (AIHEC, 2021); moreover, many TCUs are located on or near Indian reservations, areas often characterized by their rural location and high percentages of poverty (Dewees & Marks, 2017). Those conditions alone contribute to a number of obstacles faced by TCUs and their students, including the need to hitchhike to class or be physically present on campus

to have access to technology and the Internet (Shreve, 2020). Taken together, the lack of funding, remote location, and high poverty contribute to ongoing challenges for TCUs, including lower than average persistence, retention, and graduation rates (Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2020).

The traditional markers of academic success noted above—specifically persistence, retention, and graduation rates—have been well-researched in the field of higher education, but findings focused on Native American students and TCUs are sparse (Shotton et al., 2013; Willmott et al., 2016). In their book *Beyond the Asterisk: Understanding Native Students in Higher Education*, Shotton et al. (2013) not only illustrated the lack of data on Native students in higher education, but also explained the repercussions associated with that position. For example, disproportionately high attrition rates and low graduation rates are unlikely to improve without increasing the data on Native students and organizations. In fact, as part of a larger report analyzing enrollment and outcomes at minority-serving institutions (MSIs), Nelson (2017) expounded on what has come to be known as "data invisibility" among Native perspectives. Nelson (2017) argued a point similar to Shotton et al's. (2013), noting that "higher education practice, policy, and research" (p. 40) could better meet Native student needs and facilitate their educational success if it were informed by Native perspectives.

Just as there is limited data on TCUs, studies focused on those with whom TCU students most frequently interact—faculty—are even more scant. In fact, the first and last study focused on TCU faculty explicitly was conducted in 2003 (Voorhees, 2004). The results of the study showed TCU faculty were dedicated to positively impacting students

through their work, but that they would consider leaving their current TCU for a position outside of education (Voorhees, 2004). Given the results of the study, Voorhees (2004) concluded that in order to strengthen TCU faculty retention efforts, TCUs should focus on implementing professional development (PD) opportunities designed to meet the needs of faculty teaching at TCUs. Emphasizing the retention of TCU faculty is not surprising as faculty have been shown to play a key role in TCU student success (Pennamon, 2018). Because of the positive influence TCU faculty have been demonstrated to have on student success outcomes, investigating factors that affect TCU faculty performance and development is crucial. This study intends to create visibility among TCUs and their faculty by examining one area that has yet to be sufficiently addressed in the literature: How faculty working at TCUs have experienced the faculty evaluation (FE) process and perceive it to contribute to their professional development (PD).

Using a qualitative approach, this study aims to discover how TCU faculty perceive the FE process and its associated practices to contribute to their development as professionals. The findings from this study could benefit TCU faculty and leaders alike, prompting revisions to FE processes that could enable them to better support the continued professional growth among TCU faculty.

Context of the Problem

Relevance to Higher Education Leaders

FE is a common practice across institutions of higher education. The purpose of FE is often explained as a process carried out to determine how faculty are performing in

relation to their roles (Ngoh, 2018). Although this conceptualization captures the basic goal of evaluation, it misses a key component related to how the efficacy of evaluation can be maximized in the realm of teaching—that is when evaluation is designed as a formative process meant to facilitate faculty growth. In fact, faculty have been found to associate an improvement in teaching with a closely-connected FE and PD system (Navidinia, 2021). Leaders in higher education have begun to recognize the importance of linking FE with PD as well and have experienced positive results after modifying their FE processes to facilitate and account for continued faculty development. For example, Kim et al. (2016) found that when one medical school implemented a new portfolio-based faculty evaluation designed to measure participation in educational activities, the number of educational activities faculty participated in increased. Additionally, when one university switched to a multisource method of evaluation (MME), faculty were found to positively perceive the formative aspects of the new process—such as how the MME led them to reflect on their roles and abilities as teachers—but still criticized the processes' more summative features focused on providing data for personnel decisions (Lyde et al., 2016).

Though the above examples serve as illustrations of institutional attempts to create FE processes focused on the improvement of teaching, faculty often continue to perceive FE processes to serve primarily summative purposes (Lyde et al., 2016). Underemphasizing the formative aspects of FE in favor of summative goals is associated with multiple negative outcomes, especially related to faculty perceptions of the FE process and their motivation to participate in it. One study that investigated community

college faculty perceptions of the FE process found that faculty believed the most important purpose of FE should be to encourage "development as educators" (Channing, 2017, p.758). When the FE process fails to function in a way that helps instructors improve their instructional capacities, it is plausible that their perception of the process and their motivation to participate in it will decline, an argument other scholars in the field of FE have previously noted (Podsiad, 2020; Theall, 2017). When faculty lack investment in the FE process, it is unlikely that their participation in it will result in any significant development as professionals.

Relevance to TCUs

Indigenous students have become well acquainted with the "asterisk phenomenon," situations where, due to statistical insignificance, they were omitted from data and instead represented with an asterisk (Arizona State University, 2014). As previously noted, this "data invisibility" has tangible effects, primarily concerning the needs of Native students being overlooked (Shotton et al., 2013). Like Native students, there is also limited data available regarding TCUs and their faculty. For instance, a keyword search containing the phrase "faculty evaluation" conducted on ProQuest on June 15, 2021, returned 1,013,699 results. Changing the search phrase to "faculty evaluation + Tribal College" yielded only 16,407 results. Furthermore, when the results were limited to academic journal articles, the results containing the phrase "Tribal College" dropped to just 3,382. This scarcity of existing data on TCUs, in addition to the processes and practices in which they engage, presents issues for TCU faculty similar to those faced by Native students. With a deficiency of research focused on TCUs, their

leaders and other employees lack information that could inform their decisions and support the continued success of their institutions. Creating visibility around what TCUs have tried, specifically those actions that have yielded positive results, has the potential to benefit the greater TCU community.

Even though the available research on TCUs and their faculty comprises less than .02% of the scholarly literature around FE, the data that is available should not be overlooked as it offers valuable insight regarding TCU faculty and their needs. For example, in Al-Asfour and Young's (2017) study investigating faculty perceptions of their professional development needs, they found TCU faculty perceived a gap between their teaching success and the development they would like to receive in the area of instruction; in other words, TCU faculty expressed feeling only moderately successful as instructors and strongly desired to receive PD in this area. Notably, TCU faculty are not alone in their desire to receive instructional-focused PD. As illustrated in Bunkowski and Shelton's (2019) case study of one TCU, administrators also recognized the importance of providing ongoing PD for their faculty, particularly in the area of culturally-based or culturally-responsive course design. This experienced desire by TCU faculty and observed need by TCU administrators to improve instructional performance among TCU faculty signifies the importance of further investigating how FE can contribute to PD.

As TCUs strive to improve student outcomes, focusing on the creation and implementation of processes that the faculty perceive as useful to their development is an important place to begin. If faculty view FE as a supportive and constructive process, then they will be more likely to invest in it (Gillman et al., 2018; Theall, 2017). The

benefits to the students are the most notable outcome of faculty who are engaged in continuous PD because as TCU faculty feel encouraged to develop their instructional effectiveness and they take steps to do so, student outcomes will improve. In fact, "high-quality instruction" was one of two factors found to be a strong predictor of TCU students' integration into the campus environment and their continued success therein (Butler & Al-Asfour, 2018, p. 53). Data provided from the largest survey of TCU alumni to-date echoed those findings, noting that TCU graduates were nearly twice as likely as Native American students who did not attend a TCU to report they felt cared about by the faculty and had a mentor that encouraged them to work toward their goals (College Fund, 2019). As shown by the data, the impacts of effective faculty are profound, further illustrating the need for the creation and implementation of FE processes that support faculty needs and facilitate their growth.

Problem Statement

A desire to develop is a common trait for any faculty member working in higher education, including those working at TCUs (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). However, because TCUs are unique in their mission to facilitate both academic and cultural advancement, the PD needs faced by TCU faculty are wide-ranging and often include place-based knowledge that extends beyond content knowledge. TCU leaders must purposefully design their environments to meet the academic and cultural needs of their tribal communities by combining "rich Indigenous content" with "approaches to learning and student support considered essential to sustaining a successful learning environment for Native American students" (DeLong et

al., 2016, p. 66). In other words, along with maintaining their expertise in particular fields of study and instructional best-practices, TCU faculty must also be aware of how they view and approach the concept of teaching and learning as it occurs within the culture and context of their particular institutions.

Considering the data invisibility currently experienced by TCUs, it is largely unknown how their FE processes have been designed or what practices they include. Without this information, it is not surprising that faculty experiences with their institution's FE process and their perceptions of how FE practices contribute to their PD is also a mystery at TCUs. The ultimate purpose of this qualitative study is to understand and share information related to FE at TCUs that can be applied to promote the continued success of TCUs by supporting the development of their faculty. To achieve the goal of this study, it will both explore how faculty working at TCUs have experienced the FE process and also identify FE practices TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their development as professionals.

Research Questions

The objective of this study is to discover how faculty working at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) have experienced the faculty evaluation (FE) process and identify FE practices TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their PD. With the information gained as a result of this study, FE processes at TCUs could be better understood and, if needed, modified to better facilitate continuous professional growth among faculty working at TCUs. To address the objective of this study, the following research questions were created:

1. How have faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities experienced the faculty evaluation process at their institutions?
2. What faculty evaluation practices do faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities perceive to contribute to their professional development?

Assumptions

The researcher has served in a full-time faculty role at a TCU for more than eight years, and as such, holds her own assumptions regarding the FE experience. Experiencing mandatory annual faculty evaluations during each year of employment has influenced the researcher's perspective on this topic, especially in regard to the purpose of FE and how well it fulfills that purpose. In addition to personal assumptions, the researcher holds assumptions about the TCU faculty experience in general and how this experience could influence this group's perception of FE.

TCU Faculty Perceptions of FE

Based on the researcher's experiences and observations as a TCU faculty member, she assumes that a majority of TCU faculty have participated in the FE process and that their participation was typically mandatory. Additionally, because most TCUs do not use a tenure system, the researcher assumes that experiencing an annual FE will be common. In regard to the relationship between FE and PD, the researcher assumes that faculty employed at TCUs will perceive their institution's FE practices to contribute to their development as professionals only minimally. The rationale for the researcher's assumptions is situated in the multifaceted position TCU faculty members fulfill. In addition to teaching multiple courses and sections each semester, TCU faculty members

often serve as student advisors, participate in multiple committees, provide extra tutoring and counseling before and after class, and participate in campus and community events. Furthermore, TCU faculty members must balance the effective delivery of subject matter with an awareness of Tribal values and how history has impacted their students and communities (Antoine, 2013). Recognizing the cultural context in which they are located, TCU faculty members often revise or create curriculum to better align with a place-based approach. Moreover, many TCUs are located in rural, high-poverty areas that serve a number of first-generation students, factors that certainly highlight the importance of TCUs, but also present a number of challenges for TCU faculty.

