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Professor camp: A phenomenological study of the origin and persistence of the Wakonse conference on college teaching and learning

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Professor camp: A phenomenological study of the origin and persistence of
the Wakonse conference on college teaching and learning

by

Michelle Lea Boettcher

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

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Ames, Iowa

2013

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DEDICATION

Molly told me, “It takes a village to write a dissertation.”

She was right.

So thank you to all of my village people.

Aja, Amy, Andy, Ann, Barb, Barbara, Bill, Brad, Cameron, Catrina, Chad, Chris, Clarence, Cora, Corly, Craig, Criss, Dan, Deborah, Elizabeth, Elliott, Erik, Flo, Ginny, Gretchen, James (2 of them), Jenn, Jerry, Jessica, Joanne, Joe (2 of them), John, Joy, Joyce, Judy, Kate, Keith, Kipp, Kirk, Laurel, Laurie, Leota, Leslie, Maddie, Marjorie, Mel, Mike (2 of them), Mimi, Molly, Nacho, Nancy (2 of them), Pamela, Patty, Reyes, Richard, Rio, Rose, Ryan, Sally, Sara, Sharilynne, Stephanie, Steve, Susan, Susana, Terry, Tina and Tom.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Background of the Study	1
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of the Study	2
Research Questions	3
Significance of the Study	4
Wakonse significance	4
Significance beyond Wakonse	5
Higher education	5
Other organizations and institutions	7
Theoretical Framework	8
Summary of Research Approach and Design	8
Researcher Positionality	9
Definition of Terms	11
Summary	12
 Chapter 2. Literature Review	 14
Introduction	14
Historical Context: Shifting Academic Cultures / Priorities	15
Organizational Development	19
Deming's "Systems of Profound Knowledge"	21
Appreciation for a system	21
Theory of variation	22
Theory of knowledge	23
Understanding psychology	23
Self-Worth	25
Organizational Culture	32
Individuals	34
Organizational leadership	37
Participants as a part of organizational culture	39
Effectiveness	42
Organizational Communication	43
Organizational Change and Learning	45
Action-based research	51
Conclusion	51
 Chapter 3. Methodology	 54
Epistemology: Constructivism	55
Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism	56
Phenomenology	58
Methodology: Case Study	58
Data Sources	62

Records and Document Analysis	66
Interviews	68
Observations	70
Data Analysis	71
Data Management	72
Formatting	74
Cross-referral	74
Coding	74
Research memos	75
Pagination	75
Trustworthiness Criteria	75
Objectivity and Confirmability	76
Reliability, Dependability, and Auditability	77
Triangulation	77
Member Checks	78
Reflexive Journaling and Memos	78
Delimitations	80
Limitations	81
Ethical Considerations	82
Summary	84
Chapter 4. Findings	
Introduction	85
Participants	87
Founders	87
Joe	87
Bill	88
Barb	88
Non-Founder Participants	89
Dara	89
Hope	89
Jean	90
Kai	90
Reg	90
Renee	91
Research Question 1: Why did Wakonse Begin?	91
Leadership	92
Joe the leader	92
Big picture rather than details	93
Bill the holder of wisdom	94
Barb as Wakonse spirit	95
Founders as a team	97
The Origin	98
Founder's perspectives	99
The role of Camp Miniwanca and the American Youth	

Foundation	99
Miniwanca as inspiration for Wakonse.....	100
Exile from the youth conferences	101
A Celebration of Teaching and Learning.....	102
Enhancing passion	103
Not remediation	104
Wakonse Attendees.....	105
Holistic approach	105
Playing upon strengths of attendees.....	106
The Chautauqua	107
Organizing Wakonse.....	107
The name.....	109
Creating the Wakonse format	110
Context.....	111
Conference framework.....	112
Funding Wakonse	113
Summary.....	114
Research Question 2: Why has the Wakonse Conference Continued?.....	116
Leadership.....	118
Joe	118
Staff.....	121
Wakonse is a Unique Community Celebrating Teaching and Learning.....	123
Wakonse embraces a love of teaching	124
Wakonse provides and opportunity to share student engagement	
Strategies.....	127
Valuing expertise of participants	129
Wakonse: Building a Community.....	131
Who: How people contributed to Wakonse's continuity.....	131
Wakonse fellows.....	133
Commitment to learning and teaching.....	133
Interdisciplinary philosophy	135
Diversity and inclusion	138
The Native American experience.....	140
Women at Wakonse	142
The dialogue of women	142
The mentoring of women.....	144
The inclusion of other groups	146
Non-tenured faculty	146
Students.....	147
Undergraduate student participants.....	148
Graduate student participants.....	150
Disagreement on the student role.....	151
The role of participants in the continuation of Wakonse.....	151
What: Wakonse activities	152
The role of dialogue	153

The dialogue group	153
Classroom connections to dialogue groups.....	156
Other forms of dialogue	158
Communal experiences.....	160
Lodging and dining	161
Low ropes.....	163
Sessions.....	164
Sunsets	166
Challenge by choice.....	167
High ropes.....	168
Polar bear plunge	170
Chautauqua	171
Virtual Wakonse	173
Where: The role of Camp Miniwanca	173
Founder's perspectives on place	174
Role of nature.....	176
Safe space.....	178
Camp as place of connection	184
Letting go at Wakonse	186
When: Time of year and developmental milestones.....	187
Time of year	187
Wakonse development	188
Why: Isolation in academe.....	190
The founder's perspectives	191
The perspectives of other participants	192
How: The magic of Wakonse	195
Whole self	196
Reflection.....	198
Goal-setting.....	199
Bringing it home	201
Single champions	201
Wakonse as a support system	205
Jean: The case for full professor	206
Wakonse's role in her process	208
Renee: Support in work and beyond.....	209
Personal support.....	209
Professional support.....	211
Maintaining Wakonse	212
Institutionalization at Missouri	212
Institutional administrators connecting with Wakonse.....	214
Findings.....	215
Feedback	216
Conclusion	218
Summary	220

Chapter 5. Discussion	223
Summary of the Study	223
Findings.....	224
Research Question 1: Why did Wakonse Begin?	224
The founders	224
Founders' perspectives.....	224
Founders' abilities.....	226
The origin.....	229
Celebration of teaching and learning	230
Wakonse attendees.....	231
Goal-setting.....	233
Organizing Wakonse.....	235
The Wakonse format.....	238
Key findings from research question 1	239
Research Question 2: Why has Wakonse continued?.....	239
Leadership.....	242
Joe the leader.....	245
Staff.....	246
Teaching and learning.....	249
Who: How people contributed to Wakonse's continuity	250
Openness and trust	250
Interdisciplinary nature of Wakonse	251
Passion for teaching and learning	251
Community	252
What: Wakonse activities	253
The role of dialogue	254
Communal experiences.....	257
Where: The role of Camp Miniwanca	259
When: Time of year and developmental milestones.....	263
Why: Isolation in academe.....	264
How: How Wakonse works	266
Whole self	267
Bringing it home	270
Single champions.....	271
Personal support.....	273
The future of Wakonse.....	274
Implications for future practice.....	280
Wakonse implications.....	280
Organizational reflection	282
Leadership.....	282
Evaluation	285
Single champions	286
Implications for other organizations	287
Viewing higher education through an	

organizational development lens.....	287
Organizations and organizational change	291
Community and belonging.....	291
The importance of organizations valuing individuals.....	292
Anticipating and navigating change in organizations.....	294
Leadership and change in organizations	295
Limitations and recommendations for future research	296
Limitation of the case: Wakonse.....	296
Limitation of a particular faculty and staff development	
Experience.....	297
Exploration of limited aspects of Wakonse	297
Preaching to the choir: Teaching and learning	298
Focus on aloneness of life in academe.....	300
A broad examination of organizational development leadership ..	301
Focus on large, public research institutions	302
Final thoughts and points of reflection	302
Appendix A: Interview Questions-Founders	306
Appendix B: Interview Questions-Fellows.....	308
References.....	309

ABSTRACT

This study examines the Wakonse Conference on Teaching and Learning through an organizational development lens. It explores why the conference was created and why it has continued for 24 years. Using this phenomenological case study provides insight into both the organizational elements involved in this conference, but also how the roles of individuals have contributed to the persistence of this conference.

The three founders who have been active with Wakonse from since its inception along with five other participants who have attended the conference for at least four years were interviewed. Through interviews with the conference founders and long-term participants, issues related to leadership, the value of teaching and learning and isolation in academe were explored. This study highlights the importance of place, reflection and community in attending to the holistic need of faculty and staff working in higher education. These interviews served as the primary data source for this study, though other documentation and observation as well as reflexive journaling contributed, as well.

This conference emerged from the passions of the founders and was inspired by their connection to a specific location. Their dedication to maintaining a connection with the camp where the conference evolved into an annual conference: Wakonse. This conference serves to bring together faculty and staff in higher education who are passionate about undergraduate students and teaching. These passions have resonated with faculty and staff across the country who have not found communities of teaching and safe spaces for sharing their passions for undergraduate students at their institutions.

This study has implications not only for the Wakonse conference, but across and beyond higher education. Organizations in a variety of settings can benefit from the issues related to community, holistic attention to members, reflection, time and space. Each of these factors contributed to the positive Wakonse experiences of the participants in this study. Similarly, these themes have implications for a variety of other organizations.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Yet we have suffered less visible damage. Self-esteem, and the public estimate of our performance, have undoubtedly been shaken by our recent hard passage. Higher education has been put on the defensive, at a time when it needs to open itself to new currents of thought. We must... continually explain ourselves to our constituencies, but this self-explanation should consist in revealing our highest aspirations rather than in defending ourselves from intemperate attack. (Strohm, 1989, p.6)

These words were published in *Academe* in 1989, the same year the first Wakonse Conference on College Teaching and Learning was held. It was a time when higher education struggled with a poor public perception and a lack of political support. Questions were asked about the work being done—particularly as it pertained to serving the students in the classroom.

Problem Statement

It was in the educational, political, and cultural setting described above that the Wakonse conference was founded. The Wakonse Conference for College Teaching is a conference held each May on the shores of Lake Michigan at Camp Miniwanca near Shelby, Michigan. The conference consists of faculty, staff, future faculty (graduate students), and undergraduates with an interest in student engagement and teaching at the undergraduate level. The Wakonse web site describes the conference in this way,

The Wakonse Foundation brings together people who find inspiring and influencing others is what they do for a living. We create a climate where it is

important and appropriate to display and discuss teaching talents, where colleagues learn about themselves as teachers, where they see and consider the tasks and issues of creative teaching in a manner characterized as enjoyable, where providing feedback to one another is a norm and where that feedback is outside of any institutional mandate to improve or to evaluate teaching.

Participants become Wakonse Fellows. That means, in the simplest of terms, to support, promote and share the excitement and satisfaction of teaching—to inspire others and ourselves. (“Overview,” 2012)

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study I sought to understand why the Wakonse Conference was started and why it persisted for more than 20 years. The study of this particular conference makes a valuable contribution to the literature in exploring why it has persisted and highlighting the importance of examining issues such as isolation in academe and the development of communities around teaching and learning.

Knowing why Wakonse continues today is helpful to others who may be looking to create annual experiences—conferences, workshops, and other events. Developing a further understanding of isolation, aloneness, and loneliness in the lives of faculty and others in higher education has implications beyond this conference and is relevant to issues such as the recruitment, retention, and development of those working in higher education. Finally, the importance of communities to overcome this loneliness when it comes to focus and work related to teaching and learning is essential to some faculty members’ senses of belonging at their institutions, and Wakonse is a unique place where teaching and learning communities are developed.

For the purposes of this research study, I was interested in Wakonse as an “organization.” How did it begin and evolve? What are the anticipations and worries for the future of Wakonse? How did the *organization* develop? And how might other organizations adopt similar strategies or learn from the successes and mistakes of Wakonse? The central research questions to be answered were, “Why was this conference founded?” and “Why has the conference continued for 23 years?”

Research Questions

Through this study I sought to understand why the Wakonse conference was originally founded and how it has persisted for 23 years. The focus was on the motivations, goals, and actions of the founders. I viewed this study from an organizational development perspective, focusing on Wakonse as an organization. Organizational development was the best tool for identifying why the conference has endured and how it has adapted (or not) to change. Using this lens for the study provided an opportunity to find answers to some key questions: Why did Wakonse begin? Why has the conference continued? The answers to these questions provided information helpful not only to those looking to develop and sustain organizations, but also insight into the needs of faculty and staff and the role of community in this specific organization. There are opportunities for this information to be translated and made relevant in a variety of other contexts in and out of higher education. The organizational development perspective also afforded an opportunity to look at things beyond individual influences (founders or fellows), the environment or setting, and specific structures. Rather it provided an opportunity to look at the experience comprehensively. As will be discussed later, the organization is more than a compilation of pieces, parts, policies,

and people. Using organizational development in this study allowed me to examine the experience from a larger perspective.

Significance of the Study

Wakonse Significance

This study is useful in a variety of ways. First, it benefits the Wakonse organization. As a resource that captures the history and development of the conference, it proves useful to those who are invested in Wakonse. It also serves as a resource for reflection related to strategic planning. Finally, it serves as an artifact for Wakonse that captures the unique perspectives of the founders and fellows before they are no longer active with the conference.

The founders invested significant time in their lives and through their work to developing and sustaining this conference. I anticipated that they hoped to see it continue past their own involvement. That was not necessarily the case for founders or Wakonse fellows. Some definitely had an investment in its continuation, others were comfortable considering that it may have run its course and shared that they would rather it was discontinued than that it was not done well.

Wakonse fellows expressed during the 2011 conference that they had concerns about how the conference would or could continue once the founders were no longer participating. The idea of continuity is of value to those invested in the conference, but was also a concern particularly as it related to leadership transition, vision creation, and the continuation of other activities and elements of the conference. Learning through this study about how the founders designed the conference and the roles of the location, participants, conference activities, and other parts of the experience provided not only history, but key considerations for the future of Wakonse.

Consistency and adaptability are important to events managed over time because change plays a central role in every organization. Higher education is as susceptible to change as business, non-profit work, and any other company or association. Managing both internal (member) and external (public) pressures and mandates is an ongoing challenge for higher education (Abelson, 1995; Hamel & Merz, 2005; Kyle, 2005; Sindelar & Rosenberg, 2000). This study examined how Wakonse has adapted to the influence of external and internal pressures, and provides insight about how higher educational organizations can engage positively with change. An examination of ways in which the conference has changed or not changed was of value in understanding the conference's persistence.

Finally, by using the organizational development lens in higher education, this study bridges business and academics which is a unique combination. There are critics of applying business-developed strategies to higher education (Bridgman, 2007; Tierney, 2003; Uhl, Anderson, & Fitzgerald, 2000). That said, if there are existing ways of examining the work in the business culture that can be adapted to colleges and universities, it makes sense to capitalize on that body of knowledge and information. While considerations and adaptations may need to be made, there is literature supporting the transference of organizational development from business settings to academic environments. Additionally, there is room for more research to connect higher education and other types of organizations.

Significance Beyond Wakonse

Higher education.

There is significance for this study in higher education beyond Wakonse specifically. Academic departments, faculty senates, and student affairs units are just a few organizations in higher education that could use information provided from this study. These units could

use the information here to give more focus to the environments in which they operate and the senses of belonging experienced by members.

Questions about how teaching is supported—particularly at Research I institutions need to be further explored. This study is relevant to the perception of a select group of faculty and staff and a particular conference. There are additional areas of exploration that could build upon or integrate the information here.

There are also potential implications in terms of the experiences of adjunct faculty members. As this group grows on campuses, exploring how they feel connected and sense of community (or do not) is important. If this group becomes (or has already become) a new culture unto itself with a primary responsibility for supporting undergraduate education, a further understanding of their experiences is important. Forbes, Hickey and White (2010) emphasized the need for more information in this area saying, “Although there is a wealth of literature on faculty development programs, these publications are unfortunately geared to full time faculty’s needs, often focusing on their research and scholarship needs” (p. 116).

The implications are not for adjunct faculty alone, however. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2001) predicted an increase in faculty turnover on campuses due to the large amount of hiring of faculty in the 1960s combined with slow faculty turnover made slower by the elimination in 1993 of the mandatory retirement age. This changing of faculty provides the potential for change in positions, diversifying of the professoriate and the increased use of technology and new areas of inquiry in higher education. Developing an understanding of what new faculty members may need as opposed to those who have been more established is important.

These changes also have implications for leaders of higher education organizations. Just as Wakonse is navigating anticipated change based on the retirement and potentially changing roles of the founders, higher education is navigating changes based on the retirement of faculty and experienced higher education administrators. Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pavhe, and Alexander (2010) suggested that “one of the defining challenges for leaders is to take their organizations into the future by implementing planned organizational changes” (p. 422). The authors went on to suggest that it is important for successful leaders to anticipate change and be engaged in planned change activities. Anticipating change is relevant to the Wakonse study, higher education organizational change, and the anticipation and navigation of change in other institutions and settings, as well.

Other organizations and institutions.

If there are ways in which education can benefit from business approaches and research as exemplified here in the application of organizational development, then that relationship is likely reciprocal. Kezar (2004) discussed this relationship in terms of higher education’s reciprocal contract with the larger society and its role in the common good. Lowe (2000) suggested that the consultative management approach and the long-term and holistic view of decision-making in higher education might serve business organizations and leadership well.

With the relationship between education and business in mind, considering this study in a business context could be useful. Ultimately, that would bring the study full-circle. Originally this study took a business model and concepts (those related to organizational development) and imposed them on higher education. Therefore, using this study to come

back to business applications increases its utility without using concepts unfamiliar to the corporate world.

Theoretical Framework

According to Parrott (2010), “Credible qualitative inquiry typically includes related theory and/or models, which serve as lenses through which the researcher views the study” (p. 11). With this guidance in mind, I used interpretivism and organizational development to examine this particular case study. The use of organizational development allowed a change-oriented framework to be used to examine how the Wakonse conference adapted and evolved in order to persist. The literature review for this study provided an in-depth exploration of organizational development and an explanation of how it connects effectively with this case study.

Summary of Research Approach and Design

This study was intentionally developed with special attention paid to the most effective ways to gather data and answer the research questions. Merriam (2009) said, the research and design process “involves choosing a study design that corresponds with your question; you should also consider whether the design is a comfortable match with your worldview, personality, and skills” (p. 1). This phenomenological research study used interviews and document analysis. Merriam (2009) defined phenomenology as an exploration of the meaning of a specific experience. This philosophical approach is explored more in Chapter Three.

Interpretivism is my theoretical approach and involves making sense of *things* (Maxwell, 2005). In this case the *thing* is the Wakonse conference. I implemented a case study method using semi-structured interviews and document analysis (Merriam, 2009). My

participants were Wakonse founders who have been involved with the conference from its founding through 2013 and the Wakonse fellows who have attended the conference at least twice. I analyzed the data by coding for themes (Merriam, 2009). Finally, I used a variety of strategies to ensure trustworthiness in this study (Guba, 1981). Each of these areas is explored in more detail in Chapter Three of this study.

In addition to interviewing the founders and fellows of Wakonse, I also explored what events were taking place socially, politically, and culturally (with particular focus on events in the field of higher education) through my interviews with participants. Interviews provided insight into how those involved make meaning of what their institutions valued and rewarded when the conference was founded.

Grievies (2000a) suggested that an understanding of the world beyond the organization is crucial in using organizational development strategies. He said that past organizational development efforts were less effective because they “viewed organizational change to be purely concerned with the mechanics of change in an organization, thus ignoring the historical, process and contextual issues that inform the underlying dynamics of the organization” (p. 436). This study not only examined the context in which Wakonse was created, but also how the social, political, and cultural conditions changed and impacted the conference over time.

Researcher Positionality

My interest in exploring the Wakonse conference stemmed from my participation in the conference in 2011. The conference affected me in a variety of ways, including affording me ongoing opportunities for reflection and thinking about why I engage in the work that I do. During my experience, it also was made clear that there was no captured history of the

conference. As the founders are all at or nearing retirement, it is important to capture their stories.

While I was an attendee at the conference, it is important to keep in mind that I attended as a staff member not a faculty member. Most of the attendees are faculty who are currently teaching undergraduate student classes. My perspective is different. While I am an educator, my teaching takes place outside of the classroom and usually in a one-on-one interaction through a student conduct issue. In some ways this lived work experience made me more removed from some of the topics (tenure, large class lectures, academic units, institutional support of undergraduate education). However, this distance from the issues of faculty may also have enhanced my ability to look at the Wakonse culture as an inside-outsider—an attendee, but not a participant in the same experiences as many of the others at the conference.

Additionally, one of the leaders of my dialogue group expressed concern about whether or not the conference would persist when the founders were no longer participating. My thought in choosing the organizational development lens was to capture how the conference had gone on for so long, in hopes that it might benefit those who wanted to see it continue in the future. This question is relevant to other leaders, members, and organizations as well.

Finally, the role of reflection in this conference is of personal interest. I believe that is part of the reason that the conference resonated with me. When I attended, I was at a point in my career where I was looking for understanding and clarity about the higher education experience and working in a university setting. Having time to sit and think and reflect on my professional path and journey was helpful.

My positionality affected the study in four primary ways. First, the potential for bias exists because of my past experience with the conference. I had a very positive experience and was engaged enough with the concept of the conference that I chose to do this study. My engagement had an impact on the way that I approached the project and influenced how I navigated interviews with participants and made meaning of the data collected.

Second, I was very engaged by the presentations the founders did during Wakonse 2011. I am drawn to storytelling and history. The ways that the founders engaged their audiences was fascinating to me. I was more drawn to the stories of some participants than others. I exercised caution so as not to privilege some perspectives disproportionately.

Third, my participation in the conference took place at a time when I was in the midst of serious professional struggle, if not crisis. The ways that Wakonse affected me during my initial participation continued to affect how I experienced and make meaning of it through this study.

Finally, I worked with the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) program at Iowa State by facilitating a learning community for faculty and staff and conducting additional interviews about the effect the Wakonse experience had on individuals at Iowa State University. My positionality affected this study, but this study also affected my work beyond the research. There was an overlap between what I was looking at in the study and how I worked on projects for CELT related to Wakonse.

Definition of Terms

Dialogue Groups—assigned groups in which participants are expected to engage.

Facilitated by one or two “Dialogue Group Leaders,” they meet at least once each day to discuss issues as identified by the groups themselves.

Organizational Development—change-oriented field of study stemming from business models focused on organizational viability and dealing with the culture, leadership, communication, and learning of an organization (Beckhard, 1969).

Wakonse—The Wakonse Conference on College Teaching. An annual conference held near Shelby, MI in a rustic camp setting. Wakonse comes from the Lakota word meaning to teach, to inspire.

Wakonse Fellow—An individual who has attended Wakonse at least one time. Fellows are chosen through an application process where they submit an essay describing why they want to attend and what types of contributions they can make to the experience. The majority of fellows are faculty members, although some staff also attend.

Wakonse Founder—one of the four individuals who created and led the conference.

