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Administrative Burden in the Classroom: An Embedded Mixed Methods Study of How External Pressure Impacts the Burden of Student Success at the Community College Level

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Administrative burden is an avenue to contextualize the impact of policy, politics, and management on citizens interacting with the government (Bell et al., 2020). Research on administrative burden is significant as it encapsulates the interaction between the public and government, a central focus of public administration (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). The traditional conception of administrative burden deals with the costs that people, or citizens, take on participating in a public program that could lead to a loss of autonomy or feelings of stigma (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). State-imposed burdens can occur in any instance where the state oversees or regulates behavior or access to a service, according to Herd and Moynihan (2018), and these burdens have lasting impacts on the day-to-day lives of citizens and how citizens view their government. Government regulation of higher education provides insight into how administrative burden applies to this service area. This paper applies the concept of administrative burden to higher education classroom procedures in the form of student success rates, which is calculated by the rate of students who pass a course with a C and used to determine portions of funding as well as administrative decisions.

Public higher education is a service provided and regulated by the state that includes traditional administrative burden of services such as barriers with excessive paperwork, access to information, and connection with decision-makers (Herd & Moynihan, 2018). Administrative burden in higher education is traditionally contextualized through faculty engagement with administrative processes, such as the institutional administrative barriers with research and federal red tape to navigate the grant process which causes inequity and inefficiency (Rockwell, 2009; Wimsatt et al., 2009). Examples of these administrative barriers are the lengthy paperwork process, operating costs taken by institutions, requirements to obtain financial information from institutional offices, human resource compliance in hiring, and internal and external grant review. These barriers create issues for different types of researchers and increase the need to expand grant funds and time to account for the added requirements in the process.

Considering burden is the process of citizens engaging the government, higher education is a public good where the responsibility for successful completion is placed on the student. Students are assessed on their work and are tasked with meeting the standards set by an expert in the field (Blakenberger & Williams, 2020). Identifying the impact of classroom administrative burden is important as higher education is a non-mandatory public good that citizens choose or apply to or use. Faculty function as administrators that carry out the service for the citizens that chose to enroll (Lovell et al., 2021). Public higher education is a public good that has a mission of serving students. Higher education institutions offer academic services that are semi non-rivalrous and semi non-excludable. Community college is a public good as it is open admission and has minimal barriers regarding space in courses, finance, and is open admissions. Treating community college as a public good requires identifying the administrative burden in the way of barriers that are playing out between bureaucrats, administrators carrying out the policy, and citizens who are enrolling in schools and using the service.

The purpose of this embedded mixed methods study is to address how external pressure is redefining where the responsibilities of administrative burden currently lie regarding classroom

success. An embedded mixed methods design will be used to provide a supportive, secondary role in a study. This study focuses on a field survey that identifies performance funding as an external pressure as the state of Texas bases ten percent of community college funding on the metric. Community colleges offer a unique view of administrative burden within this study because they serve a large population – over 720,000 students (Hegar, 2021) – with minimal barriers to access. The primary purpose of this study uses survey data of 570 community college faculty and administrators at 23 different Texas institutions. A comparison of medians assessing a ranking question of the most important factor to student success showed how faculty and administrators contextualized the factors that contributed to administrative burden. The secondary purpose of this study gathers qualitative data from responses to an open-ended question that explores the impact of student success on the faculty-student relationship. Collecting this secondary qualitative data adds focused context in how faculty and administrators contextualize their position and their view of students. This secondary analysis provides valuable understanding that expands the understanding of the quantitative data that would otherwise not be captured (Morse, 2003).

In this case, success in the classroom at community colleges is the outcome of the service and the burden to the citizen, which is the individual student in this case. However, constraints on academia such as enrollment and funding mechanisms raise questions about where that burden for student academic success lies today. Performance funding, basing portions of budget allocations on production measures such as student success, and resource dependence on the state has shifted the focus of higher education to include the success of students in a way that elicits needed financial gain rather than solely being based on academic progress (Kelchen, 2018). There are two research questions for this analysis:

1. How do faculty and administrators respond to political and administrative pressure to improve student success?
2. Due to these pressures, is the burden of student success in college courses shifting to the faculty member and causing conflict with students?

It is the researcher's expectation that while students traditionally carry the burden of responsibility in achieving the service outcome of a passing grade by meeting assessment standards, factors such as administrative and political pressure to ensure student success in courses to achieve state performance goals, cause faculty to view the burden as being theirs. If this holds, administrative burden in higher education and student performance is potentially creating a negative relationship between faculty and the system as well as the citizen.

Literature Review

This paper makes the case that it is important to study administrative burden at the classroom level. Administrative burden and its impact on faculty is evolving as pressure increases to progress, pass, or ensure that students succeed. Faculty are not often seen as traditional bureaucrats experiencing burden as they are not obligated to carry out curriculum under standardization in a stepwise fashion to ensure fairness. However, the evolution of higher education, especially at the community college level where curriculum is standardized through student learning objectives, progress mandates associated with laws such as Texas' 60x30 plan, and specific regulations for workforce programs, challenges this notion.

Street-level bureaucrats are government administrators that work to implement policy through a direct interaction with the public (Lipsky, 1980). As they engage the public directly, these administrators serve as boundary agents that connect the administrating entity (e.g., government agencies) and the citizen (Prottas, 1978). While faculty are allowed to use administrative discretion and tailor their approach – leeway typical street-level bureaucrats are not allowed (Prottas, 1978) – the adherence to student learning objectives and standardization of curriculum by departments to achieve student classroom success goals changes the context. This is especially true of community college faculty teaching in workforce and certification programs with strict standards, as well as academic faculty obligated to cover specific topics. Administrative discretion is the ability of a bureaucrat to deliver a policy based on the situation and citizens they are working with (Lipsky, 1980) and is an option for all street-level bureaucrats, evidenced by law enforcement officers being trained to identify when de-escalation can be used versus when the use of force is allowed. Moreover, faculty are faced with situations in which they are in a position to take bureaucrat-associated approaches. Examples of these approaches include when faculty are faced with institutional inequities (Fay et al., 2020), making policy implementation decisions regarding organizational outcomes that directly address student success (Bozeman et al., 2013), and implementing new standardized approaches due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lovell et al., 2021). The role that faculty play within these policy dimensions add to their position of influence in regards to student success as it expands their responsibility beyond just implementing curriculum.