For TCU faculty to experience the FE process as a worthwhile one that consists of practices perceived to contribute to their growth as professionals, the FE process would have to facilitate their development as professionals in a wide range of areas, including culturally responsive teaching and trauma informed care. From experience, the researcher assumes that current FE processes fail to effectively account for the context in which they are being used. To effectively contribute to faculty growth, the FE process itself would need to be place-based and informed by faculty input.

Theoretical Frameworks

Self-determination Theory

Researchers have increasingly applied the tenets of Deci and Ryan's (1985) concept of Self-determination theory (SDT) to studies concerning motivation and workplace performance, including those focused on faculty perceptions and behaviors (Daumiller et al., 2019). Based on the goal of the present study—to better understand

how faculty working at TCUs have experienced the FE process and perceive FE practices to contribute to their PD—SDT functions as a useful guide. At the core of SDT is the belief that when people are functioning optimally, they are self-motivated in their drive to develop (Ryan & Deci, 2000). To understand how individuals can obtain optimal functioning, the spotlight on biological factors must be removed and replaced with a focus on environmental factors instead. For this study, the FE process and its associated practices are the primary environmental factors of concern.

According to SDT, to understand how motivation can vary from person-to-person or group-to-group, how social contexts meet and foster basic psychological needs—specifically autonomy, competency, and relatedness—must be acknowledged (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Essentially, to better account for individual differences in motivational levels and types, it is necessary to look at the surrounding environments. If people feel they have agency to make their own decisions, they are capable of performing in their assigned roles, and they are connected to and supported by others, they will demonstrate higher levels of well-being and overall work performance (Olafsen et al., 2018). Given the potential for FE to function as a formative process that would therefore support the basic psychological needs of faculty, investigating how faculty currently experience the FE process and perceive its associated practices to contribute to their PD is crucial. As Ryan and Deci (2020) concluded in their review of the SDT literature related to teacher wellness and student outcomes, "how teachers are supported from 'above' affects their capacities to support and optimally motivate the students and teachers 'below'" (p. 7). An

SDT framework would encourage the use of an FE process that TCU faculty experience as supportive of their needs and conducive to their development as professionals.

An Indigenous Framework for Evaluation

An Indigenous framework for evaluation emphasizes that individual tribes have their own ways of knowing, that research should be conducted to meet community needs, and that evaluation is an opportunity for learning (LaFrance & Nichols, 2009). Prior to the creation of an official Indigenous Evaluation Framework in 2009, research and evaluation were not absent from tribal communities; however, the research and evaluation that was conducted was often done *to* these communities rather than with or for these communities (LaFrance & Nichols, 2010). It is not difficult to see why many Indigenous people hold negative assumptions about the practices of research and evaluation. A majority of tribes have experienced being researched and evaluated by those who have no connection to the tribal communities being researched or understanding of their history and values. Unfortunately, these studies have frequently resulted in a loss of resources and served as justifications for such costs (LaFrance & Nichols, 2009). In a response to these often invasive studies enacted upon tribal communities by outside entities, an Indigenous Evaluation Framework was formed.

An Indigenous Evaluation Framework is composed of guiding values that can be incorporated in a number of different contexts, including higher education (LaFrance & Nichols, 2010). When applied to the evaluation of TCU faculty in particular, an Indigenous framework for evaluation illustrates the importance of creating and

implementing a formative process that contributes to the continued growth of TCU faculty and results in greater service to their students and communities.

Definition of terms

American Indian College Fund (the College Fund) – A charity that provides scholarships, programming, and support to Native students to increase their access to and success in higher education (the College Fund, 2021).

American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) – A 501(c)(3) nonprofit governed by TCU presidents designed to support and advance educational opportunities for Native Americans by influencing public policy, increasing mentoring, and offering guidance for new organizations (AIHEC, 2021)

Faculty Evaluation (FE) – A system or process designed to elicit information to measure faculty performance and provide useful information for faculty growth (Arreola, 1999)

Minority Serving Institution (MSI) – A higher education institution designed to serve minority populations, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs) (Department of the Interior, 2021)

Native American/American Indian/Indigenous/Native – Though there is no standard best term used to represent existing Tribal groups, this collection of terms is often used interchangeably by both researchers and non-researchers alike to represent the multiple Tribal groups in the US (Deloria et al., 2018)

Place-based Education – Used in reference to TCUs, place-based education is that which acknowledges and is informed by the traditions and wisdom of the local tribal community (American Indian College Fund, 2021)

Professional Development (PD) – Activities, work, or programs designed to improve a professional's knowledge, skills, and abilities within a particular field (Pak et al., 2020)

Self-determination Era- A time period marked by movements and policies designed to empower tribes to control their own nations (Strommer & Kickingbird, 2015)

Self-determination Theory (SDT) – A theory of human development founded on the relationship between the support of people's basic psychological needs and motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020)

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) – Tribally-chartered institutions of higher education designed to facilitate both cultural and academic opportunities (AIHEC, 2021)

Literature Review

Though faculty evaluation (FE) has continued to evolve, conversations about its purpose and how it could be best designed to meet that purpose are ongoing (Carmack & LeFebvre, 2019; Gillman et al., 2018; Opidee, 2018). Recent research has advocated for a handful of guidelines regarding best practices in the evaluation of faculty (Benton & Young, 2018; Lyde et al., 2016), while at the same time acknowledging that the process should be tailored to meet the needs of individual higher education institutions, disciplines, and delivery models (DeCosta et al., 2016; Thomas, 2018). In accordance with the idea of designing context-specific or place-based FE processes, this study is

intended to contribute to an area that has yet to be studied: faculty evaluation at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

This literature review first looks at TCUs—the historical context that prompted their creation, the unique missions that drive their purpose, and the obstacles they face moving forward. TCU faculty will then be discussed, focusing on the array of roles they fulfill, their impact on student success, and their professional development (PD) needs. Following the discussion of TCUs and their faculty, a brief history of FE will be examined to illustrate how the process has evolved to how it is currently understood, designed, and implemented. The roles of culture and context in the creation of an effective FE will then be analyzed, before addressing the connection between FE and PD. This review concludes by emphasizing the importance of considering faculty perceptions regarding FE and the need to create place-based, formative FE processes.

The Historical Context of Native American Education in the United States

The long-lasting, damaging outcomes produced by the U.S. government's approach to educating Native Americans have been well documented (Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016; Running Bear et al., 2018). Undergirded by assimilationist goals, many of the policies extending from the 19th to 20th centuries depended upon removing Native children from their families and communities. When separated, these children were often placed in boarding schools hundreds of miles away (Stull et al., 2015). Removed from their communities, Native American children were commonly forced to succumb to policies and practices designed to eradicate signs of their Tribal identity and hasten their assimilation into European culture (Running Bear et al., 2018). Some of the

most widely-known boarding school practices were carried out immediately upon the children's arrival and focused specifically on the erasure of all cultural markers: long braids were cut, traditional clothing was replaced with European attire, and the speaking of Tribal languages was prohibited (Native American Rights Fund [NARF], n.d.). If children attempted to resist the practices to which they were exposed, they were frequently met with some form of corporal punishment, including beatings, isolation, and denial of food (Running Bear et al., 2018). Furthermore, both on- and off-reservation boarding schools were found to have a number of environmental and health concerns, such as inadequate lighting, poor ventilation, and a lack of basic hygiene products like soap; these conditions, combined with overcrowding, served as primary contributors to the diseases that spread quickly through boarding schools and were responsible for thousands of childhood deaths (DeJong, 2007; NARF, n.d.).

By the 1920's, over 60,000 Native American school-aged children were in boarding schools (Adams, 1995). Though the number of Native students in boarding schools steadily decreased over the 20th century, Native American families lacked any legal foundation that would have allowed them to prevent their children from being placed in off-reservation homes and boarding schools until the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1978 (National Indian Child Welfare Association [NICWA], 2021). Even with the passing of ICWA, Christianization, forced acculturation, and assimilation continued to drive approaches to Native American education (Brayboy & Tsianina Lomawaima, 2018). Not only were tribal communities left to deal with the trauma associated with many of their members' educational experiences, but also with

the task of accepting a colonialist education system that was designed to "civilize" them rather than to respect their tribal cultures and meet their needs.

Boarding Schools: Implications for Current Native American Education in the United States

Native American people continue to experience repercussions from the boarding school era. In studies investigating the link between the boarding school experience and historical trauma, researchers found countless children experienced wide-ranging and far-reaching physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016; Running Bear et al., 2018). These types of traumatic events not only harmed the children who were directly impacted, but their future generations as well. The forced abdication of their cultural identity accompanied by other forms of abuse caused many Native people to struggle with depression and drug use, effects that continue to harm Native communities today (NARF, 2019). In addition to psychosocial challenges, economic hardship has continued to plague Native people, especially those living on reservations. In fact, nearly 40% of Native Americans living on reservations are living below the poverty line (National Congress of American Indians [NCAI], 2021). Struggles with mental health, drug use, and poverty are difficult to deal with on their own, and their adverse impacts on educational attainment have been widely shown (Blair & Raver, 2016; Porche et al., 2016). However, Native people face an additional hurdle related to educational success—reconciling conflicted perceptions toward educational institutions fostered by their role in inflicting and perpetuating the trauma that continues to impact many tribal communities.

Though boarding schools targeted elementary-aged children, efforts to assimilate Native Americans into European society occurred in higher education as well. While not as detrimental in their consequences, these attempts were just as unsuccessful in their outcomes (Carney, 2021). In fact, though Harvard, William and Mary, and Dartmouth articulated goals of educating Native Americans, in the eighty years following their founding and leading up to the American Revolution in 1783, these institutions graduated a combined total of only four Native students (McClellan et al., 2005). The history of failed and detrimental approaches to Native American education, taken together with the beginning of the self-determination era in the late 1960s, moved Native people to take control of their education in a way that would allow for the respect and survival of their Tribal cultures; from this, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) were born (Stull et al., 2015).

The Creation and Continued Importance of Tribal Colleges and Universities

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are unique and important higher education institutions, as captured by their missions that articulate both academic and cultural goals. Of the 37 TCUs in the United States, all were chartered by Tribal governments to meet the needs of their local communities; as such, Tribal culture and language are foundational components of their institutional outcomes (American Indian Higher Education Consortium [AIHEC], 2021; Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2019; Marroquin, 2018). Even though the persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students attending TCUs tend to be lower than those of other institution types (Stull et al., 2015), focusing only on these traditional measures of

academic success without contextualizing them portrays TCUs as ineffective institutions. Furthermore, the benefits TCUs provide to their communities cannot be captured by looking at student data alone.