Summary

This study includes an introduction, a literature review, and a discussion of methodology. These introductory sections are followed by the findings and a discussion of the findings. In Chapter Two, I focus on an exploration of organizational development. This category is further broken down into other parts of an organization—culture, leadership, communication, and change / learning. The organizational development lens is connected to higher education and, by extension, to the Wakonse conference.

In Chapter Three, I outline the methodology of this qualitative phenomenological study. The chapter includes information about my constructivist epistemological and interpretivist theoretical perspectives as a researcher. I contextualize the data using my framework and discuss the delimitations, limitations, and ethical considerations.

In Chapter Four I focus on the findings. There the data I collected are shared and examined. I identify themes and different parts of the Wakonse organization and explore the Wakonse conference within the context of organizational development. I review and organize the data I collected through interviews to provide insight regarding the research questions.

Finally, in Chapter Five I provide a summary of the study and findings. I also identify limitations and areas for future research identified as a result of this work. I conclude with thoughts and final reflections on this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter positions my study in the context of the body of related literature and research. The literature review provides a lens through which to examine the research questions I sought to answer in this study: why the Wakonse Conference was founded and why Wakonse has persisted for the past 23 years. The goal of the literature review was to identify existing studies related to this topic and to demonstrate how my work extends the work of prior studies (Creswell, 2009).

In an effort to develop an understanding of how the Wakonse conference has evolved, I examined Wakonse as an organization and the ways in which it was established and has developed over time.

I drew from organizational development literature with a focus on areas such as culture, leadership, participants, and communication. I also drew from literature on organizational change and learning. I began with an overview of Wakonse through an organizational development lens.

The Wakonse conference culture is unique to the setting, people involved, founding, history, and organizational goals. Examining the evolution of the culture helped answer questions about why the conference has persisted over time. Thus, Wakonse culture encompasses a variety of elements which were considered in this study.

Leadership, participants, and communication are pieces within that culture. Understanding the role of the leaders (or founders) of the Wakonse conference assisted in contextualizing how the conference came to be and what the vision of the founders was.

Looking at Wakonse from an organizational perspective provided insight into the role of the founders not solely as individuals, but as key elements within the Wakonse organization.

Similarly, the role of the participants or fellows was important to understanding how the conference was established and has persisted. Without people attending the conference, the conference would not exist. Communication is an organizational component that can help connect leaders, participants, and future participants (Beckhard, 1969; Bynam, 2007; Schein, 1965; Spendlove, 2007; Woodd 1997). The ways by which Wakonse has gotten its message out and conveyed its goals and organizational values are important to the establishment and continuation of the conference.

Linked closely to the people involved in Wakonse are the ways in which Wakonse has grown and adapted in order to persist. Senge (1990) said, “Organizations learn only through individuals who learn” (p. 139). All of the components of this study, while unique, are connected through the human element of the organization.

Historical Context: Shifting Academic Culture / Priorities

I began by situating the development of Wakonse within the broader historical context of higher education as these factors contributed to the development of this event. The first Wakonse conference brings together faculty, staff, and students each year over the Memorial Day weekend to discuss teaching and learning. It is set in a children’s summer camp and there are sessions on a variety of topics and small group discussion as well as time set aside for self-reflection and goal-setting. It is worth noting that the founders of Wakonse came of age in terms of their personal, political, and professional identities in the 1960s. The idea of “change and reform”—the phrase Altbach (2005) used to describe that era in higher

education—would have been part of their development and identity. Exploring this part of their experience and how it contributed to the Wakonse movement was important.

One of the founders, Joe Johnston, discussed the founding of Wakonse during the conference in 2011. He shared that there was a desire among the founders to put more of an emphasis on teaching and valuing connections with students in the classroom. According to Johnston, it felt to those involved, that there was too much emphasis being put on research (all founders were working at large, research-driven institutions) and not enough on undergraduate students.

There is support for this point of view in the literature. One example can be found in *American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Social, Political, and Economic Challenges* by Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport (2005). The single reference to teaching in the index (aside from teacher education and teacher training) is about “teaching/research balance” (p. 556), and the focus of that listing is on balance and does not reference a need for high quality teaching. On the other hand, there are 37 listings in the index for “research and development” (pp. 554-555).

Government funding has been an ongoing challenge for colleges and universities. In the form of support to institutions, financial aid for students, and other partnerships with economic implications, higher education has had to navigate its relationship with legislators (and the public/votes) carefully. Scanzoni (2005) tied this issue to higher education relinquishing status and said,

Divested of its principled advantage (its high moral ground), and thus its unique status, officials now tend to view post K-12 in much the same light as its rivals for funds, and so they toss its appeals into the same in-box with those

of its competing supplicants.... Today, post K-12 is, for the most part, perceived as simply another pesky interest group much more absorbed with self-interest than with the greater good of the larger whole.... The disillusionment of public officials arises from feelings of trust betrayed. As they construct the situation, post K-12 has not, by and large, been faithful to the solemn vows it undertook by signing on to the mid-century social contract.

(p. 69)

The role of money in higher education has always been important—as it is in any organization or institution. Not only are colleges and universities forced to negotiate getting funds from state and federal governments and through grants and research, but they also have to navigate whether or not to accept money from the business sector. Bok (2003) suggested that competing for money may compromise the integrity of institutions and confidence of their constituents. Scanzoni (2005) labeled this era of competition for resources, “The Decline of the Research University and the Rise of the Entrepreneurial University” (p. 69).

Other scholars have agreed and discussed various areas compromised in higher education as a result of funding, policy, and other issues. Best (1988) discussed the role of vocational training in higher education using examples such as computer science, police science, and food industry as areas of study “inappropriate to the intellectual aims of higher learning” (p. 187). Kimball (1989) added that reform must be led by faculty not by external agencies and that it must focus more on undergraduate education. Herbst (1989) focused on the tensions between the undergraduate college of the 19th century and the research university. He wrote that higher education in America has been about institutions of

learning, character, and citizenship, whereas the German-founded research university has been focused on knowledge development, professional training, and scholarly inquiry.

Given the above examples, the role and value of teaching undergraduates was clearly on the decline when Wakonse was founded. Faculty did not see undergraduate education as an important or rewarded role on campus. Even as early as the hiring process, faculty engaged in negotiations—in many cases—to teach as little as possible. Schank (2000) wrote that highly-sought faculty members may teach only one course every two years, but a less-valued faculty member in the same department may teach as many as four courses each term.

Along with a devaluation of teaching and learning on the part of faculty, there is no transparency for students and other constituents in terms of the quality of one faculty member to the next. Scanzoni (2005) used the term “credentialer” instead of teacher or faculty member. He wrote, “As far as officials and citizens can tell, apart from the numbers they’re able to graduate, one credentialer is ultimately as good as any other” (pp. 86-87).

According to information shared at the 2011 Conference, the idea for Wakonse came from a group of like-minded faculty who felt that undergraduate education was not valued—particularly at large research-driven institutions. Bassis (1986) wrote, “Critics within and beyond the academy have raised serious questions about the structure and mission of educational institutions, about the content of the curriculum, and about levels of student achievement” (p. 1). The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates further explored these concerns in 1998. The report advocated for more undergraduate research opportunities, focus on inquiry- and research-based learning, collaborative learning, and improved communication skills development. The follow-up report, “Reinventing Undergraduate Education: Three Years After the Boyer Report” (2001), indicated advancement in all of

these areas. An understanding of the academic cultures and climates at the time the conference was founded and the cultural change that occurred as the conference was evolving was important to consider in the context of this study.

Beyond the academic climate and culture, it was important to examine what other issues and events were taking place that could have impacted the development of this conference. Why this conference format? Why at this particular time? It is important to remember, however, that change can be positive, inspirational and beneficial to individuals, organizations and cultures. Duderstadt (1999) suggested that change equates to hope and is an opportunity to be strategic in order “to control our destiny, retaining the most important values and traditions” (p. 39). That idea resonated with the founders and fellows of the Wakonse conference.

Organizational Development

In an effort to develop an understanding of how the Wakonse conference has evolved, I examined the conference from an organizational perspective. In considering the origin and evolution of the conference, my goal was to focus on how Wakonse as an organization has developed over time. How did the individuals who established the conference create it? How did they function within the environment they had created to insure that the conference would continue from one year to the next?

Kurt Lewin is considered the founder of social psychology and was cited by Edward Tolman (1948) as “first envisioning of the dynamic laws according to which individuals behave as they do to their contemporaneous environments” (p. 4). Lewin (1939) wrote, “To explain social behavior it is necessary to represent the structure of the total situation and the distribution of the forces in it” (p. 868). Lewin’s work in focusing on the connection

between people and places—work settings, cultural environments, and formal and informal affiliations—is important in the foundation of organizational development. Similarly, “place” plays a role in the experience of individuals participating in Wakonse. The place where Wakonse takes place is important to the organization just as the places Wakonse fellows hold in the organization itself matter.

A unique aspect of this research study is the juxtaposition of the use of a business-based model to review an academically-based event. Organizational development was initially used in business settings (Cummings, 2008; Rothwell & Sullivan, 2005). In his *Handbook of Organization Development*, Cummings (2008) edited a retrospective of the previous 50 years’ growth of organizational development, including its inception, and contemporary ways of using the strategy in interventions and special cases. Similarly, Rothwell and Sullivan (2005) edited *Practicing Organization Development: A Guide for Consultants* and explored the history of this strategy from its start in the 1960s through its current uses, citing that it was first used by major corporations, but also adapted for non-business settings, such as the military and religious organizations.

Likewise, organizational development fits as a lens through which to view higher education. The foci on constant change and continuous improvement of systems work in both business and education settings. A number of scholars have used the organizational development framework to examine higher education organizations (Aitken & Sorcinelli, 1994; Boyer & Crockett, 1973; Cameron & Whetten, 1983; Schmuck, 1994). Cameron and Whetten (1983) discussed a trend toward organizational development in higher education. The authors concluded that the focus on organizational development in this setting should be

on effectiveness and specifically should include processes, outcomes, and effects. They noted that more research on organizational effectiveness in higher education is needed.

Deming's "Systems of Profound Knowledge"

One way of using this business-based model in a higher education context is to apply organizational development to the Wakonse conference in terms of the effectiveness of the conference. Deming (1994) focused on increasing effectiveness and described what he called Systems of Profound Knowledge, which focused on improving products and services and being competitive in the marketplace order to stay in business and provide employment. These same four concepts (appreciation for a system, theory of variation, theory of knowledge, and understanding psychology) can apply to higher education and can be used in the Wakonse context. Using this model to frame the study began the process of examining Wakonse through an organizational development lens.

Appreciation for a System

Deming (1994) defined this concept as a series of activities that work for an organization. The appreciation for the Wakonse system is based on the selection of participants, the sessions offered at the conference, the leadership of the conference, and the rituals established at the conference. These rituals include gathering at sunset, participation in a dialogue group, a Chautauqua (talent show), communal meals, a casual setting, and very little access to or interruptions from outside communication in terms of email and cell phone reception. Each of these activities works to connect the participants to one another and to the conference. Studies have examined how these sorts of rituals unite groups and communities in religion (Sosis, 2004), corporate life (Deal & Kennedy, 2000), and in organizational culture (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Trice & Beyer, 1984; Wiener, 1988).

Scholars have found similar ways in which activities work for an organization in higher education settings. These methods include a wide variety of activities such as teacher-created collaborative activities (Guzdial, Rick, & Kehoe, 2001), rituals and ceremonies in higher education (Manning, 2000), and the institutionalization of learning communities (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). In each of these studies, the researchers made connections between the rituals and traditions of certain activities to the value the participants put on those activities.

Examining rituals by using an appreciation of Wakonse as a system provided insight into how the conference has been sustained over time and the role of activities in terms of their perceived value by participants. Not only was the perspective of the founders (“Why were these activities implemented?”) important, but the perspective of the fellows (“Which rituals have meaning to you and why?”) was just as crucial to understanding the persistence of the conference.

Theory of Variation

Deming’s (1994) theory of variation stated that change is always present. Institutionalized rituals are balanced (or challenged) by Deming’s theory of variation. In the Wakonse organization, participants change from one year to the next. While some sessions are consistent year after year, others change. Participants can affect change during and following the conference. This idea plays out in a variety of ways in higher education, as well.

Recently scholars have written extensively about change in higher education (GUmport, 2000; Henkel, 2000; Hirsch & Weber, 2001; Kogan & Hanney, 2000). In each of

these studies, researchers stressed the fact that change is not something to be avoided and that change has been and can continue to be a positive force for higher education.

Theory of Knowledge

Theory of knowledge is defined by Deming (1994) as an attempt to predict future behavior. The role of the future is an important consideration in a variety of settings including both business and higher education. Speculation about the future ties in with Deming's theory of knowledge.

Other researchers have tried to anticipate the future in order to prepare higher education for what is to come and to help organizations (institutions—colleges and universities) plan appropriately. Examples of this research include studies on the future of the higher education enterprise (Brennan & Teichler, 2008; Hilton, 2006; Teichler, 2003), the future of higher education teaching and curriculum issues (Bridges, 2000; Light, Cox, & Calkins 2009) and the future of higher education policy (Bell, Neary, & Stevenson, 2009; Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2004). In fact, the future of higher education in relation to almost any topic—technology, social justice, sustainability, etc.—can be found in the literature.

These scholars use their studies to provide a context for strategic planning in higher education. The studies highlight a need for higher education to be more nimble in anticipating change. Not only do these studies stress the importance of anticipating change, but the authors encourage strategies to be proactive rather than simply reactive to future trends.

Understanding Psychology

The final piece of Deming's (1994) System of Profound Knowledge focuses on understanding psychological motivations. The conference is built on the idea that faculty and

staff need to be motivated in their work as it relates to teaching and learning. The ideas that participants may need inspiration, ways to reengage with their work and their students, and a community of like-minded academic professionals serve as the foundation for the Wakonse conference. In conducting interviews with participants, I was able to create an opportunity for participants to share about their motivations for participating in Wakonse.

Literature in higher education deals with understanding motivations, as well. In some cases, motivation is tied to job satisfaction as Bollinger and Wasilik (2009) explored in their review of the performance of online learning students. They found that faculty satisfaction in these cases is high as long as the institutions for which they are working value online education. Faculty are motivated to engage with online learning if their institutions value that experience. They are not motivated to use online technologies if that activity is not valued and rewarded by their institutions.

In other studies, Darwin and Palmer (2009) explored the value of mentoring circles rather than mentoring dyads in terms of cultivating collaborative learning, motivating faculty, and creating interdisciplinary teaching relationships. In their study, they found that communities of learning (in this case, learning circles) are more effective in creating senses of connection not only with other participants in the mentoring process, but with the larger organization. Turner, Gonzales, and Wood (2008) conducted an extensive review of scholarship related to faculty of color and found mentoring played a crucial motivational role and was an important theme in the literature and that the role of mentors was very important to the experience of new faculty of color.

Each of these concepts connects with the purpose of this conference as outlined by Wakonse for participants. There are two ways in which the motivations of the participants

connect with my study. First, identifying the motivations of the participants for being at Wakonse was explored to provide an understanding of how the conference has been meaningful to study participants. Secondly, the larger question of being motivated as a faculty and staff member was a part of the interview. In what ways are faculty and staff looking to be motivated or to maintain motivation if they already feel they are motivated? Why or how does Wakonse motivate participants?

Self-Worth

Beckhard (1969) discussed the need individuals have for self-worth in a business context in one of the first organizational development texts. Self-worth is valued in other contexts as well. Higher education is an arena with faculty and staff in pursuit of self-worth, growth, and satisfaction (Bozeman & Gaughn, 2011; Mclawhon & Cutright, 2012; Michel & Michel, 2012; Trower, 2012). With the idea that Wakonse is an organization focused on the self-worth of participants, I selected organizational development as a lens through which to examine the Wakonse conference.

In his essay, “Understanding the Wakonse Movement,” Wakonse founder Joe Johnston (n.d.) wrote about connecting with like-minded faculty in pursuit of improving teaching at colleges and universities. Johnston went on to discuss the importance of the self when he wrote, “We were embarking on finding a center for ourselves outside of our institutions—our departments, our colleges, our universities—as we began to find ways to support one another with our dreams for ways to bring together those who cared about teaching” (p. 1).

Looking at Beckhard’s (1969) description of organizational development alongside Johnston’s (n.d.) essay on Wakonse, demonstrates how organizational development is an

appropriate lens for this study: Wakonse as an organization is focused on teaching and learning and the ability to engage students—and all people in a higher education setting. Wakonse is about people and made up of people, which aligns with Bellavita’s (1990) concise definition of organizations saying, “Organizations are people” (p. 209). Johnston would likely concur, saying, “Wakonse is people.”

While organizations and the people who comprise them have positive characteristics, organizations also have limitations. Rusaw (1998) identified some of these limitations as being social dependence, life histories, and genetic inheritance. Scholars have explored these same issues in a higher education context. Silver (2003) studied the role of social dependence in higher education and argued that social dependence at the university level ultimately contributes to the fact that there is no such thing as a university culture.

Other researchers have studied the role of institutional life histories in higher education (Light, Cox, & Calkins, 2009; Meyer, Ramirez, Frank, & Schofer, 2007; Middlehurst, 1999). In these studies, rather than negating the existence of a culture within the university setting, the authors found that a culture *does* exist. That culture is captured through the life histories of each institution. Getting a clearer understanding of the life history of Wakonse will afford me insight into the culture of that organization.

Organizational behavior (including Wakonse as an organization) is a whole greater than the sum of the human being behaviors within that organization. This theme is seen repeatedly in the literature where an organization—usually focusing on a single issue or topic such as service learning, student engagement, or social justice issues—brings together a variety of pieces in order to affect change.

Barr and Fear (2005) discussed that transformative change in higher education (in this case from an instructional to a learning paradigm) requires an understanding of “higher education, the nature of learning, the nature of organizations, organizational change, and the approaches change agents take” (p. 13). Each of these pieces is important, but none of them sufficiently addresses the issue alone. For example, an understanding of higher education within a given organization would not be enough to create the change. Nor would an understanding of organizational change result in change happening. Rather, combining these pieces (and others) and being aware of the unique ways they connect and interact provides a more comprehensive picture than simply listing individual components.

Given that organizational behavior is both complex and important, what does an effective organization look like? Beckhard (1969) summarized Gardner’s rules for an effective organization:

1. The first rule is that the organizations must have an effective program for the recruitment and development of talent.
2. The second rule for the organization capable of continuous renewal is that it must be a hospitable environment for the individual.
3. The third rule is that the organization must have built-in provisions for self-criticism.
4. The fourth rule is that there must be fluidity in the internal structure.
5. The fifth rule is that the organization must have some means of combating the process by which men [*sic*] become prisoners of their procedures. (p.11)

These five rules apply to higher education organizations as well. Recruiting talent is seen as an important issue across the literature (DiRamio, Theroux, & Guarino, 2009; Mohrman, Ma, & Baker, 2008; Turner, Gonzales, & Wood, 2008). The importance of higher education environments being supportive of faculty and staff is also considered and deemed essential to faculty recruitment and retention in recent literature (Braun, Nazlic, Weisweiler, Peus, & Frey, 2009; Dannels & Gaffney, 2009; Darwin & Palmer, 2009).

Rules three (built-in provisions for self-criticism) and four (fluidity in structure) were addressed simultaneously by Trani and Holsworth (2010). The authors identified universities as places for self-criticism not only of themselves as institutions, but “within which societies engage in self-reflection.” (p. 18). The authors went on to write about the flexibility institutions of higher education show in recruiting leaders and managing economic issues and mandates.

Rule five pertains to treating individuals as people rather than just pieces of a procedure and since higher education is well-known for bureaucracy, this concern is important. There are calls for challenging this bureaucracy and pushing back against existing structures so that institutions become more flexible for members of their communities.

Grievés (2000b) explored strategies for addressing concerns about the dehumanization of people within organizations. He said organizational development originated as a response to dysfunction and went on to outline strategies for using organizational development today. After each of Grievés’s examples below, I have provided Wakonse-related questions for the strategies:

1. Grievés: “Journeyman” practitioners who are constantly learning the application of their craftsmanship should adopt post-modern thinking in “deconstructing the taken

for granted assumptions of the workplace and focusing on the sense-making procedures that organizational members use to define reality” (pp. 434-435).

Wakonse: How do both Wakonse founders and Wakonse fellows define reality in the context of the conference?

2. Grieves: Organizational development places an emphasis on personal and organizational development using interactive, team-based activities (p. 435).

Wakonse: What sorts of team-based activity does Wakonse employ to develop individuals and the organization?

3. Grieves: Use of Human Resource Development (HRD) as a strategy for employing organizational development approaches (p. 435).

Wakonse: What or who plays the Human Resource Development arm of Wakonse? How does HRD translate to a conference rather than a business or employment setting?

4. Grieves: Using dialogue or “critical debates” as “a stimulus for change and as a vehicle for identifying opportunities for innovation and organizational learning” (p. 436).

Wakonse: How is dialogue used to stimulate innovation and organizational learning in Wakonse?

5. Grieves: Awareness of issues outside of the organization which affect the organization and an understanding that organizational change is a dynamic process beginning with an initiative which requires organizational change and influences individual behaviors which impact organizational outcomes (p. 436).

Wakonse: In what ways is Wakonse aware of outside issues and how does it use

that information to adapt in order to achieve its outcomes?

6. Grievies: An understanding that the organizational development process is not a neutral process, but organizational development recognizes “the inevitability of a value-driven position in the attempt to achieve personal and organizational development” (p. 437).

Wakonse: What are the Wakonse values? Are they determined by the founders, the fellows, or the current participants for a given year? Or a combination of all three?

So, again, *how* did Wakonse develop if it indeed followed an organizational development strategy? Beckhard (1969) suggested that fundamental pieces of an organization are groups. If that is the case, what groups or teams were in place at the onset or have been put in place through the Wakonse movement? What teams are missing that could serve to benefit the organization? What role does each team play? How are team members selected and how are the teams developed?

Beckhard (1969) also suggested that collaboration and information-centered decision-making are crucial to organizational development efforts and that all parts of an organization measure their success against organizational goals. In what ways has Wakonse developed a collaborative environment where decisions are based on information rather than hierarchy and how do fellows measure their own success? Wakonse’s success? Beckhard (1969) highlighted the importance of communication, mutual trust, and confidence across all levels. How has Wakonse worked to achieve these goals? Have their strategies changed over time? If so, how? A number of studies have used this approach with varied findings.

Bergquist and Phillips (1975) identified organizational development as part of a triad of faculty development components along with instructional and personal development. They found that organizational development was important in creating a positive environment at the institutional level for faculty. Understanding if participants see Wakonse as faculty development, instructional development, personal development, or a combination will be important to the study and to understanding the conference's persistence.

