CREATING AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ADULT LEARNERS: A QUALITATIVE, MULTI-CASE STUDY OF OFF-CAMPUS CENTER ADMINISTRATOR’S USE OF INVITATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative, multi-case study was designed to examine off-campus centers and their administrators in creating an effective learning environment for adult learners. Serving as the conceptual framework, invitational leadership theory is a holistic approach which nurtures the belief that everyone is intrinsically motivated and it is the leaders’ responsibility to unleash their true potential (Purkey & Siegel, 2003). The researcher utilized invitational leadership theory as lens to analyze off-campus center administrators to understand the perceptions of faculty, students, and staff on the four characteristics: trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality within the five environments: people, places, policies, programs, and processes (Novak & Purkey, 2001).

The off-campus centers analyzed were located in Midwestern States and the universities were classified as Master’s Universities and Colleges by the Carnegie Foundation. The study’s populations consisted of three off-campus center administrators and their supervisors, faculty, students and staff. Data was collected and triangulated through interviews, focus groups, observations and historical material (Creswell, 2003). From the research, conclusions derived from the finding indicated the off-campus center administrators’ practices were consistent with invitational leadership characteristics and the educational environments were comparable to their main campus learning environments. A final conclusion emphasized the continuous need for transparency between their main campuses and the off-campus centers.