Despite the challenges TCUs face, TCUs have proven themselves as integral to the advancement of Native Americans today (AIHEC, 2020). In fact, in a study investigating the relationship between previous TCU attendance and eventual mainstream graduation rates, Bryan (2019) found that Native American students who attended a TCU before transferring to a mainstream institution were more likely to graduate with their bachelor's degree than those who had no prior TCU affiliation. Brown's (2017) analysis of graduation rates for Native American students in Montana resulted in similar findings, illustrating that Native American TCU transfer students were nearly twice as likely to graduate as their counterparts who began at mainstream institutions. Given the aforementioned data, continuing to find ways to support TCUs, their faculty, and the work they do is necessary to improve outcomes for those they serve.

In considering the unique purposes fulfilled by TCUs, it becomes clear that multiple types and streams of support are needed for these institutions to continue fulfilling their missions. The success of TCUs is facilitated by their dedication to meet the needs of their students and communities in very tangible ways, primarily by being accessible both geographically and financially (Song, 2016). Multiple publications have noted that without TCUs, many of those living in some of the poorest and most rural areas in the United States would have no other opportunity to pursue postsecondary education (Espinosa et al., 2018; Exec. Order No. 13592, 2011; Postsecondary National

Policy Institute [PNPI], 2019). In addition to their location, TCUs have an open-door policy, meaning regardless of previous academic achievement, students who submit complete application packages will be accepted (DeLong et al., 2016). Furthermore, TCUs support their students and wider communities by offering services such as childcare, transportation, and GED tutoring and testing (Stull et al., 2015).

Even though TCU student enrollment has increased over the past two decades, the funding these institutions receive continues to fall far short of what they need to continue to accomplish their purpose (Nelson & Frye, 2016). State and local governments have obligations to provide funding for other types of Minority-serving institutions (MSIs), but not for TCUs (Droll, 2020). This lack of revenue forces TCUs to rely on funding from the federal government. Since the federal government provides funding only for Native students attending TCUs (but not non-Native students attending TCUs) and has consistently provided less than the amount authorized (Shreve, 2019), TCUs—including their personnel—are continuously put in the position of having to do more with less.

TCU Faculty

Very little published research exists on TCU faculty. In fact, the American Indian College Fund (the College Fund) administered both the first and last cohesive survey of TCU faculty in 2003 (Voorhees, 2004). Though the data on TCU faculty is scarce, Collins (2018) stated that like other community college faculty, TCU faculty spend most of their time teaching, in addition to fulfilling several other student services and advising roles. It is no surprise that after their review of a collection of research on faculty

employed at community colleges, Gonzales and Ayers (2018) found community college faculty to be “under-supported and overstretched…” (p. 456).

The extensive amount of work performed by TCU faculty is in part due to the chronic lack of funding TCUs have experienced (Nelson & Frye, 2016). Unsatisfactory funding has left TCUs unable to hire support personnel needed to help them fully meet their students’ needs, including the instructional and support needs of the majority who qualify for remedial courses (Community College Center for Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2019). In a brief detailing the “Breaking Through” model designed to promote success for underprepared students attending community colleges, His Horse is Thunder (2011) underscored that comprehensive student support services would be needed for this model to work, noting that this would involve the hiring and training of employees prepared to provide these services effectively. Yet, due to the lack of funding for extra support personnel, TCU faculty often fulfill various support roles in addition to teaching, serving on committees, and performing other advisory duties (Bryan, 2019). As illustrated by one TCU faculty member who compared their work expectations to that of the “Duracell bunny” (Antoine, 2013), to describe TCU faculty as “busy” is an understatement.

The demands TCU faculty face should not be ignored. Given the positive relationship between faculty-student interaction and student success in TCUs and other higher education environments (Al-Asfour et al., 2020; Lancaster & Lundberg, 2019), it is important for institutional leaders to be cognizant of faculty needs. Stupinsky et al.’s (2019) study of pre-tenure faculty emotions corroborates this point with their findings

that illustrated wide-ranging positive and negative emotions among faculty; the researchers recommended administrators implement practices designed to increase faculty feelings of value in order to strengthen their development and boost retention. Though this study focused on faculty representing mainstream institutions, it would be expected that the range of emotions experienced by those teaching while simultaneously fulfilling multiple other roles would be similar. Recognizing the amount of pressure that accompanies the need to successfully perform in several roles again calls attention to the need for continued faculty support and development.

Considering the assortment of roles TCU faculty fulfill in addition to the unique environments in which they work, early and ongoing instructional support is necessary. As illustrated by the few published studies that have addressed TCU faculty development, both faculty and administrators alike consider PD an essential component of faculty success (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). Moreover, findings have shown that in addition to simply perceiving PD as important, TCU faculty desire to receive more of it, especially within the areas of culturally-responsive curriculum and instruction (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017). Used as a tool to help facilitate PD, FE becomes an important area of focus.

Faculty Evaluation

History and Purpose

In the book *Grading the College: A History of Evaluating Teaching and Learning*, Gelber (2020) surmised that the evaluation of teaching and learning at a post-secondary level began in the 1920s, and that for a period of approximately fifty years,

supervisor and student evaluations were the most used types of FE across institutions. Though these two types of evaluations have been used for decades, they are not infallible in their measurement of faculty performance, including the quality of teaching. Many scholars have agreed that effectively evaluating faculty performance is a difficult endeavor (Benton & Young, 2018; Wieman, 2015) and has never been flawless (Opidee, 2018). Furthermore, not to be overlooked in a discussion of FE is the ongoing issue of how the data produced as part of the FE process can be used to help faculty enhance their skills (Benton & Young, 2018).

Faculty Evaluation: The Current Context

More recently, scholars interested in FE have increasingly called for approaches focused on the improvement of faculty performance (Lutz et al., 2018; Opidee, 2018; Theall, 2017; Weiman, 2019). While research productivity is a common marker of faculty performance at mainstream institutions (Schimanski & Alperin, 2018), the primary role of faculty employed at community colleges and TCUs is teaching. Considering studies have shown that focusing on service, research productivity, or content knowledge does not stand in for good teaching (Cadez et al., 2015; Weiman, 2015), the evaluation of teaching needs to be considered a worthy endeavor in itself and designed as such (Wieman, 2015). With the acknowledgement that improved teaching quality leads to more desirable student outcomes that in turn facilitate continued institutional wellbeing (Mangum, 2017), it is easy to see why a college or university would find it worthwhile to design and implement an FE process informed by the goal of continued teaching improvement.

In addition to internal benefits, increased pressure from external accreditation agencies has catalyzed institutions of higher education to confirm they have well-designed processes in place meant to ensure faculty continue to excel in the area of teaching and learning. For example, the New England Commission of Higher Education and the Higher Learning Commission list accreditation guidelines that include standards requiring institutions to design and integrate FE processes that regularly evaluate faculty and facilitate their professional development (Higher Learning Commission, 2021; New England Commission of Higher Education, 2021). The combination of potential organizational benefits in conjunction with external accountability factors contributes to ongoing research in the area of FE.

The Use of Multiple Measures. Even though there is no "one size fits all" approach for FE, the consensus among scholars is that its utmost priority should be to improve student learning (ASCCC, 2013; Benton & Young, 2018; Lutz et al., 2018), an outcome in alignment with an Indigenous worldview emphasizing personal growth as a means to contribute more significantly to the greater community (LaFrance et al., 2012). With the improvement of student learning as the goal, the focus of FE lands squarely on the improvement of faculty teaching. The question then arises: How do institutions—including TCUs—know which FE practices will best contribute to an improvement of teaching?

To reach the most accurate conclusions about a teacher's performance, current research advocates for the use of multiple measures, with student, peer, self, and supervisor assessments being widely employed (Berk, 2018; DeCosta et al., 2016).

Additionally, educator or teacher portfolios have been implemented more recently and often include evidence from a combination of the four primary measures mentioned above (LeVan, 2020). Ensuring data are being gathered from multiple sources allows the evaluation to be both thorough and fair, two qualities that help prevent faculty from losing trust in a process that relies solely on one approach (Benton & Young, 2018). Research has shown that the type of measure in addition to how the measure is designed and implemented influences how faculty perceive its usefulness (Williams & Hebert, 2020). Because it is probable that TCU faculty have experienced at least one of the common practices and that this exposure has influenced their experience with the FE process, a brief overview of each measure and what research has revealed about its perceived usefulness will be discussed below.

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). The debate about the usefulness of student evaluation of teaching (SET), also referred to as student rating of instruction (SRI), has been ongoing for decades (Gelber, 2020). Even though numerous studies have found SET to be bias, especially toward marginalized groups (Austin, 2021; Boring, 2017; Keng, 2020), and others have shown faculty to be aware of this bias (Shreffler et al., 2019), SET continues to be one of the most commonly used approaches to evaluate teacher performance and influences decisions regarding promotion and tenure in many institutions (McClain et al., 2017; Opidee, 2018). The continued use of SET illustrates what many scholars have concluded: even though the practice of SET is controversial, it is still viewed as one type of evaluation capable of producing meaningful data (Benton & Young, 2018; Wieman, 2015).

As a group, faculty have been found to agree with the potential formative value regarding the information gleaned from SET, but not necessarily its summative value (Newton et al., 2019); in other words, even though faculty might not view SET as a valid marker of teaching effectiveness, they still perceive it as an opportunity to learn from students' experiences in their classes. In fact, research has found that faculty *desire* to receive feedback from their students, particularly detailed, qualitative feedback (Lutz et al., 2018), and that they rely on SET results for continued development (Debroy et al., 2019). The fact that faculty have expressed a desire to receive more detailed, qualitative feedback from the SET illustrates they not only care about student perceptions, but also find them useful. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that the way the SET is designed and implemented, in addition to whether it serves a formative or summative purpose, impacts how faculty perceive it (Williams & Hebert, 2020). Given this conclusion, rather than eliminating SET because of its imperfections, designing it to serve a formative purpose could maximize its perceived and actual usefulness for faculty.

Peer Evaluations and Faculty Collaboration. Peer evaluations have been suggested as an approach to minimize the possibility of relying too heavily on any one type of evaluation practice such as SET (Miles & House, 2015). Furthermore, peer evaluations have been found to be viewed favorably by faculty, specifically when combined with follow-up meetings to discuss the observations (Brickman et al., 2016). The findings from Donnelli-Sallee and Autry's (2018) study of one institution's implementation of a peer review of teaching program corroborated a positive view of the peer review practice. In their qualitative responses, instructors revealed they felt the

feedback produced as part of the peer review was both constructive and motivating, highlighting two potential benefits of incorporating peer evaluation practices within the FE process.

In addition to offering perspectives beyond those provided through SET, peer evaluations often facilitate collaboration among faculty and allow them to stand as the experts in their fields (ASCCC, 2013; Fletcher, 2018). When FE processes are designed to include or even rely upon peer evaluations, faculty are portrayed as capable professionals responsible for individual and communal growth. In turn, peer review practices could very well contribute to feelings of greater autonomy, competency, and relatedness, and therefore improve faculty motivation and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Given the potential benefit of making peer evaluations part of FE, it is worthwhile to explore how they are used and perceived by faculty employed at TCUs.