Cameron and Freeman (1991) studied the relationship between organizational cultures and effectiveness as parts of organizational development by comparing the cultures of 334 institutions of higher education. They found that there was little difference between the effectiveness of institutions with strong or weak cultures. However, they found that the cultural type was more important than either congruence or strength of culture. This study provides data about what pieces of the Wakonse organizational culture are meaningful to the fellows and which were important to the founders when it was established. These cultural issues have an effect on the perceived effectiveness of the conference from the expressed viewpoints of both the founders and the participants.

Camblin and Steger (2000) found that faculty development actually reinforced organizational development. There were anticipated results for the individual development of faculty members, such as increased technological skills. However, they also found that there was more cooperation between faculty members across disciplines. In addition, there were "multiplier effects on the scope and nature of the projects" (p. 1) undertaken by faculty. As translated to this study, the assumption emerged that if participants experienced the conference as faculty development, then the experience reinforced the notion of Wakonse's organizational *culture* being positive.

Organizational Culture

“Organizations as living phenomena” (p. 72) is a phrase that Rusaw (1998) used to describe how organizations exist, evolve, and adapt. So what type of culture does this living phenomena inhabit? To engage in an exploration of the role of organizational culture, it was first necessary to define what constitutes an organization’s culture. This process was challenging since the pieces that make up an organization’s culture are specific to each organization. Schein (1993a), who played a key role in the establishment of organizational culture thinking, said, “I do not offer to help an organization decipher its culture.... To do a full analysis of a culture would require years of ethnographic work and would still leave one wondering whether the description had utility or not” (p. 705).

So is defining or deciphering an organizational culture irrelevant? Was looking at Wakonse without paying attention to or attempting to understand the organizational culture not only an easier way to approach this research, but the *only* way to do it? On the other hand, would that approach disrespect the organization not to give consideration to its culture? Before deciding whether or not to attempt to develop an understanding of the culture, the term “organizational culture” had to be defined and contextualized in the relevant literature. Schein (1993b) said,

I define *culture* as the sum total of what a given group has learned as a group, and this learning is usually embodied in a set of shared, basic, underlying assumptions that are no longer conscious, but are taken for granted as the way the world is. The visible, audible and touchable artifacts of an organization are a manifestation of those underlying assumptions, as are the articulated and

espoused values that often get written down as the company's philosophy. (p. 705)

If this is the definition on which the understanding of Wakonse is based, then coming to understand what that culture *is* was not only relevant, but necessary to developing an understanding of how the organization is developed.

Why does the culture of higher education matter? Masland (1985) asked directly why organizational culture should be studied in higher education. He identified several reasons the culture of higher education should be studied including, "When explicit and implicit controls are weak, the unobtrusive forces such as organizational culture become more important. A college or university campus is the classic example of an organization with weak explicit and implicit control mechanisms" (p. 166). Kezar and Eckel (2002) found that institutional culture plays a crucial role in any sort of change on campus and that the more collegial a culture is, the more easily members of that culture deal with change.

Organizational culture related to this study as a part of the organizational development lens. Knowing what comprised a culture was important in developing an understanding of the Wakonse culture. Tierney (1988) identified communication, institutional norms, belief in institutional mission, and a sense of contribution to the common good as being fundamental to a positive institutional culture in higher education.

Bergquist (1992) identified four cultures in higher education (collegial, managerial, developmental, and negotiating). Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) updated the cultural labels and added two more with the final list. The original list included collegial (valuing academic freedom and scholarly work), managerial (prioritizing efficiency and accountability), developmental (valuing faculty, staff and student development). The authors added

advocacy (which emphasized social justice and equity), virtual (technology and on-line focused), and tangible (historical and ritual traditions on campus) cultures. Kezar and Eckel (2002) used these frameworks to study higher education organizations' abilities to adapt to change. These categories were also helpful in understanding the type of culture Wakonse has developed. This study would indicate Wakonse's culture is primarily developmental but also includes important tangible cultural aspects.

Boyce (2003) used Bergquist's frameworks to explore the role of organizational culture in organizational learning and the role of organizational learning in sustaining change. She found that "successful change is about learning enough collectively so that institutional consequences, outcomes, and inquiry change" (p. 133). Learning about an institution—understanding the institutional culture—is central change.

Individuals

There are other strategies for developing an understanding of the organization, however. In her chapter "Contemplative Administration: An Alternative Paradigm," Eggert (1990) presented an approach in opposition to the traditional paradigms that revolve around issues of control, attachment, efficiency, and rationality. The contemplative manager, Eggert suggested, follows a path of affirmation and gratitude that is grounded in being fully present in the moment. She went on to say that this approach provides greater creativity, transformation, and compassion.

Using these strategies fits very well with Wakonse. There are significant periods of time at the conference dedicated to reflection. In fact, at the opening of Wakonse, participants are told that if they need to sit on the beach or walk in the woods instead of

attending a session, that is what they ought to do. The experience ends with time specifically set aside for reflection, journaling, and goal-writing.

Finally, this approach respects some of the core values of the conference: affirmation, being fully present, and the search for one's "true self." The role of the self in an organization is found in the literature as well. Bellavita (1990) discussed the importance of the self in organizational culture saying:

To assist other people in organizations it is necessary first to know where you stand in relationship to their ideas, including what motivates you to help....

Finally, there are two kinds of people in public organizations, "human beings" and "human doings." Public organizations seem to work better if you can remain a human being while you are doing. (p. 210)

Wakonse draws a great deal from the work of Parker Palmer, particularly his book *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life* (2007). The concepts that Bellavita (1990) discussed are reflected in Palmer's book. Palmer (2007) put the interconnection between organization (or in his example, vocation) and the individual this way, "Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). If we consider this text as a framework for the conference, Wakonse is about the self in addition to being about the organization. This premise mirrors Bellavita's aforementioned discussion of the central role of the human being in an organization.

Similarly, Rusaw (1998) talked about the importance of "nurturing the self" (p. 81) and the role of reflection for change agents. The author also stated,

To nurture the self as an instrument for change, change agents require continual personal and emotional renewal. Practicing skills of reflection promotes self-maturity and revitalizes the soul.... This process leads to developing sensitivity to gaps between ideas, beliefs, and values and actions.

(p. 81)

So, here again, the role of the self and the necessity of showing care for the self are central to successful work within organizations.

Studies related to the role of the individual in an organizational culture touch on a variety of intersections. O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) explored the role of the individual in terms of organizational "fit" and found it is crucial that an employee's preferences and the organizational culture be well-aligned for the success of both. Brief and Aldag (1981) outlined a model for attending to the self within organizations and organizational research. Their framework concluded that employees' thinking, behaviors, and the work environment are reciprocal relationships.

Research also supports the importance of the individual within organizational culture. Schwartz and Davis (1981) explored how individuals align with culture. They found that business culture can be identified, clarified, and understood by looking at individuals, such as bosses and people chosen to fill key jobs. Johnsonrud and Rosser (2002) focused on the role of faculty as individuals in higher educational organizations in the context of faculty retention. The authors found that a variety of factors are important (rewards, administrative support, benefits, etc.). They noted, however, that generalizations are not singularly useful to institutions. The authors argued that there is value not only in looking at individual

campuses but also at individual cases on each campus to make the most valuable meaning to the specific higher education organization.

It was important as my study moved forward to pay attention to the particular case. Individual stories and experiences were important. There were themes that emerge, but there were special case circumstances to consider as well.

Organizational Leadership

This study examined the potential role of organizational leadership on the Wakonse conference. It was possible leadership was not going to emerge as one of the key areas contributing to the persistence of Wakonse. However, given the ongoing role of the founders in the continuation of the conference, different types of leadership impact had to be considered in this study. In the end, the role of Joe Johnston as a formal leader and the other founders as co-leaders of the conference made leadership a central theme of this study. Sessa and London (2006) described the potential abilities of leaders as having the opportunity to maintain, improve efficiency, or help the organization engage in learning and adaptation.

While Sessa and London focused on what leaders *do*, Bennis and Biederman (1997) focused on who leaders *are* and posed the following question: “Who succeeds in forming and leading a Great Group?” (p. 19) and went on to identify a variety of characteristics—often seemingly mismatched pairs of descriptors, saying, “He or she is almost always a pragmatic dreamer. They are people who get things done, but they are people with immortal longings. Often, they are scientifically minded people with poetry in their souls.... They are always people with an original vision” (p. 19).

The idea of the Great Group translates to the Wakonse founders. The three of them each dreamt of maintaining a connection to Camp Miniwanca, but knew there had to be a

practical reason to do so in order to secure funding and establish that connection on an ongoing basis. Initially, they seemed to hope to change the face of higher education (an immortal longing, perhaps), but they came to realize that it was important to focus on what they actually could influence. That sphere of influence was the experience of a few faculty and staff members each year. Their approach to sustaining a connection with Miniwanca was innovative. They didn't simply want to return and vacation at the camp; they envisioned an experience—for themselves, but also an experience to share with others. They then moved forward as leaders to establish Wakonse, recruit attendees, and build an experience that has been sustained for nearly 25 years.

Spendlove (2007) studied competencies specifically related to effective higher education leadership. The competencies identified were academic credibility, experience of university life, continued research and teaching, and people skills particularly as they relate to communication and negotiation. Bryman (2007) conducted a literature review and identified forms of effective higher education leadership behavior. His results can be grouped in categories similar to the ones Spendlove used. Academic experience would include advancing a cause with respect to constituencies and providing resources. People skills as used by Spendlove would capture Bryman's categories of being considerate, treating academic staff with integrity, being trustworthy, engaging in participatory decision-making, communicating well, and creating a collegial work environment. Additionally, Bryman discussed the importance of having a vision and the ability to carry out that vision.

Does the leadership provided by the founders of Wakonse meet this set of criteria? Jreisat (1997) defined leadership as “the process of influencing the behavior of others—subordinates, followers, peers, or a community—to accomplish defined objectives” (p. 156).

With this definition in mind, what leadership skills were used to start Wakonse and which have been used to sustain it? What are or were the defined objectives of Wakonse?

In their study of leadership opportunities for women, Weir and Thomas (2008) stated that leadership by committee is distinct to universities and that “these forms of leadership and decision-making separate higher education from other businesses” (pp. 509-510). While there may be challenges with a team of leaders, the diverse experiences and skill sets brought to the work are of value.

Lesniaski, et al. (2001) studied collegial leadership in higher education—specifically in academic libraries. The authors described collegial leadership as a flat management model where teams—including team leadership—are used to increase organizational effectiveness. They stated, “A collegial organization, built on trust, respect, and shared goals, provides both the strength and the flexibility to make the most of change” (p. 238). Ameijde, et al. (2009) concurred, saying that distributed leadership in all of higher education combines strengths and balances weaknesses of individuals. Lesniaski, et al. (2001) concluded, “If sharing decision-making among a self-regulating community of peers is an impractical ideal—the wider implications for higher education are bleak” (p. 239).

A team-based leadership model for Wakonse, therefore, was not necessarily problematic in and of itself. It was worth exploring how the founders saw the team functioning in terms of strengths and weaknesses and how they saw that leadership transitioning in the future.

Participants as a Part of Organizational Culture

Without participants, there would not be a Wakonse conference. An understanding of participant needs and theories and research related to this idea was both important and

relevant to this study. Who are these people who attend? Why do they attend? The answers to these questions are closely linked to the philosophy and goals of the organization. Vogt and Murrell (1990) wrote, “Giving high priority to both the worth of individuals and their value in terms of contributions to the organization requires a close examination of the organization’s values” (p. 47).

Carnevale (2003) expressed a similar sentiment saying, “Organizations and their human resources are intimately related in the organizational development view and must collaborate for mutual gain.... Organizations are social systems” (p. 123). He stated the role of participants or members or employees or fellows in organizational development very succinctly: “The heart of OD is realizing human potential at work” (p. 113).

Tierney (1997) looked at participants of organizations with participants being faculty and the organizations being higher education institutions. He found that by becoming a part of an institutional culture, what frequently happens is that the participants are assimilated into that culture. This action results in cultures re-producing themselves. He challenged that institutions need to look carefully at their hiring and rewards practices in order to respect the individual and let those individuals contribute and potentially change the cultures they join.

Beyond the *who*, however, lie questions about *how* the people became a part of the culture of the organization. Are all Wakonse participants a part of the Wakonse culture? What steps do participants go through in order to be a part of Wakonse? The fact that participants come from different institutions implies different paths (literally and figuratively) to the shores of Lake Michigan where the conference is held.

Kausner and Groves (2002) provided an explanation of how individuals become members of an organization, suggesting that it is the process of familiarizing oneself with

norms, values, and behaviors and can involve *unlearning* as much as learning. The authors suggested that this process continues throughout a person's relationship with an organization, but is never total since each individual brings his or her own qualities that may not fully align with the organization.

Tierney (1997) suggested that learning and adjustment to new higher educational organizations happens for participants not through major events or flash points, but through the daily experiences of doing one's work or holding one's role on campus.

Clearly, an organization cannot exist without people. The people who make up the Wakonse organization are educators, leaders, students, administrators, and change agents. They hold a variety of roles and statuses on their campuses. The literature supports the fact that these individuals matter to the organization's development. That reinforced the approach of this study to gather information from those who participate in the conference—from founders to fellows.

Discovering what the founders learned as they established and developed the conference over time and what individual Wakonse fellows learned from the experience provided a deeper understanding of the experience. This information was also relevant to those creating or implementing other conferences, organizations, and events. In addition, individual change agents who are looking to establish organizations or create change in existing organizations will be able to use this information.

Effectiveness

There is more to an organization and its culture than the people in the organization. While the people are important, organizational evolution is impacted by people-plus: people

plus action, people plus perception, and people plus results. In short, the development of an organizational culture is tied to its effectiveness.

In determining organizational effectiveness, Lewin and Minton (1986) identified a series of questions about researching organizational effectiveness. “What is effectiveness..? Does it change with time and organizational maturity? Can it be sought, gained, enhanced, or lost? Why is one organization effective at one time and not at another, or why is one organization effective and another not?” (p. 515).

These questions contributed to the framework of this research study. Ultimately, one of the larger difficulties is determining what constitutes “effectiveness” for Wakonse as an organization. The dialogue was not always easy or comfortable. What if the conference was found to be a way for a group of friends to connect once a year for a week in the woods? What if there had been unintended and potentially negative consequences for some participants? Why might some Wakonse fellows chosen to have attended once and then disconnected from the organization? The questions to be explored were not simply the feel-good reminiscences of conferences past, but a challenging and critical look at the organization over time.

Smart (1989) explored institutional effectiveness in higher education by focusing on private colleges and universities’ effectiveness in three domains: academics, morale, and external adaptation. While Smart found that the results differed depending on institutional type, he also found that overall there was decline in both morale and external adaptation, regardless of institutional type that had led to a decline in organizational effectiveness.

Kofman and Senge (1993) stated that an organizational community must engage around difficult dialogues. They wrote, “Ultimately, what nurtures the unfolding community

most is serious, active experimentation where people wrestle with crucial strategic and operational issues” (p.23). Asking the difficult questions helps organizations to persist, grow, and thrive.

Organizational Communication

A key component to organizational effectiveness is communication within that organization. Beckhard (1969) outlined operational goals from an organizational development perspective. Each of his goals related to organizational communication and included: flexibility, opportunities to give feedback, high collaboration / low competition, open and managed conflict, and decisions based on information not position. In order to fully examine Wakonse through an organizational development lens it was important to consider each of these pieces in the Wakonse context.

Gratz and Salem (1981) suggested that communication in higher education is “all too frequently an improvised matter” (p. 68). They went on to identify problems of diffusion, distortion, and uncertainty and suggest that higher education too often defines *who needs to know what* as *everyone needs to know everything*.

Deshler (1985) examined the role of metaphors in higher education as ways of communicating about organizational culture. He identified dozens of words and phrases that can contribute to the environment on a given campus. Examples included “carrot and stick,” “battles for survival,” and “departmental dog-fights” (p. 27). He concluded saying that while the metaphors themselves do not fully capture an institutional culture, the emotion behind this method of communication can be a significant indicator of positive and negative issues on campus. It was worth exploring how metaphors or slang used at and about Wakonse

provide insight into the conference and how founders and participants make meaning of that experience.

As an example, the founders discussed “High Wakonse” as the peak of attendees’ engagement with one another. They also used “Golden Year” to describe nearly every year at Wakonse. These somewhat effusive, very positive descriptors of the conference experience provide context for how the founders saw Wakonse from its inception.

Beyond metaphors, what are the roles of conversation and action? Palmer (2007) labeled this “dialogue.” Dialogue includes ground rules such as only asking questions of the person initiating the dialogue, mirroring back things said and done, not focusing on “solving” problems, and confidentiality.

In contrast to the open dialogue espoused by Palmer (2007), Eisenberg and Whitten (1987) developed what they called the “Contingency Perspective” on organizational communication. The authors suggested that individuals make decisions on how open to be in regard to communicating within an organization based on their individual, relational, organizational, and environmental contingencies. Each of these variables plays a role in how much a person may choose to communicate.

What mattered in the context of this study was how communication exists in the Wakonse organization and how participants made meaning of conversations and other forms of communication. One of the most important pieces of the Wakonse experience—in fact the one “requirement” of the conference—is participation in a dialogue group. Several times throughout the conference, dialogue groups (to which participants are assigned) convene. They discuss items of interest or concern under the guidance and facilitation of dialogue group leaders. This expectation was central to the experience because it gives participants a

connection point and because it provided a forum for more intimate conversation about the issues facing higher education professionals.

While change will be discussed in the next section, there is overlap in change and communication. Schein (1965) suggested a number of strategies organizations use to cope with change, all of which contain a communication component. These included the ability to take in information reliably and a safe environment free of threats that would undermine communication. Interestingly, much of the current research in higher education on information sharing and communication focuses on distance learning and electronic communication. However, for the purposes of this study, the more important issue was interpersonal communication outside of the electronic venues available.

Good communication practices are essential to a healthy organization which means not only information-sharing from the top down, but an openness and sense of safety in sharing ideas and concerns and engaging in conflict for the benefit and growth of the organization. Woodd (1997) talked about the role of communication in mentoring relationships for new teaching staff. She identified the fact that a mentor need not be at an upper level in terms of the hierarchy so long as the mentor has access to helpful information and the ability to communicate well with the mentee. Not only does mentoring strengthen the relationship between the individuals involved, it reinforces organizational strength as well.

Developing an understanding of each of these in the Wakonse setting provided insight into areas of strength and potential areas for improvement. As a result, a clearer understanding of the persistence of the conference came into focus.

Organizational Change and Learning

While individuals matter and communicate and learn and grow as a result of their relationships with organizations, organizations learn, as well. But what does “organizational learning” mean? How can an entity learn? How is that learning both similar to and different from the learning of the individual members of the organization?

Argyris (1957) defined learning as occurring when errors are detected and corrected as well as when intentions and results match. Bellavita (1990) defined learning as a developmental activity that inspires growth and is based on an ability to listen. In both of these definitions, learning involves action. Individuals engage in activities and learn from their successes and failures.

But what of organizations? And what of Wakonse? Organizations do not learn in isolation from the individuals who make them up. According to Senge (1990), “Individual learning does not guarantee organizational learning. But without it no organizational learning occurs” (p. 139).

Kofman and Senge (1993) shared that organizational learning experiences are often considered sources of fear rather than opportunities for creativity. They went on to note that the ways that we organize information can provide structure. The negative side of that structure, however, is that it can limit ways of meaning-making on a community level.

Some organizations are more successful in navigating change than others. There is a role organizational culture (discussed previously) plays in the ability to navigate change in higher education. Kezar and Eckel (2002) examined how culture and change are interconnected. Their findings suggested that at all institutions and in every strategy employed there is a relationship between culture and change in higher education institutions.

Sonnichsen (1990) suggested that organizations learn in order to compensate for deficits and achieve the goals of “many entities within an organization, each with differing information, biases, and objectives” (p. 70). Whether those entities are individuals or organizations, the information, biases, and objectives are not static, but constantly changing.

If an organization is made up of individuals, then for the purposes of this study, how has Wakonse captured and assessed the learning of fellows? How does that learning contribute to the organizational learning? How has Wakonse learned? With participants as learners (and teachers) how do new members of an organization contribute to the learning of that organization? Tierney (1997) stressed that as colleges and universities hire new faculty, they need to “accept difference and discontinuity, rather than similarity and continuity... if we desire an organization that modifies rather than reinforces behavior, we need a schema of socialization that allows for creativity and difference to flourish rather than to become incorporated into a unitary mindset” (p. 15).

Developing an understanding of Wakonse as a *learning organization* was essential to examining the conference over time. It was possible that Wakonse might be found to not be a learning organization. Before assessing, it was important to determine what a learning organization is. Kofman and Senge (1993) described the learning organization in the following way:

We believe a learning organization must be grounded in three foundations (1) a culture based on transcendent human values of love, wonder, humility, and compassion; (2) a set of practices for generative conversation and coordinated action; and (3) a capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system. (p.

27)

Did Wakonse fit this definition? Again, referencing the foundational text of Wakonse, *The Courage to Teach*, it would seem that Wakonse does indeed meet the definition of a culture based on the values of love, wonder, humility, and compassion. Palmer (2007) explored a notion of “The Community of Truth” and shares a list of virtues that are found in an “educational community in its finest form” (p. 110). His list includes diversity, ambiguity, creative conflict, honesty, humility, and freedom (pp. 110-111). Again, the founders stress the thinking of Parker Palmer and the role his text played in the evolution of Wakonse. The above passage is congruent with Kofman and Senge’s (1993) definition of a learning organization.

There is a variety of additional scholarship around learning organizations. Levitt and March (1988) reviewed literature on organizational learning and discussed how organizations learn, interpret experiences, and how organizational memory works. The authors defined organizational learning as “encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behavior” (p. 319). They found that organizations learn from direct experience and the experiences of others and that organizational learning is complicated by adaptation to a constantly changing environment.

Levitt and March’s (1988) work on organizational memory is particularly relevant to this study. The authors contended that,

Rules, procedures, technologies, beliefs, and cultures are conserved through systems of socialization and control. They are retrieved through mechanisms of attention within a memory structure. Such organizational instruments not only record history but shape its future path, and the details of that path

depend significantly on the processes by which the memory is maintained and consulted. (p. 326)

Clark (1972) explored similar concepts and found that “organizational sagas” are useful tools for exploring institutional identity and culture. What these researchers have identified is much of what this study focused on. Figuring out how things have been captured in the past, how decisions and changes have been made, how that information is retrieved, and the impact of each of these items on the future of the Wakonse organization was the goal of this study.

Other researchers explored learning organizations in the context of higher education. Martin (1999) studied how academic work changes affected faculty and staff. Academic staff stated there was a lack of institutional vision and felt undervalued as teachers and described a lack of institutional vision. Rowley (1998) focused on higher education institutions becoming learning organizations as a means of survival in a constantly changing world. She concluded that a higher education learning organization that will embrace experiential learning and management will maximize individual learning to the benefit of the organization. Brancato (2003) used Senge’s components of a learning organization (personal mastery, team learning, mental models, shared vision, and systems thinking) to focus on faculty development in higher education. She found that this approach is not only transformative for faculty, but helps them help their institutions become learning organizations.