Community college faculty are one of the subject groups for this project and are treated as de-facto bureaucrats being asked to expand their scope of influence beyond what is traditionally expected in the classroom and what they have been trained for in graduate school. Increasing empathy for student well-being and success through increased access to materials sound like progressive approaches intended to create positive outcomes for student success. However, feasibility, job pressure, and responsibility associated with the faculty's position impact their ability to meet this empathy mandate and prompts this study of how the burden of academic success could be shifting from the student to the faculty member.

While faculty intentions and merits are justified, it bares examination how the alteration of expectation and redefinition of the bureaucratic role in classroom burden impacts academic success. Faculty can internalize burden by increasing support for students that help them progress and collaborate well with student services (Culver & Bowman, 2020; Kahu & Nelson, 2018; Sneyers & DeWitte, 2018). Conversely, burden can force faculty to simply practice grade inflation or compromise academic quality (Ehlers & Schwager, 2012; Jephcote et al., 2020; Tyner & Gershenson, 2020).

Performance Funding

The federal government and Texas have focused on college completion for over a decade. Federal action under President Barack Obama and non-profit organizations such as Lumina and the Gates Foundation have incentivized student success programs geared around increasing college completion rates. Texas launched their efforts in earnest with the 60x30TX plan in 2012 that focuses on increasing the number of citizens with a degree by 2034 and reducing the debt burden from higher education. Texas is one of 41 states currently employing performance-based funding consistent with the second wave of policies: attaching funds to meeting education outcomes. The concept is that funds would incentivize progress through institutional change. Texan politicians have identified student success rate – which is calculated as a student earning a C or better by the Texas

Higher Education Coordinating Board – as the way of determining ten percent of funding allocations for community colleges (Gandara, 2019).

The state bases ten percent of its funding metric on performance measures despite research that shows no evidence of consistent positive impact on completion rates (Boland, 2018; Favero & Rutherford, 2019; Hillman et al., 2018). Boland (2018) and Favero and Rutherford (2019) found that there is no significant impact from performance funding on increasing graduation or degree completion rates at HBCUs or among institutions generally. Those institutions that did benefit were already predisposed to succeeding. Hillman and colleagues (2018) found similar results with the main exception being workforce certificates at community colleges. In fact, unintended consequences have surfaced with institutions altering patterns of access and approach to meet external pressure (Kelchen, 2018) as well as shifting priorities to focus on the external mandates (Courty & Marschke, 2008). For example, institutions can place a performance standard associated with student success rates on faculty or shift the types of students – for example admitting more college ready students rather than students that pose academic risk – they admit or focus on to increase compliance. As Ortagus and colleagues (2020) suggest, institutions most likely to shift approaches to achieve compliance are those that are dependent on state funds, such as community colleges, and do so by the path of least resistance.

Administrative Burden

Administrative burden is defined traditionally as the barriers placed on citizens to achieve or make use of a public good or service. Administrative burden is characterized as the result of hidden political agendas played out through policy choices that seek to deflect political unrest or bad will from decision-makers by focusing on change through an increased cost of learning and compliance on citizens (Heinrich, 2015; Herd & Moynihan, 2018). When the cost to the citizen becomes too high, there is a precipitous decrease in the use of that service, especially for underrepresented or marginalized groups (Johnson & Kroll, 2020; Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2021; Nisar, 2017). This is important for community colleges, especially in Texas where they are tasked to focus on students from these at-risk communities. Underrepresented and marginalized communities are recruited heavily by community colleges, mainly for economic stimulus in Texas. However, students (i.e., citizens) are likely to exit the service arena if the burden is too high, this is especially true for marginalized students who are not trusting or familiar with the processes associated with programs such as admissions, registration, or financial aid (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2021). Students who exit the service arena due to administrative burden do so because they have little knowledge of how to navigate the system, which is more likely the case for students from lower income and minority communities.

Administrative burden can be by design due to political will, or by folly due to miscalculations of the citizen and the bureaucrat's ability to align with the policy and implement policy directives (Bell & Smith, 2019). People in underrepresented communities are likely to disassociate if they feel the bureaucracy serving them is not representative of their community (Johnson & Kroll, 2021). Without clear directives, bureaucrats are left to implement policy in ways that may fail to reach equity, empathy, and moral expectations (Dolamore et al., 2021). Understanding how the citizen (i.e., students) engages with bureaucrats providing the service (i.e., faculty) and what their expectations are increases our understanding of how administrative burden in the classroom and higher education.

Herd and colleagues (2015) suggest different methods to reduce administrative burden; the support of the political system is vital as they require political, policy, and financial support. Their research points out that political influence and cognition of burden is important to understand and the recognition by elected officials of its existence is normally low. What can be operationalized is the congruence between political goals and administrative shift – without the latter one cannot have the former. This relationship provides support to the central questions in this analysis as it is designed to test this correlation between burden expectations due to external, in this case political and financial, influence.

The focus of this research is to identify where the burden lies in one area of higher education – community college classrooms – which deals with several challenges and external pressures, both political and social. This research categorizes higher education as a government service that carries burdens and barriers to attainment. This line of thinking aligns with the current political movements seeking to open access to higher education and traditional approaches that see academia as an institution where success is based on merit and accomplishment only.

At community colleges, several burdens of service apply including admission procedures, financial aid paperwork, and course advising and enrollment. These are access burdens. In this case, the service sought is progress towards a degree or successful completion of a course as there is a bureaucratic regulator (i.e., faculty) imposing standards set by the state through mandates such as student learning objectives that citizens (i.e., students) must overcome or satisfy to earn progress towards a degree or certificate or completion of a course (i.e., service). Creating a successful path to completion and progress towards a degree or certificate reduces the burden of the service and allows for higher enrollment, better academic outputs, and potentially reaching more individuals and increasing the opportunity to positively impact citizen conditions. Political and financial incentives from performance funding skews how this happens.