Self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is closely connected to self-reflection, an integral practice in the production of personal insight and professional development (Slade et al., 2020). Moreover, both aspiring and current educators working with Indigenous youth have been shown to grow in their knowledge and application of teaching practices when they incorporated self-reflection into their practice (Oskineegish, 2019). Furthermore, Scott et al. (2021) found when therapists regularly practiced self-reflection, they experienced lower levels of burnout, a salient point to consider for TCU faculty who often fulfill a number of roles with minimal resources. Additionally, findings have illustrated a positive correlation between self-reflection and professional development, observing that more-advanced teachers regularly practice critical reflection (Szucs, 2018; Tursini, 2017).

In connection with FE, self-evaluation practices are not only easy to implement alongside other evaluation approaches, but also tend to be perceived positively by faculty (AAUP, 2015; Rigler et al., 2016). Moreover, self-evaluation has been shown to increase the efficacy of other evaluation approaches by allowing the individuals being evaluated to reflect upon the practices used throughout the evaluation process (Donnelli-Sallee & Autry, 2018). Essentially, self-evaluation is easy to incorporate, generally well-received, and capable of strengthening the FE process overall. Given the benefits associated with self-evaluation, it is worthwhile to investigate how TCU faculty have experienced and perceive the use of this practice.

Supervisor Observations. It is common for supervisors to perform classroom observations as part of the FE process, yet this approach often produces anxiety among those being evaluated contributing to the long-held negative view of this practice (Tawalbeh, 2020). Like other methods, however, there are factors that have been found to influence the efficacy of supervisor observations in addition to how faculty perceive them as a tool used within the FE process, with implementation approaches being especially important. For example, Tawalbeh (2020) found that faculty tend to be more satisfied with observation practices when the purpose of the observation is clarified beforehand. Additionally, multiple "mini observations" have been found to be more effective than one, class-long observation (Marshall, 2017). Furthermore, the observations themselves have shown to have their greatest impact on teaching when the supervisor follows them with individual instructor meetings (Marshall & Marshall, 2017). Similar to the other measures discussed, when consciously designed and implemented, specific observation practices

used to evaluate faculty teaching performance have the potential to function as a constructive tool and therefore be viewed more favorably by faculty. Exploring TCU faculty perceptions of supervisor observations will allow for a more detailed understanding of how this practice has been used and perceived at TCUs.

Educator Portfolios. Research has noted that teacher or educator portfolios have been implemented as part of the FE process since the 1980s and serve various purposes, including the promotion of continued growth of faculty through reflection (Deshpande et al., 2019; Matthews, 2018). An educator's portfolio often contains a number of artifacts and a variety of data such as assignment examples, student evaluations, statements from peers, and even video of the faculty member teaching a class (Vanderbilt University, 2021). The variety in scope a portfolio provides allows faculty to consider and portray a holistic picture of their performance in a cohesive package (LeVan, 2020). Furthermore, portfolios are typically cumulative and therefore serve as excellent tools to capture and illustrate progress over time.

Even though portfolios have many benefits related to teaching and learning, the amount of time and effort that is needed to create a well-rounded and strong portfolio often exceeds that required by other evaluation methods. Because faculty members must devote a high level of continuous engagement in the creation and management of their portfolios, it could be thought that this type of evaluation tool would be overly burdensome for community college and TCU faculty. Yet, given faculty members' desire to develop in their roles as instructors, the process of creating a teaching portfolio could be perceived and experienced as a beneficial and worthwhile one. Uncovering TCU

faculty experiences with teaching portfolios could clarify their perception of the usefulness of this approach.

The Role of Culture and Context in the Creation of Effective FE

Though culture and context are often used interchangeably, they are distinct concepts with the difference most easily understood by viewing context as a cultural production (Savard & Mizoguchi, 2019); given this distinction, both must be considered when higher education organizations attempt to design and implement an effective FE process (Theall, 2017), especially at TCUs given their unique place-based missions. The Northwest Indian College (NWIC) serves as one example of a TCU that has demonstrated the importance of culture in designing the FE process and the practices of which it consists. After NWIC revised their FE process so that it included culturally relevant indicators specific to their institution, they noted faculty were more comfortable visiting with their peers about teaching practices and better able to examine their own development as instructors (Compton et al., 2016). The implications of NWIC's efforts deserve clarification: by using the local Tribal culture as a foundational influence in the creation of the FE process, the results impacted the larger context and benefitted the overall environment.

Even while acknowledging that it is beneficial for the culture of an individual institution to inform the creation and implementation of that institution's FE process (Opidee, 2018), it would be erroneous to assume that any one process or the practices included therein would not be useful at other institutions, especially those with similar missions or demographics. The Academy Senate for California Community Colleges

survey on FEs (ASCCC, 2013) serves as an example illustrating how a list of generally-applicable best practices can be formed by considering multiple, related data sources. By focusing on similarities among individual faculty responses representative of multiple two-year institutions across California, the ASCCC was able to create relevant, state-wide FE suggestions for community colleges in their report *Sound Principles for Evaluation Processes*. Even though TCUs represent unique institutions and vary according to their individual tribal cultures, their contextual similarities would allow for a high level of transference regarding the design and implementation of FE. Of course, creating awareness among the efficacy of current FE processes and practices is the first step.

FE: A Tool for Continuous Improvement

Regardless of the measures and practices used to evaluate faculty, facilitating an effective FE process relies upon faculty involvement during both the creation and implementation stages (Fayez et al., 2019), a position supported by the AAUP's *Statement on Teaching Evaluation* (AAUP, 2015). Inviting faculty to contribute to the creation and design of the FE process increases their perception of its worth; once faculty are on board, they are apt to participate willingly as long as they continue to see the process as valuable (Fayez et al., 2019), or as research has shown, constructive (Benton & Young, 2018; Opidee, 2018; Theall, 2017). It is no surprise that the reception of constructive feedback weighs heavily on faculty perceptions of evaluation practices; faculty—and in this case, TCU faculty in particular—want to be good at what they do, and constructive feedback helps them not only fulfill their required duties but also excel

while doing so (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). In essence, faculty want to grow, and the reception of quality feedback can help them do so more effectively (Niyivuga et al., 2019). What an in-depth review of the literature reveals, however, is that studies have not yet investigated the specifics underlying the design, implementation, and assessment of PD, particularly as these factors pertain to TCUs. How to ensure effective PD, however, does not have to be guesswork. Within the FE process lies the potential to identify PD needs and assess the impacts of PD activities.

As a process, FE can identify how faculty are performing in the classroom, highlight areas of strength and weakness, offer support and resources for development, and determine how faculty members have grown (Benton & Young, 2018), but to meet those objectives, the FE process must be consciously created to do so (Opidee, 2018). In other words, if the FE process focuses on formative goals rather than only summative ones, it has the potential to facilitate continuous faculty development.

The Importance of Studying Faculty Perceptions of FE

Understanding how TCU faculty perceive the FE process to contribute to their PD has implications that transcend FE's ability to successfully assess teaching performance and provide guidance for growth. As found in DeCosta et al.'s (2016) qualitative study of online faculty perceptions of faculty evaluation, more than anything else, faculty desire to grow in their instructional capacities. Understanding this need for faculty to develop in their roles is the keystone to designing and implementing effective FE processes. Do faculty feel like they are able to grow as a result of participating in the FE process? If yes, then the process is viewed as meaningful, making faculty more likely to participate. If no,

then faculty view it as an obligation, an unnecessary requirement important only because it is tied to their job security and promotion potential (Theall, 2017).

Both Self-determination theory (SDT) and an Indigenous Evaluation Framework provide lenses underscoring the importance of continued development. Primary tenets of SDT are that people are inherently motivated to develop and can best do so in a supportive environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When individuals *view* an act as one that supports their ability to develop, they will be more motivated to engage with it, which results in higher levels of participation and greater performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020). By acknowledging the relationship between perception and motivation, designing the FE process to be viewed positively by faculty becomes imperative to its ability to function effectively. If administrators want the FE process to give them accurate results of how well their faculty are performing, then they will need the faculty to fully engage in the process. For faculty to fully engage, they will need to view the process as worthwhile. An Indigenous Evaluation Framework also emphasizes growth, specifically the importance of focusing on the use of evaluation to "better understand and improve programs" (AIHEC, 2009, p. 108). In other words, for TCU faculty, the FE process should be about developing a better understanding of their roles as instructors and improving their instructional capacities. Both SDT and an Indigenous Evaluation Framework work together to support the creation of FE processes that TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their ongoing development as professionals.

Conclusion

Faculty evaluation has been a long-standing yet imperfect process. Considering the potential for FE to inform and facilitate effective PD, studying how FE is perceived to do that is a worthwhile endeavor. Identifying the FE processes and practices currently in place at TCUs along with how their faculty perceive these processes and practices to contribute to their development as professionals is a start. Given the uniqueness of TCUs and the paucity of data currently available on TCUs and their faculty (Nelson, 2017), investigating the relationship between FE and PD as it pertains to TCUs and their faculty is especially important. Furthermore, because TCU faculty have expressed a desire to receive PD tailored to their instructional roles (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017), TCUs could use the findings from this study to revise their current FE processes so that they consist of practices perceived by faculty to support their development. Modifying the FE process so that faculty perceive it as worthwhile could very well increase faculty motivation to participate, thereby resulting in continuous and effective PD.

Research Design

Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the researcher will investigate TCU faculty experiences with faculty evaluation (FE) and their perspectives of it, with the ultimate goal of identifying specific FE practices faculty perceive to contribute to their development as professionals. A qualitative phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study because it allows for the researcher to become immersed in a range of TCU faculty perspectives in order develop a deep understanding of their experiences with FE (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, data gained from qualitative interviews can often

contribute to the creation of future quantitative instruments designed to focus on similar concepts with a similar demographic (Ortiz, 2016). Considering the dearth of research that currently exists on FE at TCUs, the content produced with this qualitative study could assist in the future creation of an appropriate survey instrument.

Methods

Participants

The population of this study includes full-time faculty employed at any of the 37 TCUs in the Fall 2021 semester. Additionally, to be included in the study, each faculty member will be required to have previously participated in the FE process at their current TCU. Faculty who are not employed at a TCU during the fall 2021 semester, who are not considered full-time, and who have not participated in the FE process at their current TCU will be excluded from participating in the study. Non-faculty TCU employees will also be excluded. Though participant responses may differ based upon demographic characteristics, teaching discipline, years taught, and other factors, those factors will not be used to exclude TCU faculty who meet the established inclusion criteria from participating in the study. In fact, participants representing a wide range of demographics, subject areas, and teaching experience is sought to improve the diversity of the sample for this study.