This concept of organizational learning is consistent with Rusaw (1998) who stated, “Learning that changes mental models transforms actions” (p. 75). But how can a research or an organizational member ascertain if the transformation is occurring? It is crucial to look

at change within the organization. How has change occurred? What changes have taken place? What were (or *who* were) the catalysts for change? Carnevale (2003) stressed this *who* component and wrote, “Organizations cannot change unless individuals change... It is fundamentally about the human experiencing these things. It is in people’s heads that real change occurs, if organizations are to be transformed” (p. 39).

Beckhard (1969) explained that the person initiating change can hold any of a variety of positions. These include the chief executive, a unit head, functional leader, a group made up of individuals who have successfully converted to the change, or an individual Beckhard labeled “the evangelist.” He defined this person in the following way:

In every organization there are a few people (who may be located almost anywhere in the formal power structure), who are ‘natural leaders’ and who have great influence on the total organization. Their official roles may not provide them with immediate control over numbers of people in the organization, but their power, stemming from their ability to influence significant people, may be more potent than official authority. (p.103)

Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling (2008) examined higher education using what they call distributed leadership. In their study, they found that leadership exists at all levels and varies depending on the agency of the individual. They stressed that followers are responsible for more than influencing formal leaders, but that they engage in leadership directly through their communication and action.

This observation applies not only to potential roles of some of the founders within Wakonse, but their roles in attempting to change their institutions or the institutional values

of higher education as a whole. Additionally, this observation is relevant to the role of non-founder fellows who have helped to shape the Wakonse experience.

It is important to remember that while change was something to be explored, it was possible that Wakonse has changed very little since its inception. A lack of change may or may not have presented concerns in the course of this study. As Sessa and London (2006) phrased it, “Often, maintaining the status quo with adaptations is exactly what the organization needs. Change is not necessarily needed and too much might actually hurt the organization” (p. 188). So, the exploration around change included whether change occurred, what the changes were, and if the change worked to benefit the organization. And if there was no change, was the result productive or prohibitive?

Action-based research.

Part of the organizational learning of Wakonse involves action based research. Lewin (1946) defined action research as a reflective process wherein an organization works in teams to identify and address change leading to social action. Argyris and Schon (1996) used the concept of action research within the context of organizational learning. McTaggart (1997) further explained these definitions saying, “Action research must include the active participation by those who have to carry out the work” (p. 82).

The concept of action research has been used in higher education as well. Kember and Gow (1992) and Zuber-Skerritt (1992, 1997) each explored an action research model used with faculty in learning and teaching teams. The studies found that by being involved in these teams, participants improved their teaching, but they also improved the conditions for learning for their students.

In the case of this study, the active participation of the Wakonse founders and fellows facilitating the creation and continuation of the conference was important. Understanding the roles that different individuals played and how those roles contributed to the organization as a whole was important.

Conclusion

This study's focus was on understanding why the Wakonse conference was created and has persisted for more than 20 years. By examining the conference through the lens of organizational development, a clearer picture of the process was formed. As a result, information for others looking to establish organizations with long-term viability or with an interest in organizational development as it relates to higher education was provided.

Wakonse is a unique experience created by four founders with a vision and desire to challenge the devaluing of undergraduate education—particularly at large, research-driven institutions. The goal of the founders to disrupt the status quo and alter the work of the university is a lofty one. That, however, may be at the core of any change agent's work and at the center of any organization working to be truly transformative. According to Bennis and Biederman (1997),

A dream is at the heart of every Great Group. It is always a dream of greatness, not simply an ambition to succeed. The dream is the engine that drives the group, the vision that inspires the team to work... a kind of contract, a mutual understanding that the product, and even the process itself, will be worth the effort to create it. (pp. 19-20)

This idea for change, this attainable goal, this dream is significant. In fact, many researchers argue that the state of higher education is not strong. There are

threats and perils and risky unknowns that threaten the nature of institutions in higher education. Bennis (1973) believed that the stakes are high and developing leaders and creating the “social architecture” (p. 398) to preserve higher education “as a harbor for free speech, a spirit of inquiry, responsibility, human responsiveness, learning and integrity” (p. 398) are not only desirable, but necessary.

Wakonse’s role in the preservation of higher education is unclear. The manner in which the conference was developed in order to engage and inspire teachers and learners may have been established in reaction to a set of social circumstances. The ways in which teachers and learners have engaged with the conference may prove that those circumstances persist and that the needs of the individuals within organizations are not only relevant but important considerations for higher education. This study seeks to provide an explanation for the more than 20 year existence of a teaching and learning conference from why and how it was established to why it has persisted.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand why the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching developed and has persisted for 23 years. This chapter provides information about how I conducted the research process for this study. This is a qualitative case study and included interviews, fieldwork at the Wakonse 2012 conference, and the analysis of events at Wakonse. Upon the completion of my data collection, I conducted a review of the data with participants.

My research design used qualitative techniques in order to collect and interpret the data. Using a case study approach, I made meaning of how the founders of Wakonse created the conference and why it has been sustained for more than 20 years. As the focus was on the researcher as the primary data collection tool and participant making meaning of a specific situation in order to deal with individuals' experiences and stories, a qualitative strategy was most applicable (Creswell, 1998).

What is the process through which Wakonse was founded and has evolved and what are some of the potential causes for the persistence of this event? I used an inductive approach, focusing on *people* (Maxwell, 2005), to investigate these questions. Maxwell went on to suggest that qualitative research is most well-suited for “understanding the process by which events and actions take place” and “developing causal explanations” (p. 23). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) described this approach, saying, “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3).

Epistemology: Constructivism

In order to understand my study, it is important to understand my epistemological perspective—or what Crotty (2005) called a “way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (p. 3). Constructivism is the epistemology I use as a researcher. The idea that participants make meaning of the world around them is important to my worldview and is appropriate for this study. While the focus is on Wakonse as an organization, the primary means for developing an understanding of that organization is from the individuals involved. The way I gathered that information was by being a part of the conference. By being present I shared the experience with the participants. This approach is consistent with my epistemological view because constructivism is used when the goal of a study is to understand and the voice of the researcher is that of a passionate participant (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

With constructivism as the epistemological foundation, the focus of this study is on the exchange of the individual participants (Wakonse founders and fellows) with the researcher. My role in the study is important and needs to be acknowledged. As Denzin, Lincoln, and Giardina (2006) said, “The researcher’s own self is inscribed in the text” (p. 777). This study focused on how the participants create meaning (which they shared with me as the researcher) around the creation and evolution of Wakonse based on their individual experiences.

By being immersed in the Wakonse conference as a participant in the conference, I was afforded the opportunity to learn *differently* about it than I would be able to learn from a distance. In becoming a part of the Wakonse culture, I was not only able to “speak the language,” but I became familiar with the rituals and environmental factors through my own

experiences. As a past participant and by attending again in the course of this study, I was connected to the people, places, beliefs, and expectations in ways I could not be as an “outsider.” This role is consistent with a constructivist epistemological perspective because if I am familiar with Wakonse, then I am afforded a way of knowing about the experience that—while uniquely my own—may open the door to further questions during interviews. While this process presented challenges, it also provided me with a more authentic understanding of the experience.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) said that constructivism is “socially and experientially based” (p. 110). They went on to add that social, political, cultural, and other factors affect the interpreter’s meaning-making, all of which are valued in the constructivist paradigm. The social-cultural-historical-political context for the origin of the conference was important. In examining this context, I took into consideration how Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) defined society as a multi-institutional system and stressed the interconnected roles of economics, politics, and power in social activity. Rosaldo (1993) supported this idea, saying that culture, politics, and history have become intertwined and integral to understanding social relationships. With those things in mind, understanding the picture beyond the conference was important to understanding why the conference was created and to provide a context for how it changed over time.

Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism

An interpretivist theoretical perspective was used for this study as the goal of this study was to understand, through the voices of the founders and participants, why the Wakonse conference has persisted. According to Merriam (2002), a key characteristic of this perspective “is that researchers strive to *understand the meaning* people have constructed

about their world and their experiences; that is, how do people make sense of their experience?” (p. 5). A number of authors define interpretivism as having a focus on the human interpretation of situations and experiences (Brown & Strega, 2005; Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Prasad, 2005). Using interpretivism, phenomenology, and constructivism in my study allowed me to most fully explore the experiences of the participants. Using Crotty’s (2005) definitions and applying them to this project means I consciously chose to privilege the Wakonse founders’ and fellows’ ways of engaging with Wakonse and making meaning of the conference based on their direct experiences with Wakonse.

By interviewing founders and fellows I had an opportunity to explore with participants how they made meaning of their individual Wakonse experiences. This approach went beyond simply documenting what they did at the conference or even before, during, and after the conference. This perspective meant I partnered with individuals to explore what the conference meant to them and what has been significant about their personal Wakonse experiences. I used an organizational development lens to examine this question with information based on the personal reflections and recollections of the founders and Wakonse fellows. Their interpretations of the conference and their experiences were central to my understanding as a researcher.

This perspective is not uncommon in exploring issues related to higher education. Tierney (1988) used interpretivism in his study of organizational culture in higher education. Dougimas and Taylor (2002) used this same theoretical perspective in their analysis of online coursework. Dill (1995) used interpretivism in an analysis of higher education quality assurance policies. Fien’s (2000) study of the advancement of sustainability in higher

education also used the interpretivist perspective. My study, through interpretivism, explored the formation and persistence of the Wakonse Conference for College Teaching.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology was the philosophical perspective I chose to use in researching the creation and persistence of the Wakonse conference. Merriam (2009) defined phenomenology as the study of people's experiences in a specific context or with the focus on a particular part of that experience. In other words, the purpose of a phenomenological study is to examine a specific event through the eyes (and ears and minds) of the people who had the experience. My study focused on the experience of individuals in the specific context of the Wakonse conference. Therefore my phenomenological philosophical stance underscored this study.

As both the primary data collection instrument and going through Wakonse as a participant, as well, using this philosophy required me to consider my own thoughts and experiences. My goal in doing so was not to eliminate bias, but to be as aware of bias and subjectivity as possible. According to Larrabee (1990), "Phenomenology is a reflective enterprise, and in its reflection it is critical."

Methodology: Case Study

This study sought to understand how a particular conference was started and why it has persisted. As such, this study used a case study methodology since it focused on how a specific experience was created and sustained over time. This method aligns with Creswell's (1998) definition of a case study—focused on the circumstances of a system over time. Merriam, et al. (2002) took this definition further, adding that the researcher is the primary data collection and analysis instrument and the case is chosen based on specifics of the case

which are of interest to the individual conducting the study. Yin (2008) provided this definition of a case study: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).

In the case of Wakonse, I examined a single case most specifically the context of the individualized experiences. It was important for me to leave open the possibility that other contexts may have surfaced as important to the participants during the study. These contexts might have included but were not limited to the physical setting of the conference, the social-cultural-historical-political contexts over the time the conference has existed, and the specific contexts of the participants’ institutions.

The conference setting is Camp Miniwanca in Michigan, which played an important role in the conference. First of all, the setting serves to bound the system and provides parameters on the study (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 2002). Additionally, the setting prompted questions to be asked in this case study: What was the initial draw to this site? Why has it continued to be the location over other possibilities? What is unique about this setting that enhances (or presents challenges for) the conference? The role of place in connection with culture and power are important, as is the definition of “the local” in terms of both place and community (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

Creswell (2009) identified the data analysis strategies for a case study as being description, themes, and assertions. Those were the goals of this study. I sought to identify themes that may be useful in a variety of other settings, as well as information helpful to those invested in the Wakonse conference. So, again, the case study was the most effective methodology for this study.

Although an appropriate approach for this study, there were potential difficulties in undertaking a case study. Merriam (2009) outlined some of these challenges: generalizability, time required, amount of detail to be included, investigator sensitivity and integrity, reliability, and validity. In order to make generalizations, it was important to start with specific examples. Erickson (1986) addressed concerns about generalizability stating that we make meaning about general situations based on our experiences of particular instances. The use of a particular case study can have applications beyond that context or case and the generalizability is ultimately left to the reader of a particular study.

Flyvbjerg (2004) wrote that all human knowledge is context-dependent and that “for adults there exists a qualitative leap in their learning process” (p. 421) from analytical rationality to expert activity. He went on to discuss the multitude of human tasks where individuals make decisions based on the past experiences of single cases—social skills, motor skills activities, etc. In this study, the value of the case became stronger as the descriptions became deeper and a variety of people were interviewed. The more description, the more useful this approach is to others in a generalizable sense (Creswell, 2009).

Concerns about time and detail can be addressed by bounding the system to be studied (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Stake, 1995). While there are virtually unlimited depths of detail that could be provided, focusing on a specific period of time and bounding this case with questions related to the origin and persistence of the conference helped to narrow the focus. Additionally, by limiting the number of participants, I provided parameters on the study. I worked to identify people who have a comprehensive picture of why the conference was created and has persisted, but not so many as to be unmanageable.

Sandelowski (1995) discussed theoretical saturation in relation to phenomenal variation. She suggested that this type of variation means within the phenomenon being studied, it is important to have a variety of perspectives in order to effectively saturate for the purposes of this qualitative study. Mason (2010) addressed this point, noting that “samples must be large enough to assure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered, but at the same time if the sample is too large data become repetitive and, eventually, superfluous” (p. 1). Working with the Wakonse Foundation as well as founders and participants to identify additional participants who started attending the conference at different times helped ensure that I was not identifying themes specific to a certain group from a certain stage of the conference’s existence. Additionally, the founders who have participated throughout the conference’s existence provided a broader perspective rather than something unique to three or four particular years.

By focusing on the Wakonse conference, which has a specific time and place, I attempted to minimize this limitation. On the other hand, I was also looking at this conference over a period of time. This longitudinal approach expanded the case, but it was still bounded, as the conference has only existed for a set period of time. A strength of the case study methodology is thick and rich description and detail (Creswell, 2009; Fitzpatrick, Sanders & Worthen, 2004; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 2009). This case study and the strategies I used for data collection provided thick, rich description, but it was important to discern what was most relevant to this particular study and served best to tell the story of this case.

Issues related to investigator sensitivity, integrity, and bias were addressed as well (Merriam, et al., 2002). I dealt with these factors on an ongoing basis through my reflective journaling and memos (discussed at length in the data collection section). Additionally, by

cross-checking my findings with participants, I had the chance to hear their thoughts, concerns, and observations about how I made meaning of the study.

Cross-checking with participants also assisted in the validity and reliability—or trustworthiness—of my findings. In addition to challenging any bias and maintaining integrity through the process, discussions with participants after the initial interviews as I began to put together the final report provided me more insight and clarity as a researcher. I shared the transcription of individual interviews with individual participants. Additionally, I shared a draft of my findings chapter with the entire participant group. Based on their feedback and input, I made clarifications and added additional context to the findings.

Data Sources

This study focused on developing an understanding from the founders' perspective and the perspectives of conference participants (who have attended for three or more years) about why Wakonse was started and has persisted. Thus, the data from this study came mainly from two sources: founders and fellows.

Participants

The founders were central to this study. There are three founders of the conference who have participated in every conference since it began more than 20 years ago. They have been identified as primary sources because of their roles and experiences. Select other Wakonse fellows were also asked for information about their experiences with the conference. While the founders may know what they valued and hoped to achieved, it is the fellows who afford the conference an opportunity to continue and who were able to shed light in different ways on the second research question.

The founders have the unique perspective of having been with the conference from its inception. They have seen the conference from the beginning to where it is today. They have not only the insights collected over time, but the knowledge of what drove the conference at the beginning and how they have worked to keep it going over the years. Additionally, since this study involved a retrospective look at the conference, interviews were essential to understanding the past. As an example, observation of the first conference is not possible. Therefore, a dependence on the recall of those present was both necessary and useful.

I asked the founders why they decided *this* conference was necessary. How did they meet and connect and decide that they could and should move forward with the idea? What things were happening in their individual lives that influenced these decisions? How did they decide on a conference format? What were the roles of place and location and time of year for the conference? It was important to understand why the founders did not feel they could accomplish their goals on their individual campuses, but needed to go elsewhere.

After gathering data about the origin of the conference, I focused on an examination of decisions made about the conference that may have contributed to its longevity. What were the successes and challenges of the *first* Wakonse conference? How were participants identified and recruited? What did the schedule look like? What feedback was collected and how did the founders and other participants work to improve the conference? Particularly from an organizational development perspective, these contributions mattered. How an organization arranges the work it does and the role of its members helps to chart the course for the organization's development and—by extension—persistence.

During the course of the study, additional questions emerged. When the first conference had concluded, how and why did founders plan a second conference? Was the plan and expectation from the beginning that it would continue? How did the founders strategically chart the course for the conference—or did they? In what ways did they see the conference evolve after the inaugural event? Once information about the evolution had been collected, the next research question could be explored.

Interviews of the founders answered questions about why Wakonse has persisted. Similarly, fellows who have participated over time, but who may not be one of the founders, were able to share thoughts about why they think the conference has continued for over 20 years. These interviews also shed light on what is the context—social, political, and cultural—today that allows the conference to continue. The study explored how founders and fellows defined success as similar to and/or distinct from simply continuing the conference from one year to the next.

Selecting participants for this study involved different strategies for different groups. The founders are a small group (three people). They were made aware of this study and agreed to participate. A fourth founder no longer lived in the Midwest where the others are located and was no longer participating in Wakonse (nor had he been for several years). The focus was on the three founders who continued to be active with the organization. They had the most familiarity with the evolution of the conference. The second group of participants was Wakonse fellows who had participated in the conference over several years. Fellows offered the perspective of being engaged with the conference. They did not help create the experience, but the purpose or message of Wakonse resonated with them. I talked with fellows who had attended three years or more. Many other attendees come for only a single

year, so interviewing longer-term participants helped me understand what those attendees got out of this experience. Understanding why the fellows attended the first time and why they have continued to participate provided me with important data.

First, information about why participants supported the conference emerged. Additionally, this information about Wakonse fellow support of the conference led to information about whether or not longer-term participants recruited others to participate (which has contributed to the sustainability of the conference). From this data major themes emerged about the role Wakonse plays in terms of community identification and the isolation of faculty in higher education. Because this is a larger pool of participants, a purposeful sampling strategy was used (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

There are approximately 100 fellows each year at Wakonse. Most of them are first-time (and only-time) participants. Over the course of 20 years, there have been around 2,000 fellows total. This number is too large to be practical. A convenience sample (Merriam, 2009) was used to select participants based on availability and accessibility from a list of fellows and participants from past years, but only participants who had attended at least three times. These lists were available through the Wakonse Foundation at the University of Missouri.

After narrowing the list to those who had attended three times or more, I considered proximity to make the study more manageable. Those who live in the Midwest were given priority as in-person interviews were more easily conducted with them. Additionally, I solicited potential contacts from the founders and from the fellows whom I interviewed. The network of relationships led me to additional sources of important data for this study. After

identifying a potential pool of participants, I did outreach to see who would be available in my time frame and who was most accessible geographically and identified my final list of participants.

Since many of the participants go only once, there was insight to be gained about the value of the conference from those who chose to go multiple times. I talked with six fellows, and reached the point of saturation. This process allowed for some further triangulation within the participant group. While there were a large number of individuals who attend once, but not again, they were not a focus of this study. My goal was to understand why the conference has persisted over time and their insights into why it has continued would be more limited than those who have attended multiple times.

Data Collection

In the spring and summer of 2012, I conducted interviews with Wakonse founders and fellows. These interviews occurred on the home campuses of the participants or at mutually agreed upon locations off-campus. I had Institutional Review Board Approval at the time that the interviews began and made participants aware of their rights including the right to decline to participate.

The data collection strategies most common to the case study methodology were the ones used in this study. Creswell (1998) identified these methods as documents, archival records, interviews, and observations. I used materials the founders and fellows had collected, as they were comfortable and willing to share them with me. Finally, I conducted interviews with the founders and fellows.

Records and Document Analysis

I was provided with notes from the initial meetings among the founders about starting Wakonse. Barb, one of the founders, allowed me to borrow the notes and review them. Additionally, she went through the notes with me and provided additional context to these documents.

I also had access to documents through the Wakonse Foundation. These included mainly schedules and conference materials. I reviewed these in advance of interviews to help me further refine the questions I would be asking. I also used them to establish the consistency of many of the conference events over time.

Another way I collected data for this study was by reviewing documents and artifacts related to the conference. Document analysis, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is similar to fieldwork. In both cases there are stories to be heard and meaning to be made of the experiences as captured by the subject (person interviewed, situation observed, or document read). This strategy is a common one for data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 1998, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2004; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Shank, 2006).

In the case of Wakonse, the documents included correspondence between the founders, documents related to planning for the conference, and materials shared with participants. By using the materials available, I developed a deeper understanding of the context for this conference. I also had access to ways in which the conference evolved. This information served to enhance the interviews I did and observations I made. In addition, information from these materials prompted additional questions for participants.

While the document analysis mainly informed the development of my interview questions, the documents also provided me information that helped in the interviews beyond

the structured questions. Additionally, these items provided me significant information about the steps the founders took in establishing Wakonse. Finally, these materials provided a sense of continuity and highlighted the consistency in the structure and activities at Wakonse each year.

Interviews

I interviewed the founders and fellows in order to collect information on their experiences. The interviews were semi-structured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009; Wengraf, 2001), which allowed me to adapt to the dialogue with the interviewees as new topics or themes emerged. Merriam (2009) wrote that a semi-structured interview includes a mix of structured and unstructured questions that are used flexibly to guide the interview with no predetermined wording or order.

My initial interviews were divided into two categories of questions—those for the founders and those for the fellows. The questions for the founders included a focus on the origin and development of the Wakonse conference. Beyond that, I asked if the conference is the same or different today than it was when it started in 1989. The questions for the fellows focused on their own involvement with the conference, why they have continued to attend, and their thoughts on why the conference has been sustained for so long.

I did one semi-structured interview with each participant, solicited feedback based on the transcripts of those interviews and solicited feedback again on the findings section of this study. The purpose of the follow up was to cross-check my data and the themes I had identified.

The interviews were conducted in person with one exception. One participant was located in Texas and it was not possible for me to travel there to interview her, so that

interview was done over the telephone. I recorded and later transcribed this conversation. I did travel to Missouri and Pennsylvania to do in-person interviews, as well as interviewing one additional participant here in Iowa. This process allowed me to pay attention and to build rapport more easily than over the phone. Personal contact was used as much as possible to afford opportunities for informal interactions (Creswell, 1998).

The follow-up information was collected electronically. I emailed out the transcripts and later the findings section to solicit the input of participants. Gibson (2010) warned that “it is true that email interviews are not as spontaneous as face-to-face interviews, and the researcher gets less extra-linguistic data such as facial expressions and body language, but in my case I found that the email interview data was particularly rich and helpful for analysis” (p. 2). Again, while in person or phone interviews were preferred; given the distance and time issues for this study, phone and email were used in to collect some data.