This paper seeks to expand on the examination of administrative burden in academia by identifying how it is impacted by external forces (Bell et al., 2020). External information and influence are impactful when information is disseminated and applies to the subject of this study, community college faculty and administrators. Within this study, faculty are viewed as street-level bureaucrats within Lipsky's (1980) characterization of policy implementers as they carry out policy and engage with the public in ways similar to their K-12 counterparts. Bell and colleagues' (2020) analysis of a state education program in Oklahoma, there are two types of administrators: those who go the extra mile and those who see services as a privilege to be capitalized on or earned rather than provided. The former type of administrator enables and provides the service at a higher rate due to a social or in this case political motive. This is the case at the K-12 level (Bell et al., 2020). When transferring to higher education, where faculty are the administrators in question, there is more progression to the latter point of view, more of an earned service view. This suggests that the administrative burden is held by the student as they are the core influencer of their receipt and quality return of the public service (Baker, 2020).

The intent of this paper is to examine if burden is shifting inward to the faculty member regarding academic success in higher education? Identifying where the weight of the administrative burden is allocated allows for practitioners and researchers to have a better view of how administrative services are both perceived and being implemented. Examining the Medicare system in Wisconsin, the case is made that shifting the burden to the state results in a better system (Herd et al., 2015). While positive results in outputs are possible, how do faculty and administrators respond to political

and administrative pressure to improve student success? This question addresses the presence of policy responsibility that defines administrative burden in the classroom. The baseline hypothesis regarding how bureaucrats view burden is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Expectations and requirements attributed to different roles (faculty or administrator) within policy and service delivery contribute to a difference of how administrative burden in the classroom is characterized.

Hypothesis 2: Faculty will view student driven factors as the most important regarding student success while administrators will view faculty driven factors as having the highest impact.

Recent research has identified that administrative burden in education as being significantly influenced by political ideology (Bell et al., 2020) and can be shifting away from the citizen and towards the bureaucrat (Herd et al., 2015). Introducing influences such as political ideology as a bias or change agent in how burden is conceptualized is furthering a deeper understanding of how this concept is being operationalized and responded to within the contemporary administration literature. Realizing that external factors such as political bias can influence how burden is carried out opens the door to examining how burden is shifting because of similar external pressures. Internal pressure also has an impact but is not the source of the survey topics or this study. This is of particular importance in higher education as faculty are seeking to respond to administrative directives and mandates due to performance funding that are shifting their views on academic positions and focuses within higher education (Baker, 2019; Kelchen, 2018; Li, 2019). This sets up the second question for the study, 2. Due to these pressures, is the burden of student success in college courses shifting to the faculty member and causing conflict with students? Pressure from administration to align with these external pressures require examination leading to a second hypothesis:

H3: External pressure such as politics and policy decisions can cause a negative shift in how bureaucrats (faculty and administrators) view and act upon administrative burden in their engagement students.

The overall hypothesis is that external pressure alters the view of administration burden related to classroom success. Instead of the citizen seeing a drastic shift in how they interact with the policy and administration, faculty are bearing the responsibility due to a shift in duty to ensure positive outcomes to meet financial needs and citizen desires because there is a benefit to be gained. If this is the case, it could cause resentment from the bureaucrat towards the administration and the citizen that creates a tense public service environment at these institutions (Wiley & Berry, 2018).

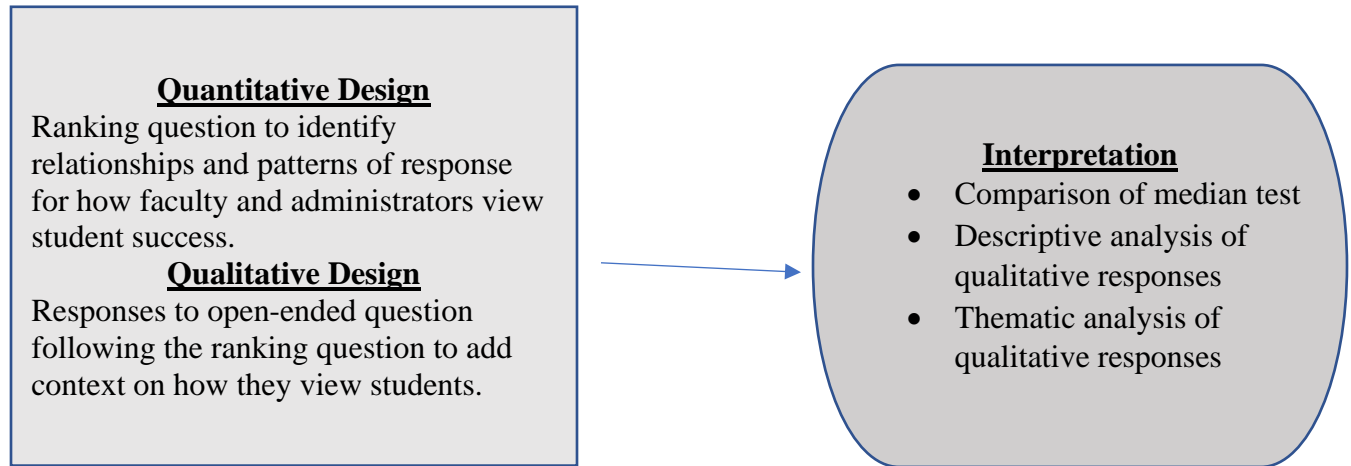
Method

The embedded mixed-method research design tests if external pressures contribute to faculty and administrator views of administrative burden of academic success and whether it lies with the citizen (i.e., the student) to the bureaucrat (i.e., the faculty) at community colleges (Christ & Makarani, 2009; Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011). In this study, both components are of equal value in regard to design, approach, and interaction (Greene, 2015; Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2015). The embedded mixed methods design that comes from equal status methodology offers value by providing a contextualized view of empirical analysis by combining quantitative analysis to define the baseline views with context gathered from more nuanced assertions (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). These data are integrated throughout the exploratory study design as the questions were designed, deployed, analyzed, and interpreted concurrently (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2011; Teddlie &

Tashakkori, 2009; Watkins & Gioia, 2015). Data are integrated in the analysis and interpretation through data transformation to provide additional understanding of the results.