Sampling Method

To secure interviews with the target population, the researcher will combine purposive and snowball sampling approaches. A purposive sampling approach will initially be employed to connect with potential interview participants who are known by

the researcher to be currently serving in a fulltime faculty position at a TCU. A snowball sampling approach will then be employed to expand the reach and diversity of the sample. Snowball sampling is made possible by a referral process (Parker et al., 2019); following the initial interview(s), the researcher will continue their study by reaching out to the referrals shared by the interview participants. As the process continues, the number of potential contacts builds—much like how a snowball grows in size with the accumulation of new snow. Even though snowball sampling has been criticized for "not producing samples that meet the criteria for random samples in the statistical sense" (Parker et al., 2019, p. 4), it continues to be applied as a valid and valuable qualitative method. Specifically, snowball sampling has been highlighted as an effective way for researchers to gain access to a target population (Naderifar et al; 2017). Snowball sampling has been employed in multiple studies spanning various fields and has served as a prominent qualitative method in numerous studies designed to explore experiences and perceptions (Karabatak & Alonoglu, 2021; Leighton et al., 2021; Tyson & Sauers, 2021).

Procedures

A phenomenological approach will be used to conduct this study. One way phenomenology is explained is as the study of "how we experience things" or "the meaning things have in our experience" (Smith, 2013). Relying upon first-hand, conscious experiences, phenomenological research seeks to understand the "essence" of an experience (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). The researcher will rely upon one-on-one interviews with TCU faculty to glean their first-person perspectives of their

experiences with FE. The interviews will be structured according to Bevan's (2014) method of phenomenological interviewing as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Bevan's (2014) Structure of Phenomenological Interviewing

Phenomenological Attitude	Researcher Approach	Interview Structure	Method	Example Question
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Acceptance of Natural Attitude of Participants	Contextualization (Eliciting the Lifeworld in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions	"Tell me about becoming ill," or "Tell me how you came to be at the satellite unit."
	Reflexive Critical Dialogue With Self	Apprehending the Phenomenon (Modes of Appearing in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive and Structural Questions of Modes of Appearing	"Tell me about your typical day at the satellite unit,"or "Tell me what you do to get ready for dialysis."
	Active Listening	Clarifying the Phenomenon (Meaning Through Imaginative Variation)	Imaginative Variation: Varying of Structure Questions	"Describe how the unit experience would change if a doctor was present at all times."

Bevan's (2014) interviewing method includes three domains, all of which were informed by a number of practices—such as description, reflexive thinking, and active listening—previously applied by scholars known for their work in phenomenology. Taken together, these domains reflect the key phenomenological concept of reduction, or the researcher's attempt to recognize and set aside their own subjectivities in order to access and understand the phenomenon as experienced by the participant (Nicholls, 2019).

To apply Bevan's method to the current study, the researcher will begin the interview by asking questions designed to inform the "context and biography from which the experience gains meaning" (Bevan, 2014, p.139). These initial questions will focus on eliciting contextual details that will in turn lead to a better understanding of the

experience of focus. Once the context has been established, the researcher will employ descriptive questions that focus on the experience or phenomenon of most concern—in this case, the FE process. Focusing on descriptive questions will allow the researcher to work toward "apprehending the phenomenon" (Bevan, 2014), which can be understood as the researcher's attempt to see the phenomenon as experienced by the participant. The last phase in Bevan's (2014) method integrates "imaginative variation," an approach that involves the researcher posing "what if" or hypothetical questions to the participant. Employing imaginative variation can contribute to a clearer understanding of the participant's experience and the meaning they ascribe to it.

Interviews. The researcher will use semi-structured interviews to conduct this study. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they are recommended for novice researchers, and more importantly, because they enable the participants to elaborate on their responses and are well-suited for phenomenological approaches (Stage & Manning, 2016). The use of semi-structured interviews will allow the researcher to begin with a set of pre-established interview questions while permitting follow-up questions tailored to the content of participant responses. As is common with semi-structured questions, the interview questions will be more open-ended early in the interview and become more focused later on in the interview as the core concepts of the phenomenon under exploration become clear (Stage & Manning, 2016).

Scholars have noted that when a set of common characteristics is shared between those involved in the interview process—in this case, the researcher and participant—it is easier to build rapport and establish trust (Stage & Manning, 2016). The initial interview

questions were designed to establish rapport between the researcher and participant by asking broad questions related to the role of a TCU faculty member in general. Because the researcher has also served as a TCU faculty member, beginning with this area will establish commonality between the two people involved in the interview process and potentially increase the level of comfort the participant feels in disclosing their experiences and perceptions regarding FE. (Please see Appendix B for the researcher's list of interview questions.)

The researcher intends to interview 8-10 TCU faculty members, with each participant representing a different TCU. Using a purposive and snowball sampling approach, the researcher will first send a query email to known full-time TCU faculty requesting their participation in the study. The initial email will contain a greeting explaining the purpose of the study and the researcher's contact information. If a TCU faculty member is willing to participate, they will be asked to contact the researcher via email or phone to discuss the study and interview process in more detail, confirm that they meet all inclusion criteria, review the informed consent letter, and set up a time to conduct the interview. Additionally, to consciously work to increase the diversity of the sample, the researcher will ask the potential participant to respond to the following demographic questions: How long have you been a faculty member at a TCU? In what subject area do you teach? How many times have you participated in the FE process? The researcher will document the potential participant's responses and use them to inform the selection of future interview participants.

If an interview is scheduled, the researcher will email the informed consent letter to the participant and ask them to sign and return it within three days. For any potential participants who agree to participate in an interview but do not return a signed informed consent letter, the researcher will send a follow-up email to thank them for their interest and remind them to return the signed inform consent so the interview can be scheduled.

Within the informed consent letter, the importance of keeping the participant's identity confidential will be emphasized. The informed consent will state that pseudonyms will be used in place of the participant's real name and that they will be allowed to choose their pseudonym if they desire. Once the researcher has received the signed informed consent letter, then the researcher will respond to the participant with an email confirming the date, time, and type of the interview.

Each interview is planned to last 30-45 minutes. The participant will be able to choose if they would like to conduct the interview via zoom or over the phone. All interviews will be audio recorded using the researcher's personal recording device. No video recordings will be taken. If zoom is used and the participant chooses to turn on their camera, the researcher will clarify that the zoom meeting will not be recorded using the screen record option on the zoom platform, but by using the researcher's audio recorder instead.

The researcher will follow a script to open each interview to ensure the researcher includes and shares all important information regarding the study and informed consent prior to beginning the interview. It should be noted that to better establish a relationship with each participant and establish a setting that is open to and stresses the importance of

dialogue, the researcher refers to the interview as a conversation rather than an interview in the script. (Please see Appendix A for a copy of the script the researcher will use to open each interview.) The researcher will begin the interview by thanking the participant for taking the time to visit with the researcher and participate in the study. Though the participant will have already been provided with an overview of the study by this point in the process, the researcher will again state the study's purpose before reviewing the informed consent that the participant had previously signed. The researcher will clarify that the participant's confidentiality is a priority throughout the research process and that a pseudonym will be used in place of their name. At this point, the researcher will ask the participant if they have a pseudonym they would like to use for the study. If the participant has not chosen a pseudonym, the researcher will ask for permission to assign one. The researcher will then proceed with the key elements of the informed consent, emphasizing that the participant understands their participation is voluntary and they can choose to stop the interview at any time with no repercussions. Lastly, the researcher will ask the participant if they have any questions or concerns before beginning the interview. If the participant has no questions or concerns, the researcher will begin the interview.

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher will thank the participant for their time and their willingness to share their experiences. The researcher will then ask the participant if they know of any other TCU faculty members who might be interested in visiting with the researcher and sharing their experiences with FE. If the participant states that they know of other potential interview candidates, then the researcher will send the participant a follow-up email and ask them to forward it to other possible participants.

Risks and Benefits

The use of pseudonyms will be employed to protect the identity of those who participate in the qualitative interviews and minimize the possibility of their identity being determined by anyone besides the researcher. Given the content and approach of the study, there is minimal psychological or physical risk in participating. Furthermore, all participants will have read the study overview stating that participating in the study is completely voluntary and they are free to stop the interview at any time, minimizing the likelihood of discomfort resulting from participation.

Interview transcriptions and survey data will be stored on the researcher's personal laptop that is password protected and used only by the researcher. Data will be kept for three years and permanently deleted or destroyed after that time.

There are no immediate or direct benefits for participants; however, adding to the paucity of data currently available on TCUs would contribute to an increased awareness of TCUs, their faculty, and their processes. Furthermore, developing an understanding of how faculty at TCUs have experienced the FE process in addition to how they perceive it to contribute to their development could have practical implications. By identifying the FE practices perceived by faculty to facilitate their growth as professionals, TCU leaders could modify their FE processes to better support the ongoing professional development of their faculty, which could in-turn improve student success.

Trustworthiness & Authenticity

For a qualitative study to be perceived as rigorous and trustworthy, Lincoln & Guba (1985) originally posited that it must meet standards of credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability, also known as the "four-dimensions criteria." To meet the trustworthiness criteria, researchers have commonly implemented a number of strategies such as triangulation, negative case analysis, member checking, thick description, and external audits. More recently, however, Lincoln and Guba (2007) have expanded their focus of the four-dimensions criteria to include and emphasize authenticity. Though some strategies consistent with the aforementioned trustworthiness criteria will be employed in this study, to better align this study's methodology with its goals—primarily to learn, understand, and share insight with others—attaining authenticity will be of primary concern.

Informed by a constructivist paradigm, Lincoln and Guba's authenticity criteria includes fairness, ontological authentication, educative authentication, catalytic authentication, and tactical authenticity (Johnson & Rosulova, 2017; Schwandt et al., 2007). Taken together, these aims are not separate from or opposite of those composing trustworthiness (member checking is a defining activity of fairness), but instead differ by how they account for the presence and influence of values, context, and interaction in contributing to a study's findings (Schwandt et al., 2007). To meet the authenticity criteria put forth by Lincoln and Guba, the researcher will actively seek to observe and negotiate contradictory beliefs among participants, consciously reflect upon and analyze the evolution of her own and the participants' beliefs regarding the topics discussed, work to ensure that increased understanding is shared in a way that could lead to action, and follow up with participants to assess any impacts resulting from their experience of participating in the study (Johnson & Rosulova, 2017).

Data Analysis

Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed using a secure, third-party service. Through a process of content analysis, the researcher will read through each transcription to identify, organize, and categorize the data according to common meanings. Inductive analysis will then be employed to identify patterns and themes that occur across the content shared by participants.

The researcher will analyze the textual data through a process of thematic analysis. Initially, in accordance with the principles of phenomenological analysis, the researcher will build her familiarity with the transcribed content by reading and rereading through each interview in its entirety (Sundler et al., 2019). Once the researcher has become familiar with the whole of the text, she will then mark words and phrases that relate to the study's objective, taking notes in the margin that capture the "salient essence" of these spots (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019, p. 592). Each spot will then be assigned a specific code which will facilitate the identification of patterns and "meaning units" or themes (Creswell, 2014, p. 193). Following the identification of meaning units, the researcher will produce a textual and structural description of what happened and how it was experienced, two pieces that the researcher will ultimately combine to describe the "essence" of the phenomenon.