The data were collected through notes and tape recording. I transcribed all recordings of the interviews. My notes, along with notes taken while reviewing the recordings, were used to develop follow-up questions or points of clarification when the transcripts and findings were shared.

Another important consideration in providing context for the interviews was combining the semi-structured interviews with other information from the conference and from interactions between the participants themselves. As an example, Jean disclosed how supportive her Wakonse network was as she was going through her promotion process. That opened the door for additional questions—to Jean and others—about this idea of a network or community at Wakonse that went beyond the experience at the conference itself. This

became a major theme of the study. Maxwell (2005) provided guidance about other strategies, saying,

In planning your research methods, you should always include whatever informal data-gathering strategies are feasible, including “hanging out,” casual conversations, and incidental observations. This is particularly important in an interview study, where such information can provide important contextual information, a different perspective from the interviews, and a check on your interview data. (pp. 79-80)

There were important considerations in using a semi-structured interview method. Wengraf (2001) suggested that this method can be challenging in that it requires as much preparation as structured interviews, discipline and creativity during the interview session, and more time for analysis and interpretation after the session. With these points in mind, it was important for me to plan for each interview, anticipate potential responses and additional questions that might emerge from those responses, and to set aside adequate time to make meaning of the interviews when they were complete.

Observations

As a participant at Wakonse the year before the study began and the next year as I was preparing to conduct my interviews, I had the opportunity to be intentional about my observations at the conference itself. Having attended for two years, I was able to identify some common events and activities which informed questions I asked about the consistency of the conference.

There is a session at Wakonse each year about the history of the conference. While I had heard it the year before, the second year I was able to be more attentive to the story behind the founding of the conference. I was able to journal and take notes about comments made by the founders and other potential participants during the sessions and in less formal settings, as well.

Much of what I observed provided more detailed information about the experience. This was particularly helpful in describing Camp Miniwanca and the routines of Wakonse. This observation also helped me identify what sorts of questions would best inform the study.

Data Analysis

It was important to develop strategies for analyzing the information collected and making useful meaning of that data. Merriam (2009) addressed data analysis specifically related to analyzing case study data. She identified data management and identification of themes as the key elements. This section provides an explanation of these procedures.

Merriam (2009) began by saying that “conveying an understanding of the case is the paramount consideration” (p. 203) in analyzing case study data. This understanding served as an umbrella for everything else. Bearing in mind that creating an understanding of the Wakonse conference was essential to the study, and keeping the research questions at the front of my mind during the study helped in the management of data and identification of themes. The amount of data collected was large in order to provide a thick and rich description for this qualitative study. Therefore, it was important for me to keep in mind that there were things of interest that were not directly relevant to this study. Additionally, I had to pay attention to information that was in conflict with other pieces of data collected.

Staying true to the case at hand and the focus of this particular study helped in developing findings from this study.

Since data analysis and data management strategies overlap significantly, I made reference to some data analysis strategies within the data management descriptions below. I attempted to use management techniques that enhanced my analysis and analysis strategies that complemented my data management.

To begin very simply, I read my notes and listened to my recorded interviews. I completed this step in advance of any transcribing in order to take notes and engage in analysis (Maxwell, 2005). This was a simple first step, but one that could have been missed if I had moved ahead too quickly into the *capturing* instead of the *reviewing* of the data.

When I had collected my data and was in the process of writing up descriptions, identifying themes, and making assertions, I provided this information to my participants. It was important to share my information with participants to see if I had accurately and appropriately captured what they shared with me. It afforded them a chance to further clarify or provide additional context to my results. This review was helpful in letting me know what information was unclear or inaccurate. This process helped to insure trustworthiness of the findings (Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2002, 2009). Additionally, it was my intention and my hope that this step empowered the participants to be partner researchers and not simply “subjects.” This process attended to what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) referred to as creating “spaces where those who are studied (the Other) can speak” (p. 26).

Finally, beyond internal validity, the work needed external validity. Miles and Huberman (1994) questioned how the conclusions can be transferred, generalized, and fit

with what is already known (p. 29). The remainder of this section will look at each aspect of data management and how it was completed through this study.

Data Management

As has been mentioned, there were significant amounts of data collected for this study. In order to prepare to manage the information that I collected, I followed the principles Levine (1985) developed. These procedures included formatting, cross-referral, indexing, abstracting, and pagination.

Formatting.

This process (and the others described below) evolved as the study progressed. Since my interviews were semi-structured, I was not able to completely organize my interviews or field notes or reflective journals by topic as I wrote them. However, reviewing and reorganizing them allowed me the opportunity to identify themes as I did the writing of the findings section.

That said I did attempt to identify some topics and sort interviews and other notes in that way. The interviews themselves were transcribed in chronological order, but the transcripts were then broken down into different topical areas and organized that way (while keeping the original copy in chronological order). Examples of the topics I used for the interviews of the founders include: “Origin of Wakonse,” “Evolution of the Conference,” “Recruiting Attendees,” “Mission and Vision of the Conference” and “The Future of Wakonse.”

I developed categories for the Wakonse fellow interviews as well. There was significant overlap with the categories for the interviews with the founders, but there were separate categories for these groups. Similarly, I identified topic areas for my journaling and

field notes. The notes themselves included the following at the top of each page: name of researcher, date, name of participant (or setting or other descriptor), and topic(s). The topic areas were amended to capture the topics or topic areas that were discussed.

Cross-Referral.

During my note-taking and note-writing, I indicated when a participant referenced a different participant, an event, a document, or artifact. I did the same with all the data sources. This procedure created a web of connections that helped crystallize themes and identify new areas of inquiry for the study.

Creswell (1998) used a category called “sketching ideas” as a data analysis strategy and cited Miles and Huberman’s (1994) strategy of writing margin notes in fieldnotes as one way of doing this. That was effective for me and a strategy I used to not only capture ideas in the moment, but to identify new ideas that emerged during re-reading or transcribing notes. Additionally, this process helped in cross-referencing with other areas as I made connections and identified themes from the fieldnotes. Creswell (1998) suggested that this strategy is also consistent with both phenomenology and case study.

Coding.

Levine (1985) used the term “indexing” for this category, which is, in essence, coding the data. This process evolved during the research and was descriptive in nature. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested coding by writing codes and memos. This strategy was effective for me as it was adaptable as themes emerged and was responsive to the study rather than imposing pre-existing codes or thoughts on the data. The coding process began with the identification of a few broad categories (such as the examples listed in the

“Formatting” section earlier). While some of these categories became codes or themes, they primarily served to sort the ideas for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

As the codes emerged, there was also usefulness in counting the frequency of codes, a strategy suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). It was important to limit the number of categories, however, as not everything that was discovered was relevant to the specific topics of this study. Creswell (1998) suggested that some themes will emerge early on and that with careful categorization, most data collections need not yield more than 30 categories. He went on to suggest that these categories can be narrowed to five or six themes that will be useful in writing up the findings of the study. My goal was to follow this process as well in order to highlight key points of intersection and commonality of understanding rather than giving every item its own distinct theme or category, which would have been less useful.

Research memos.

Research memos, or what Levine (1985) refers to as “abstracting,” were kept during the research process. Memos were useful in a number of ways through this study. They helped me by providing a record of some of my thoughts and experiences. However, they also served as much more than simply notes of what happened. They were reflections, ideas, tools for addressing problems, and ways of understanding my topic (Maxwell, 2005).

Research memos also assisted in managing the evolving design and identifying emerging themes of the study. Writing in this way helped me focus my interpretation and analysis, generated deeper understanding, and helped to assimilate information and identify themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Additionally, memos developed for specific purposes were useful (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Richards, 2005).

Pagination.

Per Levine's (1985) suggestion, I used specific pagination systems for each type of notes taken. When interviewing, I used the initials of the participant, a letter to distinguish when the interview was done, and a number for each page. For other data collection, I used similar differentiated descriptors. These emerged depending on the document, artifact, journal entry, etc.

Trustworthiness Criteria

It is important in qualitative research to provide an explanation of how validity threats were addressed. Whereas Maxwell (2005) stated that quantitative research can control for threats, qualitative researchers must rule out these threats during and after the research process. In the case of this study, objectivity, confirmability, reliability, dependability, and auditability were considered. In addition, triangulation, member checks, and the use of reflective journals and memos were used to address concerns about trustworthiness. Beyond simply identifying strategies, however, Maxwell stressed that a specific discussion of how these strategies were used in practice is essential. This section addresses trustworthiness and validity criteria by discussing the three strategies I used in this study.

Objectivity and Confirmability

Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that objectivity and confirmability are necessary in qualitative research. They defined objectivity as "relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases" (p. 278). Here I wish to emphasize that they were not referring to a lack of bias, but that all bias should be recognized. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined confirmability as making sure that the data are "available for reanalysis by others" (p. 278). In the case of this research study, I

acknowledged my bias as a past participant and Wakonse fellow. My role with the conference is limited, but I did participate, so this participation provided me with a perspective about the experience. My experience was a positive one. That may have inclined me to see Wakonse in a more favorable light than if I had no experience with the conference or than if I had experienced Wakonse negatively. I engaged in ongoing analysis of biases through the use of some of the strategies outlined below.

Although my previous experience presented potential challenges, it also was an advantage. My experience with the conference allowed me to access information and individuals and to speak a common language with them. Having been a participant afforded me an understanding of what the conference is like in terms of schedule, environment, participants, leadership, and other areas. However, I also was not as invested in the experience as the founders and fellows. I could engage with the founders in a dialogue about the origin and evolution of the conference and remain removed enough to ask questions that “insiders” might either choose not to ask or might assume they know the answers to.

While Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that it is important to remain free of “unacknowledged researcher bias” (p. 278), this is a very difficult thing to do. I know that I can and did acknowledge the bias of which I was aware; however, there may be other biases that I have not acknowledged; not out of a need to conceal them, but because I did not realize they exist.

Reliability, Dependability, and Auditability

Miles and Huberman (1994) went on to stress the importance of reliability (consistent), dependability (stable across time), and auditability (stable across researchers and methods). I worked to be successful in this area by outlining a process for this study and

using it at each point to make sure I was being consistent in collecting data. Ongoing review and evaluation of the process kept me focused on a single approach with minimal variation from interview to interview or in dealing with documents and other data sources.

Triangulation

Looking at my research question from a variety of perspectives was essential. This meant not only interviewing multiple people with different levels of experience with the Wakonse conference, but using other means of data collection as well. Maxwell (2005) cited important strategies for good triangulation including the use of multiple sources of data and several different methods of collecting data (p. 94). In the case of this research study, I used interviews, document analysis, observation, and reflective journals.

Combining the interviews with my own observations and journals allowed me to see if the themes I identified were consistent across multiple data sources or if I had, as Miles and Huberman (1994) described it, “pattern matching” (p. 267). It afforded me the opportunity to identify outlier information that could come through interactions with a single participant or documentary information. It also created an opportunity for new questions to emerge to provide a fuller context and more clarity to the results.

Member Checks

It was important to share my information with participants to see if I had accurately and appropriately captured what they shared with me. I distributed my preliminary findings electronically to the participants and then provided an opportunity for feedback. Through email exchanges, phone conversations, or in-person meetings (as time and schedules permitted), I gathered responses from the participants to see if they had questions, concerns, or clarifications for the study.

Beyond internal validity, the work required external validity. Miles and Huberman (1994) encouraged researchers to question how the conclusions can be transferred, generalized, and fit with what is already known (p. 29). I did that by reconsidering my literature review and expanding on it as it fit with the study process and findings.

Reflexive Journaling and Memos

It was important to bear in mind my own biases and acknowledge how I was present in this phenomenological study. I used a reflexive journal as a strategy not only to capture details about the setting and participants, but to hold myself accountable to my own subjectivities. Maxwell (2005) espoused memos and journaling in a variety of ways and described them as not just a method for recording information, but a strategy for understanding one's study.

Additionally, as I wrote up my field notes, I was occasionally struck by other thoughts and reflections. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that to ignore these reflections is to miss out on additional resources. They went on to identify a number of categories into which these reflections might fall including: relationships with participants, further interpretation or new understandings of what a participant shared, questions of quality of information, new questions or issues to pursue, and clarification and further reactions to data collected. Other scholars have stressed the role of the reflexive process—through journals or other methods—as central to doing qualitative research (Brown & Strenga, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Merriam, 2009; Merriam & associates, 2002; Patton, 1990, 1999; Richards, 2005; Schram, 2003).

A part of this process was being aware of researcher bias and being transparent in how the data were collected in order to provide trustworthiness to the results.

Acknowledging throughout the process my own observations, feelings, and responses made the final product more trustworthy and my process more transparent. Similarly, I needed to be aware of my own ability to affect the participants and setting. Maxwell (2005) highlighted researcher bias and reactivity as two key concerns. He went on to say, “Understand how you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw” (p. 109). As I was a participant at the conference, I needed to maintain an ongoing awareness of my dual roles as participant and researcher. Sometimes these roles were complementary. Other times I specified which role I was playing. My role(s) needed to be clear to the others present at the conference before, during, and after Wakonse 2012. Frequent reflection via journaling helped me stay engaged in self-dialogue about my biases. As others surfaced, I could then acknowledge and work to address them.

Delimitations

This study focused on the Wakonse conference and why it has persisted for more than 20 years. The primary source of data for this study was the founding members. Additionally, other participants who had attended Wakonse several times were interviewed. This study looked at the persistence of the conference through an organizational development lens.

In looking at the conference in this way, I also delimited other ways of studying this conference. Leadership is a part of organizational development and as such was included. However, leadership theory was not directly applied to this study except as it related to organizational development. This research study was also not a study of how Wakonse participants were selected or the role of specific activities or rituals. That said, these things

were examined as they related to organizational development, but none of them were the single or primary focus of this study.

The study did not examine directly the effect of the conference on college teaching or student engagement. In fact, this study did not explore at length what participants do with the experience once they return to their roles. These issues were a part of the dialogue with the participants and played into why the conference has persisted. However, the goal of this study was not to examine what faculty and staff do with the experience once they return to their own campuses.

Similarly, the study focused on the faculty and staff participants and not the students or graduate students. While those perspectives are of interest and that is an interesting story to tell, it is not *this* story. With that in mind, I narrowed my pool of participants to the founders and to Wakonse fellows who have attended the conference at least three times. One participant had attended four times; the rest had attended at least six times. The founders had attended 23 times. One-time participants do not have access to the conference experience over time, thus would not be able to provide significant insight into its persistence in the context of this study.

Limitations

While this research may answer a variety of questions and have applications to other organizations, there are limitations to this study as well. One of these limitations is a very specific conference, organization, and set of participants. The Wakonse Conference, though persisting for over 20 years, only accommodates around 100 participants a year. Most participants do not attend more than once, which means that their experiences are influenced

significantly by the particular circumstances of a given year. They may have important observations, but not the deeper understandings of those who attend for multiple years.

None of the founders lives in close proximity to me so I needed to intentionally schedule time with them as they were available. The strategies I used to engage with them varied depending on how I was able to connect with them.

The same was true of other participants in the sense that I had more access to some participants than others. I do anticipate being able to access colleagues at my institution for data collection. While I had access to one participant who worked at my own institution, I was careful not to let the perspectives of that person have more weight than those of participants at other institutions. I engaged with that person off-campus, rather than on to make sure that I was conducting similar interviews in comparable settings regardless of proximity to my workplace.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the time constraints as a participant, I was aware that I had an obligation to other participants not to infringe on their experiences at the conference. While I conducted observations, I was intentional in trying not to impact the experience of the Wakonse attendees. It was important to afford participants space for themselves. The Wakonse web site states,

Take time for yourself! It's a seemingly impossible task given what we said about the place and people, but what many people remember most about Wakonse, ironically is their time alone—however brief, however difficult it is to find. Make time: never leave here saying you did not spend time alone

walking the beach, reading a book, taking in a sunset, (“What to expect,” 2012).

As that is outlined as a specific goal for the conference, while I asked people for time to talk about the conference, I respected their need for personal time, as well. Ultimately, I did not conduct any formal interviews at the conference at all.

While participants from Iowa State are my colleagues, I also needed to be aware of my positionality with them as well. Not only do I serve in an administrative role as Director of Judicial Affairs on campus, which intersects with many areas including faculty, but I am also coordinating a faculty/staff learning community related to Wakonse. I needed to outline my different roles and stress the autonomy of participants from my institution in terms of their ability to decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the study.

Additional ethical considerations included the treatment of the participants. I planned on identifying the founders. As there were only three of them and their personalities and the roles they play with the conference are distinct, it was important to honor their voices explicitly. I discussed the idea of using their real names with them, however, to ensure that was acceptable with them before moving ahead with the study and naming them in the document.

The fellows, on the other hand, remained anonymous. My goal in doing this was to afford them a safe space to share openly with me without fear of repercussion or implication from others who may disagree. In addition, this process helped in balancing a power differential between the fellows and the founders. That said, there are some pieces of information which make these participants identifiable to people involved with the conference. Using pseudonyms helped, but the cross-checking and data sharing with the

participants also afforded them the opportunity to clarify what they felt safe disclosing. By soliciting their feedback, I also afforded them the opportunity to see how I was describing them and to clarify or correct me.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to provide a methodological context for the study. A qualitative case study using a constructivist epistemological perspective and interpretive theoretical perspective was completed. The data were collected through interviews, observation, document analysis, and reflexive journaling. Trustworthiness of this study was insured through triangulation, member checking, and the use of the reflexive journal for researcher bias-checking. Finally, delimitations, limitations, and ethical considerations for this study were examined.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching through the lens of organizational development. Rusaw (1998) described organizations as “living phenomena” (p. 72). In this chapter I explore how Wakonse as an organization was born and has grown. I also examine the viability of the organization in the future. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. Why did Wakonse begin?
2. Why has the conference continued?

Through interviews with the founders and selected long-term participants, data were gathered to answer these questions and the results are discussed in this chapter. In their study of higher education institutions Schwartz and Davis (1981) found value in looking at individual circumstances within institutions to provide additional insight and meaning-making for the organizations to which participants belonged. This same idea is used as a foundational concept for this study.

The methodological structure for this qualitative study included interviews of the three Wakonse founders who are still active with the conference combined with interviews of participants who had attended the conference for at least three years. The interviews were then coded for themes. As a result this study is a qualitative case study using a constructivist epistemological perspective (Crotty, 2005) and interpretive theoretical perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The data were collected primarily through interviews, but also included observation, document analysis, and reflexive journaling. The trustworthiness of this study

was insured through triangulation, member checking, and the use of the reflexive journal for researcher bias-checking (Maxwell, 2005).

The participants in this study included the three founding members – Joe, Bill, and Barb—who worked together to create a curriculum for the conference, obtained funding to support it, and developed institutional support for Wakonse. These three individuals have consistently participated in the conference from its inception up through the most recent Wakonse conferences.

Through interviews with non-founder participants, individuals besides Joe, Bill, and Barb were also referred to as founders of Wakonse. Some of those interviewed included staff who supported the conference as founders and others included long-term participants who are not part of the staff. For the purposes of this study, however, there were three founders identified and interviewed: Joe Johnston, Bill Bondeson, and Barb Kerr. Two other key players involved in the early years of Wakonse were not included, as they are no longer active with the conference. The three founders who have consistently been with the conference from the beginning not only sufficiently capture the evolution of the conference, they also have the most comprehensive knowledge about Wakonse.

Since this study focuses not only on why the conference began, but on why it has persisted, it was important to focus on the perspectives of the three founders who have been with the conference continuously from the beginning through today. Joe, Bill, and Barb have all been involved from the inception of Wakonse and continue to be active currently. In fact, none of them has missed any of the Wakonse conferences in the 23 years that it has been taking place.

This chapter focuses on two research questions about Wakonse—why did it begin and why does it continue? Similar themes emerged to answer both of these questions. This finding is not surprising given that the conference has not changed dramatically from when it was created. The reasons for it being started are similar to why it continues since some initial needs identified by the founders continue to be needs for those who attend the conference today.

Participants

Before delving into the research questions, however, I am providing descriptions of the participants to help give additional context for the study. The founders agreed to be named in the study, but pseudonyms were chosen for the non-founder study participants who agreed to be interviewed. All of the participants interviewed are faculty members except for Dara, all are white, and all have attended Wakonse for at least three years.

It is also worth noting that all participants except for Dara work at large, public, research-intensive institutions. Throughout the interviews the theme of how important teaching and learning are to the participants came through. This was conveyed as both important and difficult for the participants who shared that often conducting research or obtaining grants were more highly valued by their institutions than teaching undergraduate students.

Founders

Joe.

Joe is a full professor in psychology at the University of Missouri—a large, research intensive, public institution. He is in his early 70s, has been a faculty member for over 40 years, and has engaged in research related to positive psychology, faculty development, and

faculty-student affairs collaborations. Joe was generally referred to by both other founders and participants of this study as the leader of Wakonse. He had a connection with Camp Miniwanca through his work with the American Youth Foundation (AYF). Camp Miniwanca is the site where Wakonse is held each year—and has been every year since it began. Joe served as a staff member at the summer camp for a number of years before helping to develop the Wakonse conference focused on teaching and learning. Joe coordinates the organizational aspects of the conference.

Bill.

Bill is a distinguished faculty emeritus also at the University of Missouri and a Wakonse founder. Also in his early 70s, Bill teaches philosophy and medical ethics and has been a faculty member at the University of Missouri since 1964. He became involved with Camp Miniwanca and the AYF through Joe's invitation. He has attended every Wakonse conference since it began. Bill provides a history of the American camp movement, as well as the origin and development of the Wakonse conference through presentations at the conference each May.

Barb.

Barb is the third founder of Wakonse who continues to be actively involved. She is a former graduate student from the University of Missouri where she met Joe and Bill. She is a counseling psychologist in her early 60s and has been a faculty member for more than 30 years. Barb works at the University of Kansas, but continues to consider Joe and Bill to be her mentors. She also provided historical insight about the camp including tours of the grounds and information about the American Indian connections to the camp. Barb also did the research that resulted in naming the conference Wakonse.

Non-Founder Participants

Dara.

Dara is the director of a center for teaching excellence at Duquesne University, a small, liberal arts, religiously-affiliated institution in the northeastern part of the United States and has served in the center for more than ten years. Her academic area of expertise is in French—specifically linguistics. Dara is in her early 50s and started attending Wakonse four years ago. In that time, however, she has established a similar experience on her campus for faculty and staff to go on a retreat and focus on teaching and learning. She has served as a dialogue leader for the past several years, as well. Dialogue group leaders facilitate smaller groups at Wakonse. The groups are composed of six to ten faculty and staff members and meet periodically throughout the conference to discuss issues related to teaching and learning in higher education.

Hope.