Figure 1

Embedded Mixed Methods Design Diagram



Using data from an original survey of faculty and administrators at 23 community colleges in Texas conducted in 2018, this research examines how these administrators view the burden associated with higher education. The reported findings suggest a need to review the concept and how it applies to classroom success due in part to external pressure. For this case, external pressure is sourced from performance-based funding. The survey includes 35 questions total, and the reliability of the survey is adequate with a Cronbach alpha reported at .761. Ten of the 35 questions are Likert scale questions measuring views such as legislative understanding of higher education, interactions with students, grade inflation, and the prevalence of performance funding in administrative directives. Ten questions are categorical and measure the impact of student success rates, administrator communication, and status with the institution on the view of performance funding. The open-ended questions ask respondents to elaborate on their views, one of which is outlined below and used for the qualitative portion of this study. Finally, the remaining questions are demographics, the demographic breakdown of faculty and administrator is focused on in this paper. The survey received a six percent response rate overall. The survey was deployed using emails provided by the institution. Timing of the survey, late in the spring semester into early summer, contributed to this response rate as faculty and administrators are transitioning into summer months.

For the full survey, 677 faculty and administrators responded to questions associated with how performance funding impacts higher education. Within the survey, respondents were asked to rank the biggest influences on a student's success and given the opportunity to offer comments regarding roles and responsibility within the academic process. The mixed method model tests if external pressures contribute to faculty and administrator views of administrative burden of academic success and whether that burden and responsibility is focused on the citizen (i.e., the student) to the bureaucrat (i.e., the faculty) at community colleges.

The survey (full survey is provided in Appendix B) asked faculty and administrators to rank the influences on student success in community college courses. The question was as follows:

Ranking question: Which of the following has the MOST impact on student success? Rank each from 1 to 7 with one being the least significant factor and seven being the most significant factor: [Most Important Factor]

Respondents ranked seven potential factors (which can be found in Appendix B) affecting student success. Responsibility and duty within the process of learning and passing the course serves as the burden to obtain that service. To conceptualize burden in higher education, specifically the classroom, assessing who is taking responsibility for completion is important. In other words, who is taking responsibility for the burden of process to obtain a passing grade or acceptable service in higher education? Establishing this ranking provides a baseline not only of how faculty and administrators view where the burden should lie in higher education success, but also estimates if the current conceptualization is aligned with the traditional view of burden in classroom success. For the ranking question, 570 respondents took part – 505 faculty and 65 administrators – provided data.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about how performance funding legislation associated with student success affects their view of students.

Open-ended question: Has performance funding and student success changed your view of students and their role? If so, how?

For the open-ended question, 273 respondents provided comment(s). A breakdown of the respondents is provided in Appendix A and shows a sample of faculty to administrators that is justified considering the disparity between faculty and administrator positions. Within the respondent pool, 83% are faculty, which is consistent with the 2.5-to-1 faculty to administrator ratio (Simon, 2017).

For the quantitative analysis, a comparison of median analysis shows the dispersal of responses alters the view of the rankings. A multivariate and univariate Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the distribution of the data was not normal ($p < .001$). A non-normal distribution is indicative of the real-world data collected. As the data were not normally distributed, a Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze the independent samples of faculty and administrators. The two major assumptions, that the data were independent, and ordinal were met.

A qualitative content analysis of 273 responses to the open-ended question was performed. This analysis provides context to how faculty and administrators see classroom administrative burden and provides insight into how they view how roles and responsibilities are defined. These open-ended responses showed a feeling among the faculty and administration that burden of student classroom success is skewed to the faculty member.

Aligning with the most recent work on ideology and administrative burden (Bell et al., 2020), an etic, deductive, open coding model was used to break the data into discrete groups to construct the codes used in the research (Creswell, 2007), comments were coded into nine separate codes (see Table 1). Axial coding, the process of grouping coded responses together based on connections within the codes and responses (Creswell, 2007), was used to create three common codes: academic impact, consumerism, and deservedness. The first level of coding included nine codes to identify meaning and organization. During the second level of coding, these nine codes were grouped into three common or indexed codes based on thematic relationship. The indexed variable of academic impact on grades includes themes of grade inflation, student-faculty alignment, and academic rigor that deal

with adjustments and expectations of faculty responsibility. Codes including consumerism are categorized together based on perceptions by faculty, students, and administrators were indexed to create a single measure of consumerism perception. Another indexed variable to indicate deservedness includes themes of student ownership, student viewing academics as a product, and skewed student expectations that address the role of the student in success. These themes address burden within the classroom as they define the responsibilities and roles that faculty encounter and offer a contextualization of how burden is internalized by faculty at community colleges

Coding was conducted to determine if the comment fit one of the three thematic codes and to identify if it was a positive response (1), neither negative nor positive (0), or negative response (-1). A negative response was coded when there was an overall negative view. Coding was conducted by theme and binary to provide context regarding the tone of the comments and the frequency of the type of response to better specify what the data represents. Table 1 reports examples and definitions of the coding process. All 273 comments were coded on this scale of positivity to indicate the direction of faculty and administrator perception. This descriptive content analysis is intended to identify the patterns of how faculty and administrators view administrative burden. Descriptive frequencies identify the number of each individual code in the aggregate. The descriptive results including mean score on a scale of -3 (i.e., most negative) to 3 (i.e., most positive) that is the product of the indexed codes being combined. For example, if all three codes were negative and assigned a -1, the indexed value is -3. Median scores are reported in the results section in Table 6. All three indexed variables reported a negative mean score with consumerism receiving the most severe response.