Limitations of the Proposed Study

Timing presents a potential limitation for this study. The researcher plans to conduct interviews in the Fall semester of 2021; depending on the FE processes of individual TCUs, some TCU faculty will not have experienced any practices related to

the FE process since the end of the previous spring semester. Furthermore, FE processes and practices during the 2020-2021 academic year could have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Considering this research study is not focused on how TCUs altered their FE processes in response to the pandemic, the researcher will need to be conscious of how the interview questions are worded and emphasize that the experiences from the past year might not be representative of what the faculty had experienced in years prior.

Contribution to Practice/Scholarship

This study will add to the paucity of published research that currently exists about the FE process at TCUs. To gain an understanding of how TCU faculty have experienced the FE process in addition to the types of practices they perceive to contribute to their PD could influence the approach, design, and implementation of FE at TCUs moving forward.

Target Journal

The target journal for this study is the *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education,* or *TCJ*. *TCJ* is a product of AIHEC and, as such, includes an authorship and readership that spans all 37 TCUs.

Rationale for Choice

The *TCJ* is the only journal with a dedicated focus on higher education and the Native American population. Furthermore, because the *TCJ* is produced by AIHEC, the articles it includes are produced from and connected to a TCU audience. Given the focus of my study, it would have the most impact if read by those working within TCUs.

Author Submission Guidelines

The author submission guidelines can be found at the following website:

https://tribalcollegejournal.org/writers-guidelines/

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Appendix A

Interview Script

Hello ____ . Thank you for taking the time to visit with me today. My name is Kayla Alkire-Stewart and I'm a graduate student in the Higher Education Leadership Program at Maryville University. The conversation we'll be having is part of my dissertation that I'm working on for the Program. As noted in the previous email, the purpose of this study is to explore how TCU faculty have experienced the faculty evaluation (FE) process at their institutions, and to better understand what FE practices TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their professional development as instructors.

We've scheduled 30-45 minutes for our discussion, but if at any time you would like to stop, please feel free to let me know. I will be recording the audio from our conversation, but no video will be recorded. Your identity will remain confidential, and a pseudonym will be used in place of your real name. Would you like to choose your pseudonym? If yes: ___pseudonym here___, great. If no: Would it be okay if I assign one after our conversation? Great.

At this time, I would like to remind you about your written consent to participate in this study and that you have received a signed copy of the informed consent letter, certifying that we agree to participate in this study. Remember that your participation is voluntary, and that if you would like to discontinue the conversation, you are free to do so at any time.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin our conversation?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

"Contextualization" questions:

- Can you tell me about how you came to be a faculty member at a TCU?
- How long have you worked at your current TCU?
- In which department do you teach?
- How big of a role does teaching play in your current position? (How many classes do you teach? How much time do you spend on teaching?)

Questions related to Faculty Evaluation ("apprehending the phenomenon"):

- When you think of faculty evaluation at your TCU, what comes to mind?
    - follow-up question
- What does the faculty evaluation process look like at your TCU?
    - How are faculty evaluated (What methods and tools are used?)
    - How often are faculty evaluated?
- How does the faculty evaluation process at your TCU help you improve as an instructor?
    - follow-up question
- What parts of the faculty evaluation process do you perceive as helpful?
    - follow-up question (Can you describe what ___ looks like?)
- What parts of the faculty evaluation process do you perceive as least helpful?
    - follow-up question (Can you describe what ___ looks like?)
- How invested are you in participating in the faculty evaluation process at your TCU?

Questions that allow for "imaginative variation":

- What are some changes that could be made to the faculty evaluation process at your TCU to improve it?
- If ___ were implemented, how do you think that would impact the FE process?
- If ___ was not a part of the FE process, how do you think that would impact the FE process?

Abstract

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) play an integral role in the advancement of Native Americans, yet research that focuses on TCUs and their students or faculty is limited. Considering the positive impact TCU faculty have on student success, it is worthwhile to explore how these faculty are supported in their work, primarily in their work as instructors. This qualitative phenomenological study explored TCU faculty perceptions of their institution's faculty evaluation (FE) process with the intent of identifying FE practices faculty perceive to contribute to their development as instructors. The researchers conducted seven interviews with faculty representing five different TCUs across the Midwest. Five themes emerged from the data:

1. The FE process is important.
2. Discontinuity exists between FE policy and practice.
3. Faculty appreciate and desire qualitative feedback.
4. Faculty prefer ongoing opportunities for evaluation.
5. The FE process and associated practices should be informed by faculty input.

The findings illustrate that TCU faculty desire to grow in their roles as instructors, and they want to have a voice in the practices that are intended to support their development. For TCU leadership, these findings suggest a collaborative approach to the creation and implementation of FE could improve faculty perceptions of the process.

Keywords: Tribal College and University (TCU), Tribal College and University faculty, faculty evaluation, faculty development, self-determination theory (SDT), Indigenous Evaluation Framework

Situating the Primary Researcher

As an enrolled Tribal member and former nontraditional student who experienced the power of higher education, I wanted to work in a place and position where my personal and professional experience could be of most benefit, a desire that led me to my role as a TCU faculty member. Over the past decade, I have served in both faculty and staff roles at two different TCUs, and I have seen the integral space they fulfill. As institutions, TCUs work with limited resources to advance both cultural and academic missions that benefit the communities in which they serve. Individuals who choose to work at TCUs do so because they believe in this mission and want to contribute in the best way they can. For TCU faculty, being effective means being knowledgeable about subject matter, skilled in instructional methods, and aware, accepting, and willing to integrate the historical context and culture of where they perform their work; in other words, TCU faculty must not only have adept content knowledge, but also be able to take a place-based approach in attempts to convey that knowledge. My chosen area of focus for this study was influenced by my appreciation of TCUs and their faculty who continuously strive to grow in their capacity to teach and support their students.

Introduction

Though faculty evaluation continues to evolve, conversations about its purpose and how it could best be designed to meet that purpose are ongoing (Carmack & LeFebvre, 2019; Gillman et al., 2018; Opidee, 2018). Recent research has advocated for a handful of guidelines regarding best practices in the evaluation of faculty (Benton & Young, 2018; Lyde et al., 2016), while acknowledging that the process should be tailored

to meet the needs of individual higher education institutions, disciplines, and delivery models (DeCosta et al., 2016; Thomas, 2018). In accordance with Indigenous research methodologies and findings that support the design of context-specific or place-based FE processes, this study is intended to contribute to an area that has yet to be studied: faculty evaluation at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs).

The Importance of TCUs

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are important and unique higher education institutions, as captured by their missions that articulate both academic and cultural goals. Of the 37 TCUs in the United States, all were chartered by their own Tribal government or the federal government to meet the needs of their local communities; as such, Tribal culture and language are foundational components of their institutional outcomes (American Indian Higher Education Consortium [AIHEC], 2021; Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2019; Marroquin, 2018). Even though the persistence, retention, and graduation rates for students attending TCUs tend to be lower than those of other institution types (Stull et al., 2015), focusing only on these traditional measures of academic success without contextualizing them portrays TCUs as ineffective institutions. Furthermore, the benefits TCUs provide to their communities cannot be captured by looking at student data alone.

The success of TCUs is founded on their dedication to meet the needs of their students and communities in very tangible ways, primarily by being accessible both geographically and financially (Song, 2016). Multiple publications have noted that without TCUs, many of those living in some of the poorest and most rural areas in the

United States would have no other opportunity to pursue postsecondary education (Espinosa et al., 2018; Exec. Order No. 13592, 2011; Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2019). In addition to their location, TCUs have an open-door policy, meaning regardless of previous academic achievement, students who submit complete application packages will be accepted (DeLong et al., 2016). Furthermore, TCUs support their students and wider communities by offering services such as childcare, food banks, transportation, and GED tutoring and testing (Stull et al., 2015).

Even while operating in a state of chronic under-funding (Nelson & Frye, 2016), TCUs have proven themselves as integral to the advancement of Native Americans (AIHEC, 2020). In fact, in a study investigating the relationship between previous TCU attendance and eventual mainstream graduation rates, Bryan (2019) found that Native American students who attended a TCU before transferring to a mainstream institution were more likely to graduate with their bachelor's degree than those who had no prior TCU affiliation. Brown's (2017) analysis of graduation rates for Native American students in Montana resulted in similar findings, illustrating that Native American TCU transfer students were nearly twice as likely to graduate as their counterparts who began at mainstream institutions. Given the aforementioned data, continuing to find ways to support TCU faculty and the work they do is necessary to improve outcomes for the students they serve.

TCU Faculty

Very little published research exists on TCU faculty. In fact, the American Indian College Fund (the College Fund) administered both the first and last cohesive survey of

TCU faculty in 2003 (Voorhees, 2004). Though the data on TCU faculty is scarce, multiple publications have asserted that TCU faculty often fulfill various support roles in addition to teaching, serving on committees, and performing other advisory duties (Antoine, 2013; Bryan, 2019). As illustrated by one TCU faculty member who compared their work expectations to that of the Duracell bunny, to describe TCU faculty as “busy” is an understatement (Antoine, 2013). From what has been written about faculty at TCUs, their experiences appear to support Gonzales and Ayers’s (2018) findings that community college faculty are “under-supported and overstretched” (p. 456).

The demands TCU faculty face should not be ignored. Given the positive relationship between faculty-student interaction and student success in TCUs and other higher education environments (Al-Asfour et al., 2020; Lancaster & Lundberg, 2019), it is important for institutional leaders to be cognizant of faculty needs. Considering the assortment of roles TCU faculty fulfill in addition to the unique environments in which they work, early and ongoing instructional support is necessary. As illustrated by the few published studies that have addressed TCU faculty development, both faculty and administrators alike consider opportunities for growth or professional development (PD) an essential component of faculty success (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). When viewed as a tool to help facilitate faculty development, faculty evaluation (FE) emerges as an important area of focus.

Faculty Evaluation

In the book *Grading the College: A History of Evaluating Teaching and Learning*, Gelber (2020) surmised that the evaluation of teaching and learning at a post-

secondary level began in the 1920s, and that for a period of approximately fifty years, supervisor and student evaluations were the most used types of FE across institutions. Though these two types of evaluations have been used for decades, they are not infallible in their measurement of faculty performance, including the quality of teaching. Many scholars have agreed that effectively evaluating faculty performance is a difficult endeavor (Benton & Young, 2018; Wieman, 2015) and has never been flawless (Opidee, 2018). Furthermore, not to be overlooked in a discussion of FE is the ongoing issue of how the data produced as part of the FE process can be used to help faculty enhance their skills and more effectively contribute to student learning (Benton & Young, 2018).