Hope is another faculty member who was instrumental in getting her institution—Texas A & M University-connected with Wakonse. Hope is in her mid-50s and her background is in mathematics and curriculum and instruction. She has taught mathematics, served as the center for teaching excellence director, and currently serves as the director of undergraduate and special programs in the College of Business at a large research-intensive institution in the south. She helped to develop Wakonse South as an experience “closer to home” for members of her institution. She has attended Wakonse for more than ten years and served as a dialogue group leader, presenter, and most recently worked with the undergraduates at Wakonse.

Jean.

Jean is a long-time attendee of the conference. She is professor emeritus in Human Development and Family Studies from Iowa State University—another large, public, research-intensive institution in the Midwest. She is in her mid-60s, was a faculty member for more than 30 years and received a number of awards for her teaching. Jean is also the former director of the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) and held a variety of administrative positions within her department and college while at Iowa State. She has served as a dialogue group leader and staff member at Wakonse. Additionally, Jean has presented on the importance of engaging students actively in learning—particularly on large campuses or in large lecture classrooms. Jean was also instrumental in getting her institution to send participants to Wakonse for the past fifteen years and has provided ongoing Wakonse-related experiences on her campus.

Kai.

Kai is a chemistry faculty member in his mid-40s and director of undergraduate study in his department at the University of Missouri who serves on the Wakonse staff. He has attended Wakonse for more than ten years and has served as a dialogue group leader, has worked with the graduate students / future faculty, and has served in other roles at Wakonse. He is considered a possible future leader of Wakonse as the founders transition out of their positions.

Reg.

Reg is a retired mathematics professor in his 70s. Additionally, Reg served as president of both the University of Missouri system (interim) and of St. Olaf College—a

small, liberal arts institution in the Midwest. He began attending Wakonse when he returned to Missouri after serving as president at St. Olaf and has been attending the conference for more than 15 years.

Renee.

Renee, like Kai, is considered a future leader of Wakonse. Renee is an associate professor in her mid-40s at the University of Missouri and has been a faculty member in design for about 15 years. She also serves as a director of undergraduate study in her department and a member of the Wakonse staff. She has served in a variety of roles at Wakonse including having been a dialogue group leader for a number of years.

Research Question 1: Why Did Wakonse Begin?

The first research question for this study was, “Why did Wakonse begin?” There is no formalized history for this conference, thus the reason for this work. Therefore, in response to this question, I started by asking the participants about their first-hand accounts or received versions of how the Wakonse conference began.

In discussing the beginnings of the conference with participants, our dialogues covered not only catalysts for the initial idea, but how funding for the conference was secured. The leadership of the conference was discussed at length—particularly the roles of each of the founders in the cultural development of the conference. Additionally, participants shared their thoughts about the organizational structure and vision. Finally, the roles of teaching and learning as foci of the conference were discussed as important and as concepts that set this conference apart from other professional development experiences and organizations.

Ultimately, this section explores the development of a space that faculty and staff could not find anywhere else. Through interviews about why Wakonse was founded, I was told over and over again by participants—the founders and others—that Wakonse provides a unique blend of place and space and community and opportunity. Here like-minded professionals come together to pursue and celebrate great teaching. The founders shared that they created this place because they realized they needed it and they did not have time for holistic self-care or a community to support them in their passion around student engagement. They did not have those experiences anywhere, so they created those things at Wakonse.

Leadership

While the leadership group included the founders who are still active today—Joe, Bill, and Barb—there are other leaders who participate as a part of the staff. The vision of that group is intimately woven throughout the tapestry of Wakonse. Hope explained the connection between the founders and the staff saying, “I think that the people that are responsible for putting it together and are on the leadership team do have a strong set of common values. And they know those and those values drive [Wakonse].” This section explores not only who the leaders have been, but how those values have come into play among the decision-makers at the conference.

Joe the leader.

Everyone interviewed spoke of Joe as the primary leader for the conference—except for Joe himself. Joe tended to avoid talking about his role at all and minimized what he did while highlighting the contributions of others. On the other hand, the other participants talked about Joe as the leader in detail. Jean talked about Joe as integral to Wakonse. She

said, “I feel you can’t talk about why or how Wakonse has succeeded—certainly at Missouri—and continued without talking about Joe Johnston.” Those interviewed shared a variety of thoughts about his leadership style and how he has invested so much of his time and passion into the conference.

Jean went on to talk about the necessary and diverse talents Joe brought to the leadership role of the conference. She observed that he has strong beliefs and opinions, but knows how to navigate campus politics. Additionally, she stressed that he has an ability to empower others while staying true to himself. She said, “He has that ability to have pretty clear values and boundaries, but is open to letting people feel that they’re a part of the decision-making. He knows what he’s doing and keeps his firm underpinnings.” Renee agreed adding, “He’s always calm, but he always seems to know exactly what’s going on everywhere.”

Other words participants used to describe Joe included modest, humble, quiet, strong, and transformative. Barb said, “He’s definitely a transformative leader. Because people grow just by being around Joe. And it’s not because they want to be just like him. It’s because he asks the right questions to get you thinking about your future.”

Big picture rather than details.

Everyone agreed that Joe manages the larger picture and vision of Wakonse, but finds others to oversee the details. Participants acknowledged that he is very good at delegating and identifying people to use their strengths in their work with Wakonse. Barb emphasized this and said, “He doesn’t involve himself in the details, so he’s a *macromanager*. Not a micromanager. He gives a vision.”

Renee said that Joe knows what's going on, "But not the details of what's going on everywhere. Just sort of the spirit of what's happening everywhere." In addition to being able to manage things, she says he is very positive and able to effortlessly control things.

Barb echoed Renee's comments. She quoted Joe as saying things like "Camp is a clock. You wind it up properly, and it ticks by itself." She said he also would repeat, "Selection is everything. You get the right people in the right positions doing the things they love and you don't have to manage them." When Joe was running the youth camp, Barb said Joe was criticized by those who said, "It's chaos. You don't have a chain of command. It's not clear who the leaders are." Barb then added, "Well, that was the gift, right?"

Kai agreed with others' assessments of Joe as a big picture person and argued that no one can have strengths in every area. He said, "I don't want Joe to focus on details if he's going to give up some of that grander picture... I think if you're in a class, that's frustrating. If you're at a conference, that's fine. That's great."

Bill the holder of wisdom.

While Joe was seen as the leader and visionary for the conference, Bill was described as the thinker of Wakonse who was able to explain both the camp and the concepts behind the conference. Like Joe, Bill talked very little about his own role as a formal leader. In fact, Bill spoke little about leadership at all other than logistic coordination. He talked about Joe's passion for the conference, but when talking about leading the organization—particularly in terms of any transition for the future—Bill focused on teams rather than any specific individual.

That said, while other participants described Joe as the leader and the charter of the Wakonse journey, Bill was described as the holder of the Wakonse wisdom. Those

interviewed talked about his presence, his knowledge of the history of the camp and the conference, and his ability to engage participants. Barb described him as the “intellectual leader.”

Kai expanded on the idea and said, “Bill is what I think of when I think of ‘professor.’” He said that Bill’s quote—heard every year at Wakonse—that, “The profession of the professor is to profess,” captures Bill’s philosophy as an academic. Kai added, “He’s the quintessential professor. That’s just what I think about when I think of him.”

Other participants agreed that Bill’s gift and contribution to Wakonse is his ability to engage with others. His session on Socratic dialogue is featured each year. He discusses medical ethics in a way that not only encourages, but inspires engagement and participation, according to Renee. Renee said, “He has just sort of amazed me since I’ve met him. He’s just so powerful—in his—just in his voice and his tone. You just want to pay attention to him.” She went on to compare his style with Joe’s, saying while Joe is greeting and meeting everyone, Bill “sits back and watches, but he always knows what to say to get you moving and get you motivated.”

Barb as Wakonse spirit.

If Joe is the leader-manager of Wakonse and Bill is the source of Wakonse wisdom, what role has and does Barb play as part of the founding and ongoing leadership for the conference? Neither Joe nor Bill talked about themselves as leaders. Barb talked about leadership and her role more extensively. As a former student of both Joe’s and Bill’s, she might more naturally compare herself to her faculty mentors. It is also likely that gender played a role in her description of leadership and how she described her contributions to the group. Barb talked about gender in terms of her own experience professionally in and out of

the Wakonse experience. Her thoughts on the experiences of women shared at Wakonse are explored later in this chapter.

All of that said, Barb did not describe herself as a leader. In her own words, “I’m a lousy leader. I’ve always just been more there as kind of the wacky mother.” In comparing herself with Joe specifically, she said Joe’s ability to share responsibility made him the leader he is. In terms of her own leadership, she said, “Another reason I’m a lousy leader is I don’t know how to delegate. I try to do it all myself. It’s a disaster.”

Renee described Barb as an outspoken person with a lot of spirit and energy. Renee went on to draw parallels to Barb’s self-imposed “wacky mother” label. She said Barb is very intelligent and has contributed greatly to the scholarship of her field, but she is very unorthodox and as she has gotten older “she has less inhibitions and she gets louder.” However, Renee went on to provide some insight into why that is part of Barb’s contribution to Wakonse. “That was probably always her place—to be the outspoken woman.”

Kai expressed similar sentiments in his reflection about Barb’s role as one of the founders of the Wakonse conference. The Lakota name Joe was given means, “with a sense of the moment.” According to Kai, “Barb is the exact opposite. She is the smartest person I know that doesn’t have the slightest clue about her environs.” He went on to stress, “She believes in that conference as much as anyone and does really, really good stuff for the conference.”

Barb’s own description of herself as a cheerleader and “wacky mother” for Wakonse and Renee’s comments about her role as the outspoken woman, capture how Barb’s role on the founding leadership team emerged. Renee discussed how Barb has a following at the conference—people who are drawn to her intense energy and who connect with her, “and are

just mesmerized.” Renee said, “She knows more of the spiritual side of Wakonse that other people don’t have a handle on.” Therefore, if Joe is the leader and Bill is the wisdom, Barb’s contributions, as described in the interviews, make her the spirit of Wakonse.

Founders as a team.

Barb talked about how the three founders knew one another prior to Wakonse. The story of how they initially connected and the important roles Bill and Joe played in her experience as a graduate student provide context for this relationship. “I always knew Joe and Bill believed in me... That they took me seriously as an intellectual when no one else did.” This teaching and learning partnership was a foundation of the relationships that would forge the Wakonse conference. The words Barb used to describe her relationship with Joe and Bill could be taglines for describing Wakonse itself. “They saw something in me. And they continue to support me and to believe in me as an intellect has meant so much to me, and made me want to pass it on to everybody.”

Joe and Bill talked about the Wakonse experience differently. Whereas for Barb it was related to her own development, Joe and Bill were already well-established, tenured faculty members with longstanding relationships with their institution when Wakonse started. Joe acknowledged that he had conversations with a variety of university administrators—presidents, provosts, directors of undergraduate programs. He was the key to institutionalizing Wakonse at Missouri.

Bill brought a sense of academic legitimacy and diversity to the project. Since his area was philosophy, he was able to bring the big ideas and great thinking and traditional faculty imagery to the conference. As was mentioned earlier, Bill is the possessor of Wakonse wisdom and he plays that role and exemplifies a college professor focused on

engaging students and inspiring them to think when he speaks to new attendees of the conference.

Barb went on to discuss how the three of them worked together to create Wakonse and how they played on one another's strengths in establishing the conference.

This is our pattern. I'll have an idea and sort of shape it and Joe will make it happen. I could never make anything happen. I mean, like the Wakonse tree, I plant a lot of seeds. I only make a few grow. I'm not an implementer. And I'm not a leader. People don't even like my leadership. They don't. I'm not a good leader. But Joe's a great leader. And so my—the only gift I had to give these people I loved was my skill at taking these rough ideas and turning them into something that would share the vision with others.

“Sharing the vision with others” is how Barb described her role as the grant-writer for Wakonse. While she minimized her contribution, without it, there would have been no funding to start the conference.

The Origin

The recounting of the origin of the Wakonse conference is fairly consistent across participants. Different people had different pieces of information relevant to the context of the beginning, but the major pieces were the same. The founding narrative is most often shared by Bill. Bill plays the role of Camp Miniwanca and Wakonse historian at the conference. Each year Bill discusses how the founders came to be involved with the youth leadership camp at Camp Miniwanca and how their connection with this specific site led to the development of Wakonse to be held at the same place.

The narrative involves the founders being at Camp Miniwanca to help facilitate the youth leadership camp. According to the story Bill recounts, one morning the founders were sitting on a porch at the camp overlooking Lake Michigan, eating cherry strudel, reading the *New York Times*, and someone said, “This would be a lot more fun without the kids.” None of the founders will specify who made the comment—in order to sustain an element of mystery about the conference’s origin, to keep all the founders on an equal level in terms of its creation, or because they cannot remember who said it. Regardless, they all agree that the statement was made. From that initial conversation, the desire to form what would become known as Wakonse was put into action.

Founders’ perspectives.

The role of Camp Miniwanca and the American Youth Foundation.

Camp Miniwanca is and has been the site of the American Youth Foundation for youth camping experiences since 1925. Bill explained that the program was for juniors and seniors in high school and freshmen and sophomores in college. Joe had been involved with the camp for a number of years as a faculty member. After being involved with the youth camp for a few years, Joe approached others at Missouri to get involved each summer.

The story of how Bill got involved with the youth camp provides additional context for the development of Wakonse. He explained that one day he was walking across campus at the University of Missouri and Joe asked him if he would come to the youth camp in Michigan and give a talk. Bill agreed and went on to say that Joe, “Gave me a big sell job as only Joe can do, and I think the first year I was there for a day, the next year I was there for a week, and the next year I was there for three or four weeks.” Bill shared that he experienced a connection to Camp Miniwanca just as Joe had.

Joe shared a similar backstory, tracing the origin of Wakonse back to his connection with the youth leadership conference with which he was working at Camp Miniwanca. Bill shared that during the program the students, “did things—mental, social, physical, and spiritual.” Joe added that he and Bill and Barb decided to try to replicate the experience for faculty members. Across all of the interviews, some version of this story was shared. The founders were working at a youth leadership camp and decided that the same kind of experience would benefit faculty members: not just the experience in terms of activities, but in terms of location.

Miniwanca as inspiration for Wakonse.

The location of the youth camp provided the founders an opportunity to reflect. They saw how the activities focused on mental, spiritual, physical, and social aspects of life translated to the lives of faculty and staff in higher education. In considering their roles on campus and what parts of their work were valued more and less, they were inspired to capitalize on this location for a different audience. They saw camp as a contrast to campus.

In some ways, simply having time to sit and talk and reflect outside of the institutional setting was a catalyst for the development of Wakonse. All the founders talked about the importance of being away from work and the distractions and pressures of life in and out of academe. Being able to sit on a deck or the beach or walk in the woods provided each of them a chance to identify points of tension and struggle in their lives and to generate possible strategies for dealing with those issues.

Barb shared how the founders experienced structure—particularly in higher education. She said, “And that’s what we all—as founders—had in common was a healthy disrespect for authority. And for centralization. And for bureaucracy. And for outside experts and

consultants.” The idea of creating something to help faculty and staff deal with and even change university structure was important to the founders. Their independent thinking and spirit were central to the development of Wakonse. However, that disrespect for structure and authority would have consequences for their connection with the youth conference in the years prior to Wakonse.

Exile from the youth conference.

Barb shared more about what may have been the catalyst for creating Wakonse. She explained that after she and Bill became involved with the youth conference, Joe had moved into a leadership role with that organization. As Joe became more and more successful in leading the youth experience at Camp Miniwanca, there was increasing internal strife with the leader of the American Youth Foundation board about a vision for that conference. The board chair wanted more structure and specified roles for every staff member at the conference. Joe, on the other hand, wanted to play upon individuals’ strengths and to let the camp be an organic and fluid experience responsive to the needs and interests of campers and leaders. This philosophical difference created tension among the members, but most specifically between Joe and the AYF chair.

Barb shared that the tension and conflict escalated until Joe was dismissed from AYF. This was a huge motivator for Joe, Barb, and Bill to develop Wakonse as a means of holding on to the connections they had with Camp Miniwanca. Since Joe had been dismissed from the youth camp, if the three of them wanted to keep a connection with the place they had to figure out another way to do so because Joe was not being allowed to return in *any* capacity. Barb said, “It meant exile. Being fired from camp by this foundation board means *exiled*.” She explained that was a catalyst for starting a conference on learning and teaching. “The

idea had begun the year before... But when these terrible things happened, I suddenly was motivated to do everything in my power to create our own space at Miniwanca that could not be taken away from us.”

Barb’s comments stress the highly personal connection the founders felt to this particular location. This will be discussed more in an exploration of why the conference continues, but it is important to note that the conference came—at least in part—from a very deep need to be in *that* space. This touches on the holistic experience of Wakonse, as well. It was a place of peace and healing and regeneration for the founders and something to which they were desperate to cling.

A celebration of teaching and learning.

Perhaps because Camp Miniwanca was a place where the founders had time away from work to enjoy quiet and reflection, their conversations about what might happen there focused on what else was missing in their lives. Wakonse provided a connection to nature and distance from technology. This connection was something they did not have on their home campuses. The founders shared that the realization that they were missing time in nature inspired them to think about what else was missing in their daily routines. Each of the founders shared how they were inspired to think about their work and what they valued in their work. While they served as faculty members at the youth leadership camp, they were also able to be creative and to engage with students and one another in ways they could not in their daily routines.

So when it appeared that their time at the camp might be at risk, they worked to identify ways that they might stay connected with Camp Miniwanca. They thought about what they might develop that would fit well in this setting. What was needed that Miniwanca

could provide? They all worked in higher education, so that was a part of it. When they talked about their struggles, they found common ground around issues related to teaching and learning. Barb discussed how the founders needed the time away from their institutions so that they could rejuvenate and return to campus ready to do the hard work of good teaching when there lacked a community to support, encourage, and acknowledge their successes in their classrooms.

The focus of the conference is on guiding academics toward their visions related to teaching and learning. This is the foundation upon which Wakonse was built. Reg challenged those who suggested that Wakonse is solely about teaching. He said, “That, in my opinion is the wrong way to say it. It’s a focus on learning *and* teaching.” According to Reg, the goals of the conference are to enhance the teaching of individual teachers and the learning of students in higher education. The goals of this conference are unique and the community developed at Wakonse is unique and the setting in which this takes place is unique. All of these things are interconnected in Wakonse’s celebration of teaching and learning in higher education.

Enhancing passion.

With attendees predisposed to valuing teaching and learning themselves, Wakonse has provided a place for individuals to connect and re-energize around their work in the classroom. Joe said, “The people that come are very interested in teaching to begin with... We’re really best at reinforcing what people are doing.” In addition to acknowledging current practices and successes, Wakonse is a place where faculty and staff can share ideas that provide new energy to faculty and staff for things to try with students in and out of the classroom.

Wakonse was set up to serve as a community for individuals with a shared passion for excellence in teaching. The conference focuses on stoking the passion of good teachers to become great teachers and to sustain their enthusiasm for teaching. Groups of faculty and staff committed to this passion are not easily found. Providing and cultivating this community at Wakonse is central to why it was founded.

Not remediation.

Wakonse is not for everyone. Those invited to attend—at least those who benefit the most from the experience—must have a pre-existing passion for teaching and learning. Therefore, just as important as the things intentionally structured into the Wakonse experience, are things which are not meant to be a part of the experience. This experience is about igniting (or re-igniting) an existing passion around teaching. It is not designed to provide remediation for poor teachers. As Kai explained, “I think that Joe has made a conscious effort to not have going to Wakonse be punitive—for people who aren’t very good teachers.”

Joe shared that those who came because they needed additional help in teaching, but who did not have a passion for student engagement in the classroom, did not describe the conference as helpful. “I could probably name all three of them over the 23 years—people who come or were sent... because they weren’t doing well in their teaching and somebody thought this might be a place to learn. It’s not.” There is no time spent cultivating buy-in for the value of undergraduate education. Those who attend who do not believe it is important—those who are relegated to Wakonse because they are not doing well in the classroom—will not find the resources they might need.

Wakonse attendees.

A community must have members. With ideas about what Wakonse *was* in place, and a sense of what Wakonse was and was not in terms of purpose and outcomes, it was important to decide *who* would be attending. Clearly, there was a faculty focus to Professor Camp. As was previously mentioned, this was not a conference for underprepared or unskilled faculty, but for faculty who had a passion for undergraduate education.

However, Barb said that the founders decided from the onset that it would be important to include staff working in higher education as well. Barb said the founders specifically identified student affairs as a necessary part of the experience. Student affairs staff had specialized knowledge and contributions they could make, particularly related to student success, development, engagement, and campus resources. She added that non-faculty staff in other areas brought additional value and perspective to the experience as well.

Holistic approach.

One of the things the founders valued about the AYF experience was the focus on individuals as whole persons. This was something they wanted to continue as they developed Wakonse. They felt that faculty and staff do not always have or take the time to attend to all parts of their human-ness. Bill described the vision for the conference and how different components were planned as a part of the experience.

It would have something intellectual. It would have something social. It would have something physical. There would be some sort of spiritual thing to it, which I think is very important. The idea of how you put all these things together in your life is an important part of it.

Barb also said that there was a focus on the conference attendees as individuals, not just in relation to their connection with students. She said that self-assessment in the areas of attendees' mental, physical, social, and spiritual development was critical to Wakonse. While the focus of the conference would be on teaching and learning, it would be a holistic focus. It would address how different aspects of the participants' lives factor into their success as educators in the classroom.

Jean provided a summary of how the founders conveyed their vision in these words, "What they say over and over again [is that the goal of Wakonse] is to inspire teachers to know more about learning. To become more dedicated teachers." She went on to share that the founders stressed that all of this begins with a focus on the self. Wakonse would provide the time and space for reflection and a holistic attendance to faculty and staff as human beings.

Playing upon strengths of attendees.

Wakonse was a place where the community provided the content. Because those who attended found—many for the first time—a place where they did not have to function in isolation especially regarding their passion for great teaching, it was important that they see themselves as experts. If this was not valued on campuses because others did not care in the same way, then who better to share ideas and be sources of inspiration than other members of this unique Wakonse community? The conference identified the topics and then called upon the expertise of the participants. Hope explained that people who had questions or knowledge or who could speak about a given topic were chosen to facilitate sessions or conversations around that topic. In other words, the structure of the conference changed depending upon the interests and needs of the group. She said, "The combination of

identifying people and people-strengths, identifying important topics to guide and frame conversations” was the core of Wakonse.

The idea of building the experience on the knowledge and talents of the participants is part of what has helped to sustain Wakonse over time. The fact that the conference is flexible enough to adapt to the needs of specific attendees from year to year is essential. Wakonse has delicately balanced that approach with the ability to stay true to its focus on learning and teaching. How participants engage in learning and teaching dialogues may vary, but the importance of learning and teaching has not faltered.

The Chautauqua.

Interestingly, one of the ways that Wakonse highlights the individual abilities and talents of conference attendees is by hosting a talent show. This activity reinforces the idea that Wakonse is unique in two ways. First, most professional or subject-matter conferences do not include a talent show. Second, not only does this highlight that Wakonse is unique, but also that every member of the Wakonse community is unique. The Chautauqua is a chance for attendees to show their diverse interests and abilities—often completely unrelated to their academic or professional work.