Table 1

Coding Structure

Indexed Code	Code	Definition	Positive coding examples	Negative coding examples
Academic Impact	Grade inflation	Grade distributions skewed to increase pass rate.	"Faculty improve grading clarity", "Increasing services for students"	"[Students] hound administrators, who in turn pressure faculty for better grades", "Unfortunately, many teachers feel they need to use poor practices to inflate grades"
	Rigor	Course standards dictated and altered to meet student success mandates.	"Improving the level of the course", "Increasing expectations to meet success."	"Too much pressure to meet the 70% pass requirement", "Definitely pressure to progress which leads to lower standards"

	Faculty Burden	Faculty requirements expanded in the name of student success.	"Faculty are motivated to increase work ethic".	"There is greater responsibility on the instructor to pass students"
Deservedness	Student/faculty alignment	Students and faculty share views of the academic process.	"Partnership", "Connection", "Interest in student issues"	"Appears student's zeal for knowledge has shifted away from mine"
	Student expectation	View that students have an expectation of success in the course.	"Challenges professors to increase effort."	"Someone paid their tuition; they should get a good grade"
	Student ownership	View of student's willingness to take ownership/responsibility for their success.	"Responsibility for grades", "Connecting work ethic to progress".	"[Students] feel entitled", "Students who work hard are demoralized knowing they could do far less and get the same grade"
Consumerism	Student-Product	Student views higher education as a product.	"Students have a healthy expectation of higher education"	"They know how to work the system", "They know if they complain they'll get a better grade"
	Admin-product	Administrator views higher education as a product.	"Goal is progress", "Outcomes drive decisions".	"Faculty are more focused on outputs than academics", "They're afraid we'll lose money if we don't get enough 'completers'"
	Consumerism	Relationship between student and faculty is transactional.	"Expanding resources to meet need"	"They believe they are paying customers", "Seems we're using a business model now"

To account for coder reliability with a single coder, a consistency test reliability (Elliot, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2005) was used to produce a level of reliability. This method was used as the coding was done solely by the author without resource or access to a second coder. To achieve the consistency test, coding was done in segments using consistency coding. Using the coding information in Table 1 comments were coded in groups of 35. Once the code was complete, 45 days later the 35-comment group was recoded to ensure single-rater reliability. For each 35-comment group, there was little variation in the code with a 96 percent agreement. The remaining coding was corrected, and the coding process was used for the remaining responses.

Results

Research Question 1

The first research question addresses the impact of external pressure to test if faculty and student roles within higher education are impacted by factors associated with the importance placed on student success. Table 2 provides a summary of the comparison of median for how administrators and faculty ranked the factors. A Mann-Whitney *U* test reports no significant difference between the median response of faculty and administrators, meaning the null hypothesis that there is no difference between faculty and administrator ranking of student success factors cannot be rejected. Having no significant difference between the median rank of administrators and faculty confirms a shared view of what impacts student success.

Table 2

Mann Whitney U Results on Ranking of Most Important Factor for Student Success

Factor	<i>U</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Standardized materials	16390	.985
Administrative support for students	14486	.118
Professional development for faculty/participation	14033	.053
Inclusion of technology in classrooms	15539	.476
Inclusion of active learning	16021	.748
Student participation/attendance	16279	.913
Student preparedness	16005	.736

Although the findings are not different between the groups, there is an interesting trend to the rank ordered data. The factors rated as having the most impact and least impact, as shown in Table 2, on student success have the weakest *p*-values. The third factor, professional development for professors/participation ($U = 14,033$, $p = .053$) approaches significance. As the ranks become more insignificant, they become more consistent between the two groups. This suggests a pattern that factors that lie in the upper-middle to middle of the scale are more likely to result in a divergence between the groups suggesting there is a consistent order to when the two groups diverge. When opinions are strong in either direction there is more consistency. These data show there is greater divergence between faculty and administrator views at the middle of the scale of most important factors than at the top and bottom.

Understanding that the two groups see the influences on student success in a similar fashion, assessing the medians and what factors are ranked the highest gives a clear view that higher education is not typical of administrative burden. According to these data, when assessing the median, faculty-driven factors are emphasized more than student-driven factors (see Table 3). Faculty (i.e., bureaucrat) and administrators see the burden of responsibility as being on institutional factors including those that are faculty duties to determine success rather than placing responsibility on the citizen.

Table 3 shows the reported median and mode scores and indicates that standardization of materials and administrative support consistently rate as having a high influence on student success. The opposite argument holds for student participation and student preparedness, which report the lowest and second lowest median and modes, respectively. While technology was in the middle of the pack of means in both groups, the median meaning the least amount of variance in responses. The congruence between how these responses is distributed is consistent with the results from the Mann-Whitney U test and suggest little variance in how the two groups rank factors related to the burden of student success.

Table 3

Comparison of Median (Mode) for Most Important Factor Facing Student Success

Factor	Administrator Median (Mode) Ranking	Faculty Median (Mode) Ranking	Overall Median (Mode) Ranking
Standardized materials	6 (6)	6 (7)	6 (7)
Administrative support for students	5 (7)	5 (7)	5 (7)
Professional development for faculty/participation	4 (4)	5 (6)	5 (4)
Inclusion of technology in classrooms	5 (5)	4 (4)	4 (4)
Inclusion of active learning	4 (3)	4 (3)	4 (3)
Student participation/attendance	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)
Student preparedness	1 (1)	2 (1)	2 (1)

Note: Faculty $N = 505$, Admin $N = 65$, Overall $N = 570$

When breaking the data down between faculty and administrators, there is a congruence between the views overall. Table 4 provides the frequency of responses of when a factor is rated as the most important and the only sign of true contrast between the groups. Again, at the top of the scale are resource and faculty-centered factors: standardized materials and administrative support for students. Both groups see these consistently as the most important factors in student success. Ranking these two factors as the most important suggests that burden is more on the faculty as both are connected far more to the faculty than the student.

Divergence between the groups happens regarding the ranking of student preparedness and participation. These factors are rated as the third and fourth most important by faculty but received far fewer top rankings by administrators. These data suggest that faculty and administrators see the

student role differently, supporting Hypothesis 2. It also suggests that there is a conflict within the faculty group as the medians reported in Table 3 show faculty overall see these student factors as low impact. This is a noteworthy trend in the data as it creates an expectation contrary to the traditional view of burden where the citizen has more influence and shows some conflict between the administrator and faculty groups as well within the faculty group itself regarding where burden lies for classroom success.