The Current Context

Recently, scholars interested in FE have increasingly called for approaches focused on the improvement of faculty performance (Lutz et al., 2018; Opidee, 2018; Theall, 2017; Weiman, 2019). While research productivity is a common marker of faculty performance at mainstream institutions (Schimanski & Alperin, 2018), the primary role of faculty employed at community colleges and TCUs is teaching. Considering studies have shown that focusing on service, research productivity, or content knowledge does not stand in for good teaching (Cadez et al., 2015; Weiman, 2015), the evaluation of teaching needs to be considered a worthy endeavor in itself and designed as such (Wieman, 2015). With the acknowledgement that improved teaching quality leads to more desirable student outcomes that in turn facilitate continued institutional wellbeing (Mangum, 2017), it is easy to see why a college or university

would find it worthwhile to design and implement an FE process informed by the goal of continued teaching improvement.

Multiple Measures

Even though there is no "one size fits all" approach to FE, the consensus among scholars is that its utmost priority should be to improve student learning (ASCCC, 2013; Benton & Young, 2018; Lutz et al., 2018), an outcome in alignment with an Indigenous worldview emphasizing personal growth as a means to contribute more significantly to the greater community (LaFrance et al., 2012). With the improvement of student learning as the goal, the focus of FE lands heavily on the improvement of faculty teaching.

To reach the most accurate conclusions about a teacher's performance, current research advocates for the use of multiple measures, with student, peer, self, and supervisor assessments being widely employed (Berk, 2018; DeCosta et al., 2016). Additionally, educator or teacher portfolios have been implemented more recently and often include evidence from a combination of the four primary measures mentioned above (LeVan, 2020). Ensuring data are being gathered from multiple sources allows the evaluation to be both thorough and fair, two qualities that help prevent faculty from losing trust in a process that relies solely on one approach (Benton & Young, 2018). Research has shown that the type of measure in addition to how the measure is designed and implemented influences how faculty perceive its usefulness (Williams & Hebert, 2020).

The Importance of Studying Faculty Perceptions

In conjunction with the measures and practices used to evaluate faculty, facilitating an effective FE process relies upon faculty involvement during both the creation and implementation stages (Fayez et al., 2019), a position supported by the AAUP's *Statement on Teaching Evaluation* (AAUP, 2015). Inviting faculty to contribute to the creation and design of the FE process increases their perception of its worth; once faculty are on board, they are apt to participate willingly as long as they continue to see the process as valuable (Fayez et al., 2019), or as research has shown, constructive (Benton & Young, 2018; Opidee, 2018; Theall, 2017). It is no surprise that the opportunity to receive constructive feedback weighs heavily on faculty perceptions of evaluation practices; faculty—and in this case, TCU faculty in particular—want to be good at what they do, and constructive feedback helps them not only fulfill their required duties but continuously improve and excel in their roles (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017; Bunkowski & Shelton, 2019). In essence, faculty want to grow, and the reception of quality feedback can help them do so more effectively (Niyivuga et al., 2019). An in-depth review of the literature reveals, however, that studies have not yet investigated the specifics underlying the design, implementation, and effectiveness of FE, particularly as these factors pertain to TCUs.

Self Determination Theory and an Indigenous Evaluation Framework

Both self-determination theory (SDT) and the Indigenous Evaluation Framework provide lenses underscoring the importance of continued development. Primary tenets of SDT are that people are inherently motivated to develop and can best do so in a

supportive environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When individuals *view* an act as one that supports their ability to develop, they will be more motivated to engage with it, which results in higher levels of participation and greater performance (Ryan & Deci, 2020). By acknowledging the relationship between perception and motivation, designing the FE process to be viewed positively by faculty becomes imperative to its ability to function effectively. If administrators want the FE process to give them accurate results of how well their faculty are performing, then they will need the faculty to fully engage in the process. For faculty to fully engage, they will need to view the process as worthwhile.

The Indigenous Evaluation Framework also recognizes the importance of growth and learning, specifically the importance of focusing on the use of evaluation to "better understand and improve programs" (AIHEC, 2009, p. 108). In other words, framed through the lens of the Indigenous Evaluation Framework, the FE process should be designed to support faculty in understanding their roles as instructors—contextualized within programmatic and institutional objectives—and help them develop their instructional capacities. Taken together, both SDT and the Indigenous Evaluation Framework support the creation of FE processes that TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their ongoing development as professionals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand and share information related to FE at TCUs that can be applied to promote the continued advancement of TCUs by supporting the development of their faculty and, as a result, the success of their students. Considering the data invisibility currently experienced by TCUs (Nelson, 2017),

it is largely unknown how their FE processes have been designed or what practices they include. Without this information, it is not surprising that faculty experiences with their institution's FE process and their perceptions of how FE practices contribute to their PD is also a mystery at TCUs.

This study explored Tribal College and University (TCU) faculty experiences with and perceptions of the faculty evaluation (FE) process. Given the limited research on TCU faculty, this study was designed to elicit first-hand perspectives to contribute to the knowledge available regarding TCU faculty experiences with the FE process. The following research questions served as the primary questions guiding this study:

1. How have faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities experienced the faculty evaluation process at their institutions?
2. What faculty evaluation practices do faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities perceive to contribute to their professional development?

Methodology

Using a qualitative phenomenological design, we explored TCU faculty perspectives of and experiences with FE, with the goal of identifying specific FE practices faculty perceive to contribute to their development as professionals. A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen for this study because it allowed us to become immersed in a range of TCU faculty perspectives in order to develop a deep understanding of their experiences with FE (Creswell, 2013). Furthermore, in alignment with an Indigenous approach to research underscored by the values of relationality and reciprocity, it was necessary for the faculty who chose to participate in this study to be

welcomed into a conversational space (Minthorn & Shotton, 2018). This study was designed to communicate to the faculty participants a sense of partnership in a process intended to produce knowledge, increase understanding, and improve practice for TCUs and the students they serve.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of full-time TCU faculty members who had experienced faculty evaluation at a TCU institution. To recruit for this study, we began with purposive sampling, contacting faculty we knew to be teaching at a TCU. A snowball sampling approach was then employed to extend the reach and diversity of faculty participants. Seven faculty representing five different TCUs across the Midwest responded to the request to participate in the study and met the participation criteria.

The variation in TCUs, disciplines, and years taught offered an eclectic sample of faculty experiences. Each conversation began with the faculty sharing details that served to contextualize their place at their TCU. These details included their discipline, years taught, and roles they currently fulfill in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Table 1 lists the faculty by pseudonym and the number of years they have served as a TCU faculty member. The last two columns list the average number of courses the faculty member teaches per semester and whether they perform any other lead roles. The number of other lead roles is also included in the last column, because all seven TCU faculty members said they fulfill at least one other lead role at their institution in addition to teaching.

Individual faculty disciplines were not listed, as one faculty member requested for that information not to be shared due to the potential increased risk of breach of confidentiality. In the interest of protecting the confidentiality of participants, the researchers are not disclosing other demographic details such as age and race.

Table 1

Pseudonyms and Professional Experience of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Number of Years as a Faculty Member at a TCU	Average Number of Courses Taught Per Semester	Other Lead Role (e.g., Grant Lead, Committee Head, or Club Advisor), Number of Other Lead Roles
Leah	3	5	Yes, 2
Jess	7	3	Yes, 2
Tonya	7	3	Yes, 2
Devon	8	5	Yes, 1
Kent	10	3	Yes, 3+
Pat	10	3	Yes, 3+
Brody	15	5	Yes, 1

Interviews

The semi-structured interview questions were designed to align with Bevan's (2014) approach to phenomenological interviewing. In accordance with Bevan's method, the researcher began the interview by asking questions designed to inform the "context and biography from which the experience gains meaning" (Bevan, 2014, p.139). Initial questions focused on eliciting contextual details designed to lead to a better understanding of the experience of focus. Once the context was established, the researcher asked descriptive questions that focused on the experience or phenomenon of most concern—in this case, faculty evaluation. The last phase in Bevan's method emphasizes "imaginative variation," an approach that involved posing "what if" or hypothetical questions to the participant. These questions were intended to contribute to a clearer understanding of the participant's experience and the meaning they ascribed to it. The hypothetical questions were especially important to this study as they allowed the faculty to move beyond their experiences with the FE process and to share ideas on how to improve it.

Analysis

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using a secure, third-party service, and member checking was employed to ensure transcript accuracy and strengthen the authenticity of the study (Johnson & Rosulova, 2017). Through a process of content analysis, the researcher completed multiple readings of each transcription to identify, organize, and categorize the data according to common meanings. Inductive analysis was

then employed to identify patterns and themes that occurred across the content shared by participants.

Findings

The interview questions that framed this study were designed to inspire conversations with TCU faculty members that would produce data that could then be shared with others to increase knowledge and insight surrounding TCU faculty experiences with and perceptions of the FE process. The results presented include quotes from the faculty that illustrate a first-hand perspective into their experiences and thoughts as they relate to the FE process. Attentive analysis of the interview data enabled us to identify commonalities in participant responses. Ultimately, the researchers identified five themes regarding how TCU faculty have experienced and perceive the FE process:

1. The FE process is important.
2. Discontinuity exists between FE policy and practice.
3. Faculty appreciate and desire qualitative feedback.
4. Faculty prefer ongoing opportunities for evaluation.
5. Faculty input should informed FE processes and practices.

The Faculty Evaluation Process is Important

Participant responses demonstrated variation in FE processes and practices from one institution to the next. Though no single FE process matched another, there were common threads that highlighted similar experiences and perceptions among the TCU faculty interviewed. One overarching theme apparent in each participant's transcript is the potential positive impact that could be realized from the FE process at TCUs. In some

form, each participant noted they perceive the FE process to be important and potentially beneficial. Tonya shared that she views FE "as a growth process to become better at what I do," while Brody commented that the process contributes to "improving of my teaching job…improving of my teaching capability." Speaking about faculty perceptions generally, Pat expressed that they appreciate knowing "what the Institution is expecting." Further highlighting the importance of the existence of faculty evaluations, Kent added, "they need to be done because I think it is easy to become complacent." Jess's response aligns with Kent's in that they perceived the FE process to encourage higher levels of accountability and that certain FE practices could even inspire faculty to "up your game a bit."

Discontinuity Exists Between FE Policy and Practice

A majority of participants noted they had experienced a discrepancy between the existing FE policy and the FE practices being implemented at their institution. Their responses showed that this discrepancy contributed to negative feelings and thoughts toward the FE process as a whole. Devon shared that, per institutional policy, their FE process "did include a classroom observation component and that classroom observation component never occurred…No one came in and supervised my classes or otherwise evaluated my actual teaching." Leah's experience was similar to Devon's in her indication that "sometimes observations are scheduled and haven't happened at all." Tonya also observed an inconsistency in policy and practice related to classroom observations. Even though classroom observations were listed as a required practice in their institution's FE process, they "haven't happened though…it has been inconsistent."