Barb spoke with a great deal of passion about the Chautauqua as a crucial piece of Professor Camp. She said it carried over from the student conference. The first Chautauqua took place when a speaker was unable to get to the camp for his session. The founders saw this means of expressing talents as part of the personal development aspects of Wakonse. Barb put it this way, “When Wakonse started, we said, ‘We can’t do it without the Chautauqua!’ And the Chautauqua became a central part.”

While seemingly removed from the teaching and learning focus of the conference, this experience contributes significantly to the continuation of Wakonse. It provides a safe forum for attendees to take risks. Ultimately, great teaching and great connections with students require the faculty and staff to take great risks. This experience mimics the traditional classroom—the lecturer in front of the group—but affords the opportunity to bring the self into the work. This conference, which focuses on people holistically, makes room for the creative parts of individuals via the Chautauqua.

Organizing Wakonse.

Building a new experience at Camp Miniwanca focused on faculty and staff instead of youth leadership was the starting point for the founders in developing Wakonse. As described above, the founders wanted to take the idea of the youth leadership experience and transform it into a camp experience for faculty and staff who were committed to undergraduate student teaching and learning. At different times throughout the interviews, participants referred to Wakonse as “Professor Camp.” The idea was to take faculty and staff to a camp setting to get them away from other distractions so that they could focus on their lives as educators.

With that in mind, the founders grappled with logistic concerns. When would the conference take place? How long would it last? What would the conference look like experientially? How would faculty and staff be engaged and reenergized? It became incumbent upon the founders to develop a plan for what the conference would entail. The desire to engage and inspire faculty was a thread the founders used to connect all aspects of the experience—from the name of the conference to the structure of the experience and the sessions offered.

The name.

Since the Wakonse experience was going to fill a void and provide participants an opportunity and a community they didn't have elsewhere, the name had to be unique, as well. At camp each year, Joe introduces the experience by explaining that Wakonse is a Lakota word meaning "to teach, to inspire." It was Barb who was responsible for doing research and coming up with a formal name for Professor Camp. She said that that definition Joe provides for the word Wakonse is not accurate. She said, "I always let Joe and Bill handle the narrative about it. The fact is they're dead wrong about what it means."

Using a Native American word was not originally a focus of the founders. Barb explained that as they were searching for a name for the camp, they looked at a variety of sources, including Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit words. She said the founders decided, "We'll look at what the Greek words are. Latin words. Anything that involves academe or thinking. You know Socrates and the Agora, and all that sort of thing."

Because of her passion for literature and languages, the task of identifying a name for the conference was one Barb assumed. She looked at materials in the literature library at the University of Iowa and saw a Lakota language dictionary with which she was familiar. She decided to pull it when she was pulling books on Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. She said the Sanskrit words were too unusual and the Greek and Latin words related to academe were already used for other organizations. She then decided to look through the Lakota dictionary.

And I see a word I remember—*Wakonse*. I'd heard it at camp. *Wakonse*, that's cool. What did it mean? I knew "Wakan" was the word for spirit. Great spirit. Not meaning the Lord God above, but the spirit that runs through all of us. All around.

To Lakotas, spirit is in everything. Rocks. Inanimate objects. Everything. So spirit. Wakan.

And it's a contraction of Wakan and econsi. And econsi does not mean "to teach."

But Econsi means "to counsel," "to mentor," "to advise" in a sacred way. So, to counsel or advise, to bring a young person toward their visionquest. So that Wakonse is the sacred—to counsel a person in a sacred way toward their vision.

When Barb shared Wakonse as a name for the conference with the other founders, they were very excited. "It just felt right. It's one of those things where you think—well, it never could have been anything else."

Creating the Wakonse format.

So how would this conference experience lead faculty and staff to their visions in higher education? The founders were compelled to keep the non-traditional structure and outcomes of this conference in mind as they developed the Wakonse conference. While Wakonse was developed as a place for renewal in a peaceful setting away from the stimuli of everyday responsibilities, the language used by the founders reveals what they felt they were facing in developing this opportunity. They did not see this as an "easy sell" as Barb put it nor was it something that would be readily accepted by the academic establishment. Barb used the following descriptors in sharing the group's initial brainstorming about Wakonse, "No outside consultants. No visible leadership structure. Purely grassroots. And based on fun and fellowship rather than competition." So, this was not to be structured in a bureaucratic way that would mirror higher education administration. Bill is even more direct in his language around the anticipated conflict the founders might face. Bill described Wakonse as a "guerrilla operation" and a "subversive group."

Context.

It is important to remember that while Wakonse was unique and it developed in a unique way, it evolved in response to multiple contexts—historical, political, and cultural. There were a variety of questions being asked in American higher education that had an effect on the thinking of the founders, but also on their ability to get funding for this conference. Jean provided a context of what was happening in higher education while the founders were developing this idea about Wakonse. Jean said what was happening on the national stage “intellectually and professionally” aligned well with the development of a conference like Wakonse.

Historically what was happening nationally was important because by the 90s there was this real change from the philosophy of looking at not teaching, but *learning*. We were supposed to talk more about learning than teaching. More about discovery than research. So, there was a lot going on nationally.

The AAHE which was the American Association of Higher Education was a very dynamic group of national leaders at that time and the Carnegie Foundation also had quite a voice and they were doing a lot to talk about looking at the change in promotion and tenure documents that we were asking faculty to do. And then Ernest Boyer came out with his work and it was just ground changing. Everything was being talked about at the time, so it was a real dynamic, exciting time to be in the field....

Engagement was the big word then. The Higher Learning Commission was even looking at some of that... It was a change for universities to even be talking about

what was happening in the classroom. Emphasizing learning. Really looking at [how] the whole scholarship of teaching and learning evolved.

The social and political context was right for the development of a conference focused on student engagement, teaching, and learning. The founders kept this in mind as they developed their approach to this new experience.

Conference framework.

Once the founders had developed the vision for Professor Camp, they needed to come up with a structure for the experience. Barb recounted one of the initial conversations the founders had about what Wakonse should look like. She read from the notes she took during those planning meetings and shared that the founders struggled with the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” questions in developing the conference. She said they asked, “Who should the population be?” and “How interdisciplinary should we be?” and “Should we have a skills focus or a values focus?” She shared that they ultimately decided on a curriculum for the conference that was both skill- and values-focused.

Some of the strategies they identified for use at Wakonse included master professor lectures, short courses, staff processing of presentations, and debate. She also said the founders identified a number of specific areas the conference should address.

What are some of the skills we need to help new teachers with? Preparation. Lecture delivery to large and small classes. How to facilitate a discussion. How to incorporate experiential learning. How to evaluate our own teaching. How to use AV aids-that was going to become technology.

Beyond the specific topic areas, Hope discussed the philosophy behind the conference. She talked about the positive psychology focus of Wakonse as being important.

She said that this is something that has become more central recently at Professor Camp, but that having a center or core set of beliefs has always been a part of the experience. She said that having a frame or being able to say, “Okay, this is what we believe,” has been essential to the founders, the conference, and the continuation of the experience.

Funding Wakonse.

Barb and Jean both talked about the historical context of the time when Wakonse was created. They both referenced the fact that at that time there was a focus on student engagement and on teaching and learning. Given the timing, there were a variety of funding options—internal and external to the University of Missouri—for a conference of this type. Before the plan for Wakonse could be moved forward, the issue of a budget had to be addressed. Joe shared that the founders focused on getting a grant from the Kellogg Foundation and institutional support from the University of Missouri.

Barb provided more specifics about funding. She said that the founders knew they had to institutionalize the conference in order for it to continue over time. She read from some of the notes that were taken during initial conversations among the founders.

“Funding: Amoco? Carnegie? Spencer? Kellogg? The Blanks?” “We need to move toward university support in the long run.” So, yeah, we determined we might start with some grants, but we needed to become self-sustaining ’cause none of those funding sources would last.

Barb developed a prospectus that would become the application for the initial planning grant. She said that given the focus of higher education at the time, finding resources to support Wakonse was not difficult. She provided a rationale for the conference by looking at “the current literature that was complaining about the lack of attention to

college teaching.” She took that information and developed a proposal that was shared with both external funding sources and the provost at the University of Missouri.

The story of the funding for starting Wakonse has filtered down to other participants who were not part of the founding team. Kai focused on Joe’s role in getting funding from the University of Missouri to make the conference sustainable over the long term. He said, “And then how it actually got the sustainable life at Mizzou, I think is really due—mainly to Joe. And his ability to convince the Provost’s Office and all the various guises that the Provost and the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Studies have had in the last 20 years, when there hasn’t been Kellogg funding or Pew funding, that it is a valuable thing and should be supported.”

So from a practical standpoint, Wakonse was started due in part to the acquisition of grant funding. The fact that it has continued, however, has to do with the political networking of Joe Johnston and others at the University of Missouri. By institutionalizing the conference at a specific university, the conference has been sustained well beyond the life of the original grant.

Summary

Participants shared that Wakonse was started because of a desire by the founders to cling to a very specific community. This community, like many others, was a unique combination of people, place, and shared values and experience. Nowhere else did the founders have space where they could come together to stoke the inspiration they had around teaching and learning. Nowhere else in higher education had they discovered space that allowed them to attend to themselves holistically.

Wakonse was founded as a conference to inspire and capitalize on the strengths of those who value student engagement, particularly as it related to teaching and learning. The conference originated at a time when undergraduate education was a focus in higher education nationally, so the funding for the conference was obtained through grants and institutional support. The connection to the University of Missouri is crucial to the Wakonse story and the conference has been sustained due to the support at Missouri.

The Wakonse Conference on College Teaching and Learning came to be as a result of the work of a group of dedicated faculty. This group of people found value in time away from campus to reflect and engage with others around the importance of undergraduate college teaching. They understood the desire for a community of like-minded individuals who appreciated undergraduate student teaching and learning. Under the leadership of Joe Johnston, with the wisdom Bill Bondeson and the spirit of Barb Kerr, the pieces for the conference fell into place.

Wakonse grew out of the American Youth Foundation conference as a result of three main catalysts. The first was the founders' connection to the site—Camp Miniwanca. The second was their exile from the youth conference. The third was their desire to create an opportunity for faculty and staff with a passion for teaching to come together in a camp setting to share community and attend to themselves holistically.

Founders shared that this holistic attention meant that fellows would attend to their physical selves by taking time to recuperate from the academic year. Specifically, the founders structured the conference so that fellows attended to their spiritual selves through communal and solitary activities and reflection. They attended to their intellectual selves by connecting with other scholars to discuss pedagogy, challenges and successes. And, finally,

they attended to their social selves through the connections they made doing all of the other things within this community of support and encouragement.

The conference was designed to play upon the strengths of attendees. I discovered not just through interviews, but through my involvement with Wakonse that those who come are the session facilitators, the sources of ideas and classroom strategies, and the performers who share themselves through the Chautauqua. Participants focus on their strengths and weaknesses through intentional goal-setting at the culmination of the conference.

The desire of the founders to stay connected to Camp Miniwanca and to create a regenerative and communal experience for people in academe with a passion for teaching and learning is why Wakonse was founded. The historical timing was appropriate for funding to be acquired and the shared passion among educators at a variety of institutions allowed it to become established and take root. From this passion Wakonse has blossomed and continued for more than twenty years.

Research Question 2: Why Has The Wakonse Conference Continued?

Understanding the development and the rationale for the conference helped provide context for what became the larger research question—why has Wakonse continued?

Wakonse could have easily been held once or a few times and then discontinued. May of 2013 will mark the 24th time the conference has been held. What was it that the founders *discovered*, *uncovered* or were attempting to *recover* that resonated with so many others over so many years? This section provides information about why the conference has persisted. The key areas that have contributed to its sustainability begin with the leadership of the conference. How that leadership has evolved and adapted is an important link between the founding, the present conference, and the potential future of Wakonse.

Another area examined in this section includes the role of teaching and learning for participants. As was mentioned in the previous section, finding a community in higher education can be difficult. This section will explore how community is actively discouraged—particularly among faculty. According to all of the participants interviewed, given the research pull—and often dominance—on the time of faculty members, those faculty who value teaching often struggle. According to Kai and Jean they have found this to be particularly true at research intensive institutions. The connection with like-minded faculty and staff who value undergraduate education is a central part of the Wakonse experience. This community is built on a combination of place, people, and activities. These come from common interests and passions, but are further developed through the Wakonse experience.

Some final areas considered in regard to the Wakonse legacy are the continued funding of the conference and the consistency of the experience over time. While funding was discussed in the previous section, that focus was on the founding of Wakonse. It was important to acquire funding for the continuation of the conference which required the ability to adapt to different decision-makers and resource allocators. Bill and Kai both talked about how Joe's talent for building relationships was instrumental as changes took place in administrative leadership at the University of Missouri. In order to maintain financial support as well as institutional support such as encouraging faculty and staff participation at Wakonse, Joe built new relationships as new people moved into leadership roles on campus. That said, the experience itself has changed very little over time. That consistency includes the program for the conference, the location, the time of year when it occurs, and some shared values of the participants.

This section also includes a review of some areas where Wakonse has not been as successful as it could have been or as successful as some of the founders and participants might have liked it to be. These areas include: the lack of influence the conference has had on the broader issues of teaching facing higher education; the implementation of the Wakonse connection and continuation of the experience on home campuses has not been historically strong; and issues related to diversity and social justice may not have been as fully explored as they might have been or perhaps should be.

Finally, this section concludes with observations about the potential future of Wakonse. The participants shared concerns about what will happen as the founders transition out of their roles at the conference. The planning (or lack thereof) for the future of the conference is important to consider.

Leadership

Joe.

A consistent theme in the conversations about Wakonse was the role of the founders in leading the conference. To begin with, the role Joe has played was highlighted in every interview conducted. This was explored in the previous section as it relates to the founding of the conference as well as its continuation. The importance of Joe's role has clearly continued well beyond the start of Wakonse 20 years ago.

Dara described Joe as “inimitable,” going on to say, “Joe reminds me of my favorite uncle in the sense of how charming [he is] and how he makes everyone feel special.” Hope discussed Joe's role of managing the conference in an effective and efficient, if not transparent, way. She described his leadership as being “on the ground” and “influencing how people hear and receive what is going on.” She went on to discuss how Joe attends to

the individual experiences participants have while at the conference. She said that he has influence on how well people are heard and is aware of whether or not people are engaged with the Wakonse experience. She said Joe works around those issues very well. She added, “It’s such a behind-the-scenes role that I’m not even sure if we’re really aware of it, but I would be willing to bet that Joe touches base with almost every person at the conference.”

Joe’s attention to the experiences of individuals at the conference stems in part from his background in psychology, but also from his passion for the Wakonse experience. He has dedicated significant time and energy to the conference and wants everyone to get as much as they possibly can from Professor Camp when they attend. Bill described Wakonse as a “labor of love” for Joe. Reg said that while Joe does not do it all himself, he “is the engine behind Wakonse.”

Many of the participants in this study discussed Joe’s near omnipresence at the conference. Jean described it saying, “Joe’s there. You’re welcomed when you get off the bus. He’s up there at the dining hall welcoming people—patting them on the back, ‘Oh, so glad to see you.’” Dara agreed: “Joe is everywhere and he greets everyone as they arrive and basically says good night to us when we go to bed.”

Jean stressed that this sense of attention and care is carried on throughout the conference. She and others commented on Joe’s talent when it comes to delegating responsibilities. Jean shared that not only does Joe do this well, but he does it in a way that further engages both participants and staff. She said he extends opportunities, “So that you feel honored as an individual, but there are expectations for the group and for the organization to keep things going... He also delegates. Joe delegates beautifully. So there’s delegation, which means people feel engaged and valued.”

Not only is Joe omnipresent, there are times when he was described as being omniscient. Again he delegates some of the responsibility for this information-gathering to the staff. He takes in the information and uses it to manage the conference so that it meets the needs of participants.

That information-gathering and need for details was perceived differently by the participants, however. Dara shared concerns about the process and the fact that it can sometimes feel controlling. She said Joe knows everybody, which is a positive aspect of the experience. She then added,

He also knows *everything*. And that's a bit scary. I mean, he is everywhere at all hours of the day. And part of the [staff] conversation is that. Is knowing everything that is going on. And I'm a little uncomfortable with that. But you know, there's also—in that—there's a lot of caring about people. But there can also be control stuff.

Jean described the conversations among staff differently. She said, “Joe always has a session when the staff come together and asks, ‘What are you hearing? What is the feedback?’ And he just sits there and listens. He doesn't judge whether it's right or wrong. He doesn't try to debate it or try to defend it. He listens.” She went on to say that she believed that listening to feedback and being adaptable were important. That adaptability, she observed, was balanced with “firm underpinnings and some pretty clear boundaries about what's allowed and what's not.”

While listening and adapting and seeing and being are all parts of Joe's strengths, there are limitations to what he offers participants. He was described as not being completely transparent at times. Dara described him this way, “You're not gonna get deep with him, but he wins you over every time you see his smile and when you feel his embrace.” Joe's having

significant knowledge about the conference without making himself and the information he has fully accessible to others may present obstacles to the sustainability of Wakonse once Joe is no longer participating.

Staff.

The observational nature of the conference is not limited to Joe as a leader and founder. Staff members are empowered and delegated the responsibility of seeing and knowing and being present. They are then expected to share back to the team so that adjustments can be made to maximize the Wakonse experience for participants. Hope said, “The leadership of the conference—the entire staff including the dialogue group leaders—is being present and aware and observing all of the dynamics all the time and coming together to debrief those.”

Additionally, the staff members bring their skills and talents to their work at Wakonse. Joe’s talent at using people’s abilities and passions to benefit the organization was discussed by a number of participants in this study. One example included a staff member who dealt with the accommodations and health and safety of participants. Jean described her as dealing with the difficulties people experience at Wakonse.

She has to handle all the people who are sick or have things that go wrong. Or don’t like their roommate and want a room change... And she’ll complain and whine, but she handles that amazingly out of sight of everyone else. The conflict is taken and handled and dealt with... She’s a character, but she holds it together a lot of times... she knows the underbelly [of Wakonse].

Another staff member whose contributions were highlighted by a number of participants was Reg. He was described as an intelligent, humble, quiet spirit. He made

interesting connections between his faith and art and music which he shared with others. As a part of Wakonse, Renee described him as wise but approachable—the thread connecting faculty and students. She said,

And he knows more than other people, so he obviously has sort of the air about him, of someone who's older than you are... But he's able to just seamlessly connect with people no matter what their age. And that has always fascinated me about him. Like somebody you want to be when you grow up.

These are just two examples of how staff members' talents—the ability to manage attendee concerns and the ability to unite attendees across age or position—are put to use at Wakonse through Joe's delegation. The importance of putting the right people in the right positions to create the most positive experience possible at Wakonse is what Joe does. Not only does this benefit attendees, but it is empowering to staff to get to use their strengths and talents to make the conference a success.

Dara provided an overview of the entire Wakonse staff team. She discussed the different styles among the staff. She also addressed why they may have chosen to come together around a project like Wakonse.

They're not cookie-cutter people... So, I have the feeling that many of them are on the margins of who their universities would value... and that they meant to change the world and they didn't, but they changed themselves and they've changed a hundred people every year.

This approach has helped to sustain Wakonse. The conference as an experience is constantly adapting to the needs of the participants through adding sessions, making changes to the schedule and addressing other issues or concerns that arise. This should not be

confused with a change in the conference format. It adapts each year based on individual circumstances, but the conference structure itself has been maintained over time.

When the conference adapts in response to issues and concerns in a given year, it does so by playing upon the strengths of the staff. Everyone wins. The attendees feel that their concerns are addressed and their needs are met. The staff feel their talents and skills are appreciated and are properly used.

Perhaps because of their experiences as individuals and their experiences touching the lives of others, the staff has remained fairly consistent over time. Barb said that is because it's a compelling experience. Kai went on to discuss how the staff complements Joe's leadership.

Joe's absolutely the core. But it wouldn't have occurred without people like Jean.

And people like Hope and people like Bill. And even, really, [other staff members]

who have had some continuity throughout 15, 20 years. I don't think Joe could have

done it with a new staff every year. So Joe being the core is fine and that's true, but

the other staff knows the roles that Joe wants us to have, too. Yes, that is part of Joe's

structure, but the staff sort of takes on their roles, as well—in the presence or absence

of Joe.

Wakonse is a Unique Community Celebrating Teaching and Learning

Just as the staff under Joe's leadership developed a common understanding of what Wakonse is, the conference attendees had a shared understanding of what the conference offers a community of faculty and staff who might otherwise feel isolated in their passion around student engagement and teaching and learning. A critically important point of connection for both the staff and Wakonse attendees has been the roles of teaching and

learning. Every participant mentioned the teaching and research conflict with which some faculty members struggle. Participants shared their own love of teaching, practical applications they learned and continue to share at Wakonse, and the value of internal expertise at the conference. They also shared that before Wakonse, many of them felt they were alone in their pursuit of teaching excellence.

Wakonse embraces a love of teaching.

Wakonse is unique in what it has to offer faculty and staff. I found in this study that that was a significant part of why it has persisted. The participants shared that having a place and colleagues to engage with around a love of teaching has given them support they did not find anywhere else. Wakonse is a place where attendees are encouraged to both engage with others and to reflect individually and look inside themselves for what teaching means to them.

Hope talked about the experiences she has had at Wakonse that significantly affected how she thinks about both teaching and learning. Wakonse provided her opportunity to reflect on herself as a faculty member and on her students as partners in the classroom. She said Wakonse has changed her teaching and the rest of her work. She discussed how as a result of attending Wakonse she finally realized that she was teaching from a perspective of loving math to “students who didn’t love math and were afraid of math.” She went on to discuss the importance of realizing that she *was* math to her students.

And so I realized when I listened to Bill that I had been teaching math apologetically.

“I’m sorry you have to take this class, and I will try to make it as painless as possible for you.” Instead of communicating my love for math, and really representing—you know, his thing of “You are your discipline to your students.” And taking [an

approach that is] more, “I love math, and I hope that by the end of the semester you will also love it more than you do right now.” It was a really important shift in how I approached my students and my math classes.

Other participants discussed how the love of teaching has been a challenge in academe. They value it themselves, but have not found others to support them in their work related to teaching. In addition to changing how faculty have engaged in the classroom, there have been implications for how they look at the nature of the work they do. At times they shared that it can be a struggle with their institutions or colleagues who may not value undergraduate teaching in the same way. They said that Wakonse offered them a place where undergraduate teaching is valued publically and proudly.

Kai shared about how the value he puts on teaching affected his tenure process after having gone to Wakonse. He decided to include an 80 page teaching portfolio in his dossier. He said, “Some of my colleagues didn’t appreciate me doing that ’cause they thought then *they* had to do that.”