Table 4

Breakdown of Responses for Most Important Factor (MIF)

Factor	Administrator MIF (Percent)	Faculty MIF (Percent)	Overall MIF (Percent)
Standardized materials	22 (33.8%)	194 (38.4%)	216 (37.8%)
Administrative support for students	22 (33.8%)	133 (26.3%)	155 (27.1%)
Professional development for faculty/participation	12 (18.4%)	57 (11.2%)	69 (12.1%)
Inclusion of technology in classrooms	4 (6.1%)	31 (6.1%)	35 (6.1%)
Inclusion of active learning	3 (4.6%)	24 (4.7%)	27 (4.7%)
Student participation/attendance	4 (6.1%)	59 (11.6%)	63 (11.0%)
Student preparedness	8 (12.3%)	89 (17.6%)	96 (16.8%)

Note: Overall N = 570, Administrator N = 65, Faculty N = 505

In response to this research question, faculty and administrators alike see faculty-driven factors as having more impact on student success. Faculty and administrators see the burden consistently overall but prioritize different factors. Having the expectation that the faculty carries the burden from both groups supports Hypothesis 1 as influences external to the classroom are influencing how burden in student success in the classroom is contextualized. This departs from the traditional focus of administrative burden where the outcome (e.g., a passing grade in a course) is the desired service of the citizen.

These traditional factors are inextricably out of faculty and administrator control yet are integral to a student achieving success in courses. Regarding Hypothesis 2, testing using the percentages of highest ratings attributed to a factor showed a contrast as faculty see student driven traits as being more important than administrators. This divergence is small but is important to note in determining the level of burden and where it is attributed. Overall, faculty and administrators see their role as

being much larger than that of the student in classroom success. In relation to administrative burden in higher education, these data support that the view of burden places responsibility on faculty.

Research Question 2

The second research question focuses on whether the shift in burden in classrooms is creating a conflictual relationship between faculty and both administrators and students due to external pressure. Hypothesis 3 suggests that the external pressure is causing negative ramifications on how bureaucrats in higher education engage with students. To test this hypothesis, a qualitative analysis of responses to the question: Has performance funding and student success changed your view of students and their role? If so, how? was used to find major themes that build on the quantitative results. Two-hundred and seventy-three individuals that responded to the survey provided comments for this question. The content analysis outlined in the methodology section was used to analyze the responses and code them into categories which are reported below.

Table 5 reports the average mean score for all coded indexed variables and table 6 reports the breakdown of the indexed variable in total and by position (administrator and faculty). The total numbers show that when the themes were present it is more likely to be slightly negative overall. A majority of the indexed variables are slightly negative or in the center of the scale. It is important to note that not every comment included a negative or positive response. When there is no positive or negative reference, the comment was coded with a 0.

Table 5

Mean Scores for Indexed Variables

Indexed variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Consumerism	-1.06	.057
Deservedness	-.97	.063
Academic Impact	-.96	.061

Note: Scale: -3 (most negative) to 3 (most positive)

Table 6

Frequency of Indexed Responses

Indexed variable	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Consumerism							
Total (n=273)	15	73	110	66	9	1	0
Faculty (n=240)	14	62	101	57	5	1	0
Administrator (n=34)	1	11	9	9	4	0	0

Deservedness

Total (n=273)	16	75	84	85	12	1	1
Faculty (n=240)	12	68	77	73	9	1	0
Administrator (n=34)	4	7	7	12	3	0	1

Academic Impact

Total (n=273)	22	55	96	93	6	2	0
Faculty (n=240)	17	49	89	79	4	2	0
Administrator (n=34)	5	6	7	14	2	0	0

*Scale is -3 (most negative) to 3 (most positive)

The indexed variable for consumerism was unintended but due to the frequency of it coming up in the commenting as it is not directly addressed in the survey but was created due to prevalence in responses to determine the view of how performance funding has shifted the view of the academic process.

Example of consumerism:

“Students go from a role akin to that of an applicant (for credit, for a grade) one akin to that of a consumer (a purchaser of credit, of grades), with the instructor as the salesperson.”

“Although assessing student success and holding instructors accountable for good performance is absolutely necessary, I feel the role of the instructor has shifted to one more of customer service. For example, the attitude of the student may be to some degree: “I have paid for this course, therefore, I expect you to work for me to ensure I get the grade I need”. Although that's not the majority, it is certainly an underlying tone. I'd like to see an increase in helping students become more independent/ motivated learners.”

From these comments the perceived burden placed on faculty has altered the perception of the academic environment as a whole. As faculty view their role as being more arduous, they view the environment as being less about academics and more about revenue and business. This theme is roundly negative, suggesting that faculty see their position and increased duty to provide the service negatively because of the burden placed on them. Respondents feel that the consumerism of higher education has reduced the academic quality and role that faculty play in their view.

Of 273 respondents, 198 of 273 comments are coded as being negative showing that, even without solicitation, there is a view that academics are being pushed as a “product” and students believe they are owed services for payment rendered. A telling breakdown of these comments is that 177 of the 240 faculty (73.7%) and 21 of 34 administrators (61.7%) reported some level of negative response to consumerism. The level of negativity on consumerism is the highest of the three indexed variables with a mean score of -1.06.

Deservedness focuses on comments that allude to a student's expectation and the perception of how the student views the academic process in the age of performance funding and student success.

Examples of deservedness:

"I have seen more and more "entitlement" in students over the past five years. Many expect success without mastery of the subject matter."

"It should be the student's job to learn the material. Some students do not attempt to learn the material. These students are going to college for purposes other than learning. It should be the responsibility of the professor to prepare appropriate material that leads to learning. Professors should not be responsible for students learning the material."

From these selected examples there is a sharp negative connotation regarding how faculty and administrators view students' approach to courses. From these data, faculty and administrators indicate that "hand-holding" is expected from the student. The coded theme from these responses suggest that faculty and administrators internalize the student's desire to learn in a negative fashion, evidence that the shift in burden is causing conflict in the relationship that could damage the effectiveness of the service.

For deservedness, the mean score reported for the indexed variable is -.97, the second most negative mean score reported of the three indexed variables. The level of negativity towards deservedness and how students value the academic experience and how they align with faculty views is lower than those reported in consumerism with a less negative view. A total of 175 of the 273 respondents were coded as having a negative response, with 77 reporting a -1 response on the scale reported in Table 6. Of the 240 faculty respondents, 157 (77.3%) were coded as a negative response and 18 of 34 administrators (52.9%) of administrators followed suit. The distribution of coded qualitative responses for deservedness was slightly less negative than consumerism, but contributes to the potential for a conflictual relationship between faculty and students.

The final index code, academic impact on grades, shows the view of student success and performance funding on grading and standards placed on students' academic impact.