The outcomes of discrepancies between written policy and implemented practice appear to damage faculty perceptions of the entire FE process. Tonya expressed, “If there is something listed as a piece in this process, but then that piece isn’t actually being carried out, the whole process can lose integrity,” while Pat shared that “it used to really annoy me because I’ve had supervisors that never watched you but would evaluate you.” Pat’s statement is especially telling because it illustrates how perception can influence attitude. If faculty hold a negative attitude toward a FE policy or practice, it is plausible that their level of potential investment in the FE process will be compromised. As Devon observed, faculty who hold ongoing negative attitudes toward the FE process or specific practices could reach a point where they become completely disengaged: “I have a fellow colleague who found the process so useless that they just don’t participate anymore.”

Faculty Appreciate and Desire Qualitative Feedback

All participants mentioned feedback and their appreciation for it. The participants looked forward to receiving feedback from a variety of sources and perspectives, including students, supervisors, and peers. Regardless of the source, feedback was most appreciated when it was qualitative in nature. Speaking of student evaluations in particular, Tonya noted that faculty at her institution take feedback from students “very seriously…I reflect on the comments that are made.” Leah shared that she appreciated learning about the students’ experiences in her course: “I got a lot of feedback that it was really, really difficult, but it felt good at the end.” Furthermore, as Brody’s response highlights, faculty understand the importance of maximizing student participation in the

evaluation process: "The more students participate, the better…so the faculty can see what's really going on in the class and where the faculty can improve."

Regarding administrator or supervisor feedback, Leah shared that "It makes you feel appreciated just to be acknowledged…just to know that your administration is paying attention." Following the completion of an evaluation form or classroom observation, Jess expressed that they would like more feedback from their supervisor: "The face-to-face interviews [with the supervisor] …could be better, that is, longer." However, it is also important to acknowledge potential harmful effects of supervisor feedback, as illustrated by Devon's experience: "The meetings have been largely focused on my personal characteristics, with no clear connection to my actual teaching or performance as a faculty member." Devon's experience illustrates that those providing feedback must be conscious of the purpose of their feedback and the context and content in which their feedback is shared.

Peer feedback was also mentioned, though no participants stated that peers served as part of the formal evaluation process. Instead, peer feedback was discussed as occurring in informal ways outside of the official FE process. When asked what types of feedback they found most helpful, Tonya shared, "The informal conversations that I have with other faculty…about things that I might be struggling with…a lot of it is some of those informal conversations."

Faculty Prefer Ongoing Opportunities for Evaluation

Toward the end of each interview, participants were asked questions that encouraged them to share their thoughts on how the FE process could be most effective.

These questions asked them to focus on changes that could be made to their TCU's current FE process to make it better. Participants shared a number of practices, including the importance of eliciting faculty input while creating or revising the FE process and ensuring faculty were receiving qualitative feedback. Additionally, practices such as goal setting and reflection were mentioned in multiple responses. Collectively, these responses contributed to a larger theme of the necessity for ongoing evaluation.

When respondents discussed practices such as goal setting, reflection, or feedback, they used phrases such as "stay aware," "able to adjust," and "change our choices," each of which speak to the idea of an evaluation process that is ongoing rather than a practice or a disconnected set of practices conducted only once or twice a year. The faculty responses illustrate that they appreciate evaluation for its potential to highlight how they can adjust and improve their teaching practice. As noted by Brody, implementing midterm evaluations not only ensures faculty are involved in the FE process on more than an annual basis, but also allows them the opportunity to engage in a practice that could contribute to their development: "The pieces help me improve because during midterm you are able to adjust." Kent further emphasized the connection between ongoing evaluation and learning by acknowledging the importance of reflection. In reference to the self-evaluation document faculty are required to complete, Kent said, "I think it's easy to collect data, but if we don't reflect on it and think about how to change our choices, I think it's not always helpful."

In regard to goal setting, Tonya noted the importance of the support received in conjunction with these goals as a key factor influencing the potential impact the goals

could have on the faculty responsible for forming them: "Encouragement and collaboration and ongoing support to reach those goals…if that's not happening, you end up having faculty that aren't really heavily invested and focused on those goals." Tonya continued with a suggestion for how this ongoing support could appear throughout the year:

> Some of our meetings could be more focused on professional development, where we have breakout sessions, and there's different things you could do, but I think that those would be good times for faculty to focus more on personal growth.

The responses that TCU faculty shared demonstrate they do not perceive FE as a "one and done" annual activity. Instead, they perceive an effective FE process as one that is supported by various formal and informal practices over time.

Faculty Input Should Inform FE Processes and Practices

An additional theme that surfaced through the conversations with faculty is the importance of faculty input regarding the FE process and practices contained therein. In short, faculty input matters. Although no faculty described what they perceived to be the "ideal" FE process, many mentioned the importance of seeking faculty input to create a process that is both meaningful and well-accepted. Tonya noted that "There was a change [to the FE process] and faculty were not involved in that decision making process…we felt that there should have been some collaboration with faculty." Tonya continued by emphasizing the importance of getting "faculty involved in that process of what they think rather than administration saying 'I'm gonna switch the evaluation tool.'"

While no other participant described experiencing a change in the FE process without prior consultation with faculty, the participants emphasized faculty input as an important factor in creating an effective FE process. For example, Kent shared that “One piece that would be helpful is getting feedback from all faculty as to what in that process they would like to see.” Kent continued,

> In any process, it’s kind of that faculty buy-in, whether they really want to or not; if they at least have input and they’re not being told…that gives them that opportunity to have a voice and have a say…I think that’s a huge piece.

In addressing the meaning and impact of the self-evaluation form, an FE tool mentioned by many of the participants, Devon suggested to “Look to other faculty members…there might be a way to create a meaningful evaluation form that’s more peer-based and more self-reflective and less of a ranking.” In addition to highlighting the importance of faculty input, Devon’s response also prioritizes a more formative or constructive practice rather than one based on a ranking or hierarchical system.

Discussion

Insufficient research exists on TCUs and their faculty, and research focused on specific policies is even more scarce. This study aimed to contribute to what is currently known about TCUs and their faculty by researching TCU faculty experiences with and perceptions of faculty evaluation (FE), with the intent of sharing information that could contribute to the creation and implementation of more effective FE processes and practices.

Perceptions of Faculty Evaluation

The first question of this study explored how TCU faculty have experienced the FE process at their respective institutions. Of the experiences shared, there was much overlap, especially related to the practices included as part of the FE process. Multiple practices noted by the participants, including self-evaluations, student evaluations, and supervisor observations, have been previously discussed as widely-used evaluation measures (Berk, 2018; DeCosta et al., 2016).

One significant finding regarding faculty experiences with FE was the discontinuity experienced between what was written in FE policy and what was implemented in practice. A majority of participants noted that at least one piece of the FE process as described in policy was not employed in practice. In-person evaluations were the most commonly identified practice to be overlooked or not fully executed as written in the FE policy. All faculty who shared experiencing such discrepancies expressed negative feelings and attitudes as a result, including annoyance and a lack of investment in the process as a whole. Ensuring that FE processes execute the standards outlined in institutional policies can be addressed relatively easily at most institutions, and TCU administrators who take steps to align processes and policies with practice restore faculty conviction in the FE process.

Though discontinuity between policy and practice was a common experience for the TCU faculty who participated in this study, faculty still held overwhelmingly optimistic perspectives of what the FE process could be. When asked to share what came to mind when they thought of faculty evaluation, the participants described the FE

process as “something to strive for,” “a growth process to become better at what I do,” and meant to contribute to the “improve[ment] of my teaching capability.” These faculty responses demonstrate that faculty are open to participating in the faculty evaluation process, and they perceive the process as an aspirational one. Framing the FE process as an opportunity for growth is not unexpected, as prior research has found that TCU faculty desire to continuously improve (Al-Asfour & Young, 2017).

Effective FE Practices

The second question of this study explored what FE practices TCU faculty perceive to contribute to their professional development. All practices shared by the participants are mentioned in previous research on faculty evaluation, including the reception of qualitative feedback from students and supervisors, goal setting, and reflection (Lutz et al., 2018; Debroy et al., 2019). Furthermore, this study highlights that, in addition to the specific practice or tool used as part of the FE process, the creation and implementation of that process is just as or, perhaps, even more important.

Nearly all participants shared that faculty input should be considered in the creation of an FE process. Viewed through a self-determination lens, the importance of ensuring faculty feel a sense of agency and autonomy in the FE process should not be overlooked. If faculty perspectives regarding the FE process are cultivated and ultimately realized in FE practice, then faculty autonomy and competency would be bolstered. Additionally, if faculty worked in a collaborative way to design certain aspects of the FE process, then all three major tenets of SDT theory would be accounted for (Ryan & Deci, 1985). For TCUs who move to strengthen the effectiveness of their FE process,

beginning by eliciting faculty input regarding what FE practices should be included and how they should be implemented is a critical first step.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One limitation of this study is that only a small fraction of the existing TCUs and their faculty were represented. Yet, considering the lack of published research on TCUs and their faculty, the findings from this study serve as a starting point for future research focused on TCUs, their faculty, and their policies and practices. Future studies on FE at TCUs could strive to identify individual TCUs where FE processes are perceived positively by their faculty; these TCUs could then serve as case studies and models for others working on revising their FE processes to better contribute to faculty development.

Additionally, for institutions that revise their FE processes and cultivate faculty input to inform the revisions, it would be worth investigating how faculty perceptions of the FE process differed before and after the revisions were made. From an administrative perspective, TCU leadership might take it upon themselves to create a meaningful and effective FE process; however, as noted by the faculty who participated in this study, faculty consider their input to play an important role in creating an effective FE process. Measuring faculty members' perceptions of the FE process after they assisted in the creation of the process could highlight the importance of adhering to a collaborative approach to policy creation and revision at TCUs.

Lastly, though much more research on TCU faculty perceptions of FE would need to be conducted, a future goal would be to study how faculty perceptions of their institution's FE process correlate with student success outcomes. Identifying institutions

where FE processes are perceived by faculty to contribute to their development is a start; the next step is to investigate the relationship between faculty perceptions of FE and student success outcomes.

Conclusion

TCUs are integral to the advancement of those they serve, and TCU faculty are essential to this mission. Though TCU faculty fulfill multiple roles, teaching is at the center of their work. Considering prior research has shown TCU faculty desire to grow in their teaching abilities, the time has now come for scholars to explore how these faculty can be supported in their growth efforts. Because faculty evaluation is a process that is already commonly practiced at TCUs, how it contributes to faculty development deserves to be assessed. When TCU leadership take a critical look at how their FE processes are perceived by faculty as growth opportunities, the actions of these leaders will communicate that they value their faculty input and care about their development. This point is more than a sentiment; it is a way of modeling values inherent to the Indigenous Evaluation Framework. Evaluation—including the choice of tools, implementation approaches, and how to disperse and utilize findings—should be performed in collaboration with the community being evaluated. Given this point, what is worth considering for TCU leadership is how well their FE processes leverage faculty ideals about what the process *could* be and, if needed, revise their FE process so that faculty perceive it to include practices that do indeed support faculty development.

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