Despite the push back, Kai said he felt that faculty could evaluate his teaching just as much as they could his articles on inorganic chemistry. “I just put that in because that was an important thing for me to do... That was me putting in what I thought was important. The point is, I’ve sort of made my peace with, I’m going to do what I think is valuable and I don’t really care if my colleagues don’t find that valuable. When it comes right down to it, I don’t really care.” Wakonse validated Kai’s emphasis on teaching and learning. Again, it has been unique in this aspect according to those interviewed. This study found that Wakonse has persisted because it is unique in its support of teaching and learning and it offers an opportunity to engage in dialogue and reflection about this in a way no other place does.

Similarly, Jean spoke passionately about what being an educator means to her. She explained that being at Wakonse was a chance to celebrate the teaching parts of being a faculty member. To her Wakonse has been a place like no other, offering her something she would otherwise not have had. She said that to fully benefit from the Wakonse experience, one needs to already value undergraduate education. She described Wakonse as a celebration of teaching.

Not that I haven't been exhausted and wondering what I was doing, but I'm grateful. I believe there's no better job than a job at a university. I think we need to be much more appreciative. The flexibility we have. The intellectual stimulation we have... Because it is a wonderful—it is a privilege—it is a *privilege* to teach.

That's the thing about Wakonse—that you can step back and say, “Get all this other junk out of there. All this quibbling. And rules.” It's a *privilege* to walk in that classroom and have students listen to what you have to say. It's a *privilege* to sit and make judgment about classroom behavior or whatever. It is a *privilege* to be able to do that. It's not just a job. It's an honor and a privilege.

The connecting of faculty and staff who were so passionate about their work educating students has been central to the continuation of the Wakonse conference. The connection among these individuals is not simply a common interest, it is a passion. The way that the participants discuss teaching and the value they place on teaching and learning shows the passion they feel for the work they do with students. When they had often gone for extended periods without finding others who shared their values, the coming together of like-minded people ignited that passion even more and inspired the participants in the moment at Wakonse. It also inspired them to carry on and continue to be passionate about

their teaching when they returned to their campuses. Wakonse was described as a place where these individuals realized they were not alone in their pursuit of excellence around issues of student engagement.

Wakonse provides an opportunity to share student engagement strategies.

At Wakonse there is a practical connection made between these individuals who value teaching and learning. Resources and ideas are shared to enhance classroom experiences across areas of responsibility and across disciplines. Wakonse provides a community where it is safe to be vulnerable in sharing challenges and failures as well as successes. Kai described how he got ideas from some attendees one year at Wakonse and since then has passed those strategies on to others.

Doing stuff in class and being able to talk to other people about it—it's really interesting. When we were talking in the dialogue group, I mentioned something about, I think it was the class council that I have. So I have volunteers and I meet with them. And no one [in that dialogue group] had ever thought of this before. And I almost didn't mention it because it's like second nature to me now. It's like, "Clearly, why wouldn't everybody do that?"

So it's the continuation of that knowledge from—you know I don't remember when I first heard that. 2004? 2005 or something like that? That the two people—the person that told me and the person that I told don't have anything to do with one another. Will never meet each other. Will never do anything. And so that bridging of those connections and those ideas.

Kai went on to share that Wakonse is a venue to connect ideas and share pragmatic approaches to teaching. He discussed things he had learned one year and then turned around

and shared at the next Wakonse after he had tried things out in his own classroom. “There are lots of little tricks and tips that have come out of Wakonse that I do in class. Do minute essays every couple weeks, mid-lecture breaks, doing announcements in the middle of class, mutual expectations.” These are things Kai learned from others, took back and implemented in his own work and now shares with new attendees for use in their teaching.

Similarly, Barb discussed how learning at Wakonse inspired her teaching in the classroom. She talked about an interaction she had with another faculty member who worked in labor arbitration and mediation and was not someone she would have encountered on her campus. Because of the structure at Wakonse, however, she was in conversations where she repeatedly had to engage with him. “So he told me he was a mediator and told me all about the work he did and... I got really interested. I ended up doing some teaching in my student development course about arbitration and mediation in higher education.”

These connections go beyond faculty sharing teaching strategies. Jean shared something similar that developed on her campus as a result of Wakonse. While much of the teaching and learning is related to classroom experiences, Wakonse is also open to staff in higher education. Jean discussed how student affairs and academic affairs came together through the learning community experience of students. Though this partnership was unusual, it was also common sense according to Jean.

So it was very unique at a Research I institution to have student affairs and academic affairs working together on these learning issues. Duh! Which of course should be happening everywhere, but we have these unique opportunities. And I don't think it was someone with great vision or was real intentional. It just sort of happened. It was organic and it grew—although people were making decisions to fund professional

and scientific [staff] people to attend these. And that was, I think from the very beginning—the strength of learning communities at Iowa State. You had that strong partnership between student affairs and academic affairs.

This is testimony to the power of the interdisciplinary approach at Wakonse. The importance of sharing struggles and ideas across different areas is central to the Wakonse philosophy. This unifies the educators and empowers them to build community beyond their own departments.

Valuing the expertise of participants.

Using the passion, talent, creativity, and experience of the attendees is the foundation for the sessions at Wakonse. This conference is unique as outside speakers and experts have rarely been invited to participate at the conference. Wakonse has continued because it does not purport that there is someone with all the answers or a singular “right way” to teach well. Instead, it acknowledges that those who care about teaching are the best to engage in idea sharing about how to teach well.

Jean acknowledged that there have been some attempts to bring in people from the outside. She said, “They used to bring in outside speakers, but then decided to just grow it from within organically because people could be critical of outside speakers... [Wakonse] is kind of a place to get away from that.” Instead, the conference showcases what works among attendees and is structured to encourage them to engage with one another in order to inspire new approaches to teaching.

This decision was an intentional one on the part of the founders and staff. Hope explained the rationale when she said, “To me the most important feature of the conference is

that foundational philosophy that faculty learn best from each other. Particularly learn best about teaching from each other.”

She went on to say that Wakonse is not about bringing in an expert with the answers, but about bringing “people together to share their own best practices, share their challenges, share their successes, their failures.” She suggested that everyone takes something away from the experience whether practical strategies, new energy, or new connections.

This approach to programming for the conference is not always comfortable for attendees. Jean shared that participants are sometimes upset because they do not receive a lot of advance notice that they are facilitating.

While this means that there is little time to prepare, Jean said that is intentional. The goal is not a presentation, but the hosting of a conversation—dialogues about the issues facing faculty and staff in higher education. Jean added that, “Joe’s real good at picking out what people’s expertise is and then using that there.” His ability to identify strengths and delegate responsibilities is important at a conference that plays upon the expertise of the attendees.

The findings of this study indicate that this “experts from within” approach has helped to sustain Wakonse in three ways. First, it has helped to confirm to participants that there are others who value what they value. Attendees are empowered to share with others who want to hear their thoughts about teaching and learning. Second, as an outcome, participants have strategies they can use in their work. This practical application piece is one of the “take-aways” of this conference and participants can do something in their work with the information they receive. Finally, all of the dialogue and empowerment helps to develop a community which participants cannot find in other places. The bringing together of over

100 faculty and staff who want to talk about teaching and learning is unique and important to the attendees.

Building a community.

The idea of what Dara called valuing the “assets from within” serves as part of the foundation for Wakonse as a community of educators. Wakonse brings like-minded people together to struggle with teaching and learning issues and to identify creative strategies for engaging students. Finally, Wakonse empowers them to return to their campuses to do their work knowing they are not alone. These ideas are perhaps the most important ones related to why Wakonse has been sustained for more than 20 years.

When asked to define the Wakonse culture, Jean responded that “a sense of community” came to her mind before anything else. She went on to discuss how staff check with participants about the basics—making sure accommodations are satisfactory and explaining how camp runs—meals, meetings, and other activities. Beyond these things, Jean stressed the need for a sense of belonging and connection related to teaching and learning. For all of the participants interviewed, Wakonse fulfilled this need in a way that no other conference or campus or experience has. Because it is the only place to go to meet this need, participants have continued to attend and Wakonse continues on.

It is sometimes difficult to find allies who value the classroom experience of students. Wakonse provides a space for sharing challenges and successes in the classroom. Jean went on to provide a larger overview for this idea of a community of professionals dedicated to undergraduate education. Jean said,

I think it’s still important to build community around the issues related to teaching and learning and student engagement. We’re all often isolated with those issues—

particularly tenure-track faculty. [It is important] to build a sense of community and connection so you have colleagues. Sometimes it's easier to connect with people—as you know—away from [one's home campus] with people that you don't know as well. You know it's this community of people who have persevered—probably because we have like interests. And they're just really positive, well-meaning, happy people that are fun to be around.

Throughout the interview process, participant after participant talked about the role of community in the Wakonse experience. This idea of community goes beyond shared interests and includes a connection to the specific place where the conference takes place. It includes the activities—both the curriculum of the conference and the optional activities. Reflection plays an important part in the shared experience, as well. Finally, Wakonse pays attention to the “whole self,” rather than just the teacher or staff member identities a person holds. This is another aspect of Wakonse which makes the experience so unique.

Wakonse has been sustained over time because of the community that has developed there. This section provides an overview of what that community consists of and how each aspect of the Wakonse community has contributed to its persistence. The section is organized in order to respond to the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions related to Wakonse community. *Who* are the people attending Wakonse—both generalizations about the entire group as well as any sub-communities that have developed over time? How have the attendees helped to sustain the conference? *What* are the activities at Wakonse designed to build community? How do the activities contribute to Wakonse's persistence? *Where* does this happen and what is the role of place in the continuation of this experience? *When* do things happen—not just what time of year, but during the conference what turning points

do participants experience? How has the timing affected the ability of Wakonse to continue year after year? *Why* is this needed for higher education professionals? This may be the most important piece of all in terms of Wakonse’s persistence. Why does Wakonse matter enough that it continues to spark interest in faculty and staff year after year? And, finally, *how* do we know that a community is developed and how has that development contributed to the continuation of the conference?

Who: How People Contributed to Wakonse’s Continuity

Wakonse fellows.

Over the time Wakonse has existed, more than 2,500 faculty, staff, and students have attended. They have come from a variety of institutions—from large, public research-intensive universities to small, private colleges. The faculty and staff who have attended are diverse in areas of expertise, experience, position, approaches to teaching, and professional and personal goals. The students include undergraduate students who are still navigating higher education and graduate students who are referred to as “future faculty” at the conference.

Commitment to learning and teaching.

The common bond between nearly all of them, however, has been a commitment to the learning and teaching of undergraduate students. Part of what Joe calls the “magic of Wakonse” is bringing like-minded people together. By coming together, attendees are able to share their passions for teaching and learning and build a community around these shared passions. As Barb described,

[W]hat comes to the fore is their basic curiosity—their love of learning—which is what got them into academia to begin with. So now you have this powerful community

that's made up of people who realize they have so much to learn from one another.

And that's explosive. In a good way. It's like fusion.

One of the questions that emerged during this study focused on the role of the participants in the continuation of this conference. How have the people involved helped to sustain Wakonse? What are common interests and qualities of those who have chosen to participate?

First and foremost, as has been mentioned throughout this study, those who participated had a common investment in and dedication to teaching and learning. Both Jean and Renee spoke about the characteristics participants at Wakonse share. Jean talked about the mindset of participants.

I believe there has to be someone who is open to the kind of experience that Wakonse is and they're probably not going to always fit your typical university role. Not that there's a stereotype, but certainly back in those [early] days there was. And you had to have a fairly open mind and open attitude, and in some departments that doesn't fly.

Renee, who started attending after Jean, described a common way of thinking as being at the foundation of a positive experience, since Wakonse is not offered as remediation for poor college teaching. As Renee put it, "Every once in a while [you get] the person who was made to go to 'fix them,' which is awkward." She went on to explain that it is awkward because that is diametrically opposed to the purpose of Wakonse.

Interdisciplinary philosophy.

The appreciation for what Wakonse is, is based on shared values of participants and the interdisciplinary philosophy behind the conference. The idea that a community of

scholars does not have to be made up of a single academic area in order to connect and inspire is very important. Joe described the interdisciplinary nature of Wakonse in the following way:

[Wakonse is based on] a subtle belief that if we connect with people outside our discipline—which in theory is what universities are about—[if you] connect with people who are in other disciplines, you see that the kind of thinking that you’re doing is not unlike the kind of thinking they’re doing. It’s just coming from a slightly different base. That’s what a university ought to be about.

Barb expanded on this idea and stressed that dialogue outside of your area of interest is part of the foundation of the conference, but there is more incorporated into the Wakonse experience. She described how the many aspects of Wakonse come together to create a unique space and experience for attendees.

I’ve mentioned the interdisciplinary conversations, but it’s more than that.

Community isn’t just a bond of social conversations. It’s about staying together. It’s about music. About singing. It’s about playing together. It’s about eating together. Building and working together. That’s what community is. There’s an amazing openness. Something really special about it. So, community, community, community.

Beyond all of this, however, there is a personal component that is an essential piece of the conference. Barb said, “I think this personality element is really critical because you’re getting together a bunch of introverts and allowing their curiosity to overwhelm their introversion.” Barb’s idea is that the personality of the individual participants is important

because it indicates that the experience is highly personalized in terms of how each attendee engages with and makes meaning of the experience.

Dara echoed this, acknowledging that there is a schedule in place, but that individuals make the experience their own.

There is room for spontaneity, but the structure is pretty locked down. And I like that. You don't have to attend everything except your dialogue group. ... You can make of it what you want, so I was able to spend three days inside my head without getting beat up for it. I mean, I was civil, but then I was able to spend one day as my extroverted self. So you can really mold it to who you are in spite of the structure and rituals. Or maybe not in spite of—you can make the rituals what you need them to be.

Beyond the commitment to teaching, a desire for community and some personality components, however, in what other ways have the participants been alike or different? What about things such as roles on campuses, racial and ethnic background, institutional type, etc.? Have the participants been more similar or more diverse when it comes to some of these other traits? Bill made the following observations about the group:

The characteristics fall into a couple of categories. Number one, are they from a large, research institution? Two, are they from a small college? And thirdly, are they staff in some way? Student affairs people. Faculty development people. There's a little bit of a difference across those groups. But in spite of that I think the people are still, pretty much, the same.

Bill said that the passion for undergraduate education overrides the differences in institutional type or position. He argued that these differences serve to bring a variety of perspectives to student engagement. There are things done in a chemistry lab that could be

modified for use in an art studio class. There are ways of approaching students at liberal arts institutions that can translate to large research institutions. This interdisciplinary approach is another piece of what makes Wakonse so unique. Many of the participants discussed the fact that they do not find these kinds of connections—connections outside of their specific departments or areas of research—in any other place.

Joe described Wakonse Fellows in a very similar way, but highlighted how he saw diversity among the participants.

If you look at the composition, it's very diverse. Not as diverse in terms of race and so forth. But diverse in terms of discipline, for sure. Only occasionally do you get too many of any one. For the most part you say, "Oh, there's somebody in the social sciences spending five days with someone who is a chemist or Renee is an artist."

That doesn't happen in any other professional meeting, if you think about it.

Renee shared similar sentiments as she highlighted the fact that there is both compatibility and diversity of backgrounds that are not always found in other settings.

I guess, I think it's interesting that everybody gets along so well. I mean, if you think about that, it's kind of rare. When you get a nice mix of people and you're in a group with a math person and a psychology person and a science person and a judicial affairs person and an artist—you're like, "What?"

Like Joe and Bill, she emphasized that there are few places for these kinds of interdisciplinary conversations to take place. The ability of people with such differing perspectives to find common ground related to shared interests and passions is an important element of Wakonse.

As has been discussed, this shared focus on teaching and learning makes this conference unique. Being able to connect with so many different people with different areas of expertise enhances the sense of connection. As participants take risks and see others being vulnerable around classroom strategies and student engagement, they realize that there is no expert and this conference experience is collaborative not competitive. Many of the participants in this study shared that they openly acknowledge to new Wakonse attendees that learning happens at every conference. Renee said, “I learn something new every year.” The willingness to share struggles and to receive the ideas and suggestions of others contributes to the community-focus of Wakonse and sets it apart from other conferences and professional development opportunities.

Social justice and inclusion.

What about diversity beyond discipline? If Wakonse is focused on appreciating all perspectives and if it is a place where the role of the individual is important, how varied are those perspectives and backgrounds? Kai said that Wakonse has worked at, “diversifying with gender, with field, with experience level. You know, we have assistant professors and full professors and everything in between.” Joe also shared that there was an intentional effort from the beginning not to distinguish based on the experience or title of participants.

Everyone is identified by his or her first name. Titles—dean, department chair, associate / assistant professor, vice president of student affairs, director, program assistant, graduate student, undergraduate student, etc.—are not used. This is meant to even the playing field during dialogue. As Joe said, “We said, we don’t have to identify them as—they’re not professors or what-not, we pushed a theme of

everybody's equal in this. We're all in the same game... That's why I often say early on, 'Don't call us by our titles. Use first names.'

That said, attendees often *do* disclose their positions and titles in the world of academe. For example, conversations on the pursuit of tenure indicate whether someone is an associate professor or not. Someone working in student affairs will likely share that they are not faculty, but staff. Graduate students who discuss their challenges in finishing the doctoral process become known as not being faculty or staff. However, that disclosure occurs at the discretion of the participant rather than as a requirement of the conference. Often it is shared as a means of further connecting and using the experiences and guidance of others at the conference. The sharing serves to further unify participants rather than to stratify them.

Undergraduate students go through a different process at Wakonse in terms of leadership development. While they are often invited to join the faculty and staff dialogue groups for some sessions, the fact that they are separated for their own activities distinguishes them from other participants. In order to provide some balance, the undergraduate students are charged with developing team builders for an afternoon workshop for all conference attendees. This puts the students in leadership positions both as facilitators of the activities and as those in charge of processing the activities afterward.

Beyond position and discipline, however, Wakonse has not been as successful in attracting a variety of perspectives. Diversity in terms of racial and ethnic identity has not been achieved at the conference. There are three ways participants talked about this type of diversity. The first was the historical context of the camp and the role of the Native American experience in the American camp movement. The second was in terms of the

racial and ethnic makeup of participants. The third area discussed by participants was the role of women at Wakonse.

Barb talked broadly about issues of diversity at Wakonse and indicated that a well-developed understanding of social justice is not a strength of the founders. While there were issues in the past around the role of Native American culture at the camp, a sense of inclusiveness for participants who were members of underrepresented groups was not something she has seen regularly at the conference. She said it was not a part of the foundation of Wakonse nor has it been central to the evolution of the conference.

I hate to say this because I hate to say anything negative about [Joe and Bill]—they don't get multiculturalism. No, I mean, they really make an effort to include people of color and all that. But they don't get the whole thing of privilege and what privilege means and how it works and all that. They don't and they're not going to. And then, you know it's like, at what point do you really expect people to do that? For their time they were the most advanced and progressive people in academe. For their time.

This section explores not just the histories of social justice and diversity at Wakonse, but also the inclusion of other groups at the conference.

The Native American experience.

An important aspect of Wakonse is its connection to Native American culture. While that was very important as the conference was founded as it drew from a student leadership camp and the American camp movement drew heavily from Native American culture, it has had to adapt in order to continue to attract staff and faculty and in order to acknowledge

aspects of its own history that may have not treated American Indians in an authentic and respectful way.

At the beginning of the conference, Bill provides a history of the American camp movement to give some context for Camp Miniwanca. He discusses the role of the Native American experience and acknowledges that while the intent may not have been to disrespect Native American culture, not all of the practices at Miniwanca or in other camps truly honored that culture. This aspect of Camp Miniwanca and Wakonse has created tension at the conference in the past, according to Jean. She described two murals in the “Upper Tipi” or main meeting hall at the camp.

Jean shared that there had been tremendous controversy about the talk given at the beginning of Wakonse in the past. She said, “It used to be that that talk was given in a very sexist, racist, traditional way and people were going nuts.” She went on to say that the founders and staff tried to interweave the traditions of the Native Americans, but that the things shared at Wakonse were often inaccurate. Jean went on to say that the sessions were problematic and not inclusive.

They were sometimes stereotypic and so you would have some scholars [on Native American culture] there sometimes and people that would be upset about what was being shared and how it was being done. In the guise of hoping to advance diversity they were insensitive sometimes.

While the experience of the American Indians is a part of the American camp movement and important to include in the history of that movement, Camp Miniwanca, and Wakonse, it has not always been navigated well. The fact that the name “Wakonse” is a contraction taken from the Lakota language exacerbates potential concerns about this. The

founders and staff came to understand that the approach they had been using was dividing rather than building a sense of connection in the Wakonse community. With input from scholars of American Indian history, the telling of that part of the history has been modified and made more appropriate, accurate, and respectful.

The fact that Wakonse adapted and more accurately reflects the history of Camp Miniwanca and the camp movement is important to its persistence. There were years as described by Jean when certain attendees—particularly scholars of Native American history—were outraged at what they perceived to be stereotypical and disrespectful projections of the American Indian culture. Had Wakonse clung to those stories and those renditions of the camp and conference history, it would not have persisted because of its historical inaccuracy as well as its cultural insensitivity.

Women at Wakonse.

While the inclusion of racially and ethnically diverse participants has been a challenge for the Wakonse conference, diversifying based on gender has been a success. There has been a space at Wakonse for women to connect and discuss their challenges, struggles, and successes. For a conference that started as primarily men, the makeup is now about half men and half women. This is due in part to intentional efforts on the part of Wakonse, but also as a result of increasing numbers of women faculty members in higher education.

The dialogue of women.

Barb provided some extensive information about the changing role of women at Wakonse. She shared that around 1991 a group of women came together to talk about being women working in academe. She went on to describe how the women discussed their

experiences. What she shared captures not only the unique struggles of women, but the willingness of these women to share intimate pieces of their experiences. The following exemplifies the desire for women participants to find a safe place where they can have a community with which to share—a community within the larger Wakonse community.

We started—somehow the topic came up of what’s the stupidest thing you’ve ever done to maintain your standing as an academic. Stupidest way you’ve ever compromised your position... We go around the circle telling stories. It’s like—oh my God, one of them was, “I can’t believe I moved for my husband to a place...” And then another woman said, “You wouldn’t believe what I had to do to get credibility in my department.”

So then, I thought I had everybody beat. I said, “Okay, guys, you know what I did that was really stupid?” I said, “I went to my department chair to ask for maternity leave when I was an assistant professor—non-tenure line—to have a baby. And he said, ‘You made your bed. You can lie in it. If you decide that you are going to take off the summer to have a baby, I’m going to give your courses to someone else.’”

Well, I couldn’t live without the money. We needed the money. And it was the course that was the key to the rest of my career—counseling the gifted. I’d invented the course. So, I said, “You guys, guess what I did? I had my baby on Friday and class began on Tuesday and I was there in the classroom at eight o’clock in the morning on Tuesday

And [another woman] goes, “I got you beat.” I’m thinking, “No way.” She said, “I was made the president of the national professional association of geographers. And I was