Example of academic impact on grades:

"There is a greater responsibility on the instructor to ensure student success. If an instructor uses this as an opportunity to teach, re-teach, and provide direction, then this is a positive change. Unfortunately, many teachers continue poor practices and inflate grades instead."

"Students perceive that they have a strong position to negotiate their grades rather than earn them and given institutional mandates to meet specified productive grade rates, in some cases, selective grade inflation can happen."

Faculty see this burden as requiring more of them. Not just of instruction, which is a positive outcome of the burden shifting, but that they are expected to alter their approach. For example, faculty feel obligated to practice grade inflation to avoid conflict with students and administrators. As noted in the selected comments, the prospect of negotiating or being forced to justify grades causes negative views from faculty. It is important to identify how these shifts are being internalized by faculty within this variable as it can lead to insight into why grades are being adjusted and students are less prepared for advanced courses.

Academic impact frequencies report similar results to those for deservedness with a mean rating of

-96. Of the 273 respondents, 173 reported some level of negative response to how external pressures are impact the academic environment based on rigor, grade inflation, and faculty burden to do more in the classroom. One-hundred and fifty-five of the 240 faculty (64.5%) and 18 of 34 administrators (52.9%) report some level of negative view of how external pressure is affecting the academic environment.

Faculty and administrator responses to the open-ended question captures views of external pressure in the classroom. These data suggest accepting the alternate hypothesis of Hypothesis 3 as external pressure has impacted the view of administrative burden. According to these qualitative responses, there are faculty and administrative populations that see the burden of student success shifting when defined by the view of consumerism, deservedness, and academic standards and impact on grades. Administrators and faculty are reporting similar negative feedback regarding where the administrative burden is on success in higher education. While administrators are setting the implementation standards creating the environment for the shift, they recognize here that the burden shift to the faculty is negative. This needs more clarification through future study.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study is that there is no data of the student's view of the burden of passing college courses. Having that data would create a holistic picture of administrative burden in the classroom. However, data from administrators and faculty is sufficient to conceptualize administrative burden regarding student success in the classroom.

Also, there are more factors at play regarding administrator decision to direct faculty. Administrators have several reasons to guide faculty in specific directions. Included in these reasons are a commitment to community building, student service pressure, and political and social expectations. I am choosing to focus on performance-funding as it has a direct correlation to metrics that have a higher level of control by the faculty. Other factors, especially the political and social influences that drive budgeting, are well out of the scope of influence of college administrators. By focusing on performance-funding it is logical to draw a stronger connection as the metric that determines it, student success rates, can be influenced at a much higher rate by the administrators and faculty.

Discussion

Inquiry into how administrative burden is carried within higher education that sparked this research came from general conversations with colleagues and monitoring the approach to teaching on social media. A segment of faculty sees it as their duty to engage students at whatever level to ensure they have every opportunity to succeed in a course. Another segment of faculty sees these steps as crossing a line of traditional higher education relationships where students have the responsibility of passing and professors have the responsibility of teaching and lament the negative influences administrators have on changing the dynamic. Accepting that achieving a passing grade is the outcome of a government service and therefore carries an administrative burden, the differing opinions suggest that there is a need to identify how that burden is carried out in classrooms. Results reported here represent a higher education system where faculty having a negative view of their role in regard to working with students and how those students view the system. Adding to these results is the fact that, while it is a small subset of respondents, the sample comes from a faculty and administrators at community colleges in Texas who are focused on student engagement and teaching.

The goal of the research questions and subsequent hypotheses is to determine if there is an impact of external pressure and identify if there is a juxtaposition between expectation and view of student success when viewed through the lens of politics and policy - in this case performance-based funding. As burden in the classroom shifts, there is evidence it becomes increasingly negative as faculty respond to external political pressures that drive internal shifts in administration and expectations from higher-ups and students (Bell et al., 2020). These data confirm the application of the theory that burden can be shifted inward to the bureaucrat. While earlier examples (Camillo, 2021; Herd et al., 2015) are seen to shift burden to increase quality and efficiency, the negativity of this shift in burden shown in these qualitative data offers a less optimistic view of classroom engagement due to administrative interventions. Faculty view the classroom in a traditional sense, one where they play the role of information provider and assessor, and students take that information and ownership of their performance. The influence of administrative directives due to external mandates has shifted that view to one where faculty see themselves as a cog in the administrative machine. External forces from political influences that manifest in administrative directives have negative impacts on academics and student success at the community college level making it difficult to conceptualize the classroom dynamics and for faculty to be compassionate. Social implications of this shift in view by faculty could range from a loss of professors to graduating classes of underprepared workers. How faculty internalize these shifts will impact how they perform in their classrooms.

For administrators and faculty these data provide both confirmation and challenges to dealing with the practice of promoting student success. When faced with a traditional question of what the most important factor is to obtain the service, in this case a passing grade, faculty and administrators undoubtedly moved away from the traditional view of administrative burden. In their view, student ability to receive a passing grade has a weaker connection to their level of academic capacity and instead is influenced by the faculty member.

The second set of results paint a picture that placing burden on faculty creates challenges in the classroom as the shift in burden is creating negative and less compassionate bureaucratic activity. In fact, respondents see the system of higher education as being less a traditional public service and more as a contemporary service where pressure requires a business-like approach. These results suggest that external influences such as politicized performance-based funding contribute to a negative academic environment due to administrative focus on appeasing political requirements concerning funding. The results are negative due to political and funding pressures that degrade the quality of classroom interaction and success. Faculty especially feel that they are unduly carrying the burden for both the student and the institution. Instead of higher education being a product of student initiative and work, faculty and administrators view it as rendering service for payment made further moving faculty away from being compassionate bureaucrats (Wiley & Berry, 2018). The potential ramifications for a continued negative perception could be as little as an increase in disgruntled employee's void of empathy and compassion or as significant as a system that has an administrative crisis due to disenchanting bureaucrats. The overall ramifications could be an undereducated workforce and population, a weaker supply of graduates into the workforce, and a reduction of the learner-centric approach in higher education that is replaced by a less effective outcome-centric approach.

Overall, these data align with Bell and colleagues' (2020) assumption that external factors impact the way burden is conceptualized and carried out. Their study was influenced by political ideology,

whereas in this study, the external influence is political pressure through policy. Within the qualitative responses, faculty have a highly negative view of education and the student when asked about the focus on student success in the classroom. Instead of being the conveyors of knowledge and skill, faculty see themselves as having to make choices to follow a system they see as business-like or risk their positions. This finding suggests that higher education, specifically classroom success, is different from the traditional view of administrative burden and looking at it the same way can cause friction and false expectations.

Administrative burden needs to be defined within the classroom to identify if the burden is shifting from student to faculty and what is the primary cause. Higher education has long been considered a public service that was steeped in traditional administrative burden - "it is up to you to get a good grade." That traditional view is morphing to more of the systems seen in public health and K-12 education.

Future work will need to focus on why this gap between perception and implementation exists and what it means for the student and administrative management in areas such as professional development that is focused on introducing the administrative measures and working with faculty to expand their role within them and how they address student needs. There is also a need to show faculty how the current administrative approach aligns policy demands with their needs and role in the classroom. Increasing that scale involves a larger sample size, yes, but also a more generalizable one that encompasses most campuses, student populations, and institutional goals (e.g., research versus teaching). Expanding on how faculty conceptualized students and their own burden is also necessary through qualitative research that supplies context and builds a theoretical framework that addresses a shift in said burden.

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Appendix A

Breakdown of Survey Respondents

Respondent Category	Frequency	%
Position	N=655	
Administrator	77	11.7%
Faculty	578	88.3%
Impoverished serving institution	N=655	
Yes	481	73.4%
No	96	14.7%
No response	78	11.9%
Minority-serving institution	N=655	
Yes	513	78.3%
No	63	9.6%
No response	79	12.1%
Gender	N=655	
Male	219	33.4%
Female	328	50.1%
Prefer not to answer	38	5.8%
No response	70	10.7%
Ethnicity	N=655	
White	435	66.4%
African-American	50	7.6%
American-Indian/Alaska Native	14	2.1%
Asian	22	3.4%
Hispanic/Latino/x	47	7.2%
Prefer not to answer	56	8.5%
No response	31	4.7%
Faculty position	N=578	
Full time/70%	286	49.5%
Part-time/Adjunct	235	40.7%
No response	57	9.9%
Administrator Position	N=77	
President	2	2.6%
Vice president	6	7.8%
Dean	18	23.4%
Instruction administrator	5	6.5%
Department chair	34	44.2%
No response	12	15.6%
Respondent subject area background	N=655	
Social/Behavioral Sciences	109	16.6%
Science	90	13.7%
Math	50	7.6%
Arts/Humanities	146	22.3%
Developmental education	18	2.7%
Kinesiology/Health Sciences	41	6.3%
Workforce education	64	9.8%
No response	137	20.9%

Appendix B

Full Survey

LIKERT SCALE

*For the following group of questions use the following Likert scale to provide your answer:
strongly agree, agree, neutral/ no impact, disagree, strongly disagree*

The Texas Legislature has a firm grasp on the needs of higher education institutions.

Legislative decision-making has a significant impact on decision-making and administrative directives on two-year campuses.

If student success is used in faculty evaluations; I believe this is a fair measure of faculty performance.

the inclusion of student success as a funding metric has a positive impact on administration/faculty relationships.

The inclusion of student success metrics promotes a healthy academic environment.

Student success as a funding metric has a positive effect on academic freedom.

Student success as a funding metric has a negative effect on academic freedom.

Focus on student success rates leads to grade inflation.

Student success has shifted the role or view of students.

If that role has shifted, please give a comment on how that change has taken place in the provided textbox.

CATEGORICAL

Are student success rates used in faculty evaluations for full-time faculty?

Yes

No

Student success rates are included in faculty contracts?

Yes

No

Student success rates are used in determining the retention or class load for adjuncts?

Lovell

Yes

No

In your opinion, what is a realistic student success rate signifying quality teaching/academic experience? _____

Has the discussion of student success increased or decreased during the past year?

Increased significantly

Increased slightly

Remained the same

Decreased slightly

Decreased significantly

What methods of delivering the information about the funding change have been used?

General meetings

Presentations

Training sessions

Meetings with faculty groups (ie faculty senate)

Written materials

Other: _____

[Faculty] What is your current success rate over your courses for the past academic year? *If you are not a faculty member skip this question.*

[Administrator] On a scale of 1-10 where 10 is increasingly impactful and 1 having no impact at all, has the inclusion of student success rates altered the messaging to faculty on your campus? *If you are not an administrator, skip this question.*

[Administrator] On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being extremely well received and 1 being received extremely poorly, how has that message been received?

Which of the following has the MOST impact on student success? Rank each from 1 to 7 with seven being the most significant factor and one being the least significant factor:

Student preparedness

Using active learning in the classroom

Inclusion of technology in the classroom

Student participation/attendance

Standardized materials

Professional development for professors

Administrative support for students

Other additional factors: _____

DEMOGRAPHICS

[Faculty] Which of the following best describes your position?

Full-time or 70% full-time faculty

Part-time faculty/adjunct

[Administrator] Which of the following best describes your position?

Department chair

Dean

Vice president of instruction

Instruction administrator

President

Select the college or college system you work for:

From the list below, which best describes the subject matter area of your discipline?

Social & behavioral science (i.e. political science, economics, geography, criminal justice, sociology, psychology)

Science (i.e. biology, chemistry, physics)

Math

Arts and Humanities (i.e. history, English, art, speech, communication)

Developmental education

Kinesiology and health sciences

Workforce

What is your highest level of education?

Masters

Ph.D/doctorate

How many years have you been in your current position?

Less than two years

2-4

5-6

7-9

Ten plus years

How many years have you worked in higher education?

Less than two years

2-4

5-6

7-9

Ten plus years

How many courses do you teach online per semester?

0

1

2

Three or more

Is your college a minority serving institution?

Yes

No

Does your college serve an impoverished population?

Lovell

Yes

No

Prior to this survey, were you aware that the Texas Legislature for two-year institutions included student success as a funding metric?

Yes

No

What is your race? Select all that apply:

Caucasian

Hispanic/Latin/x

African-American

Asian

Native American

Other

Prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

Male

Female

Prefer not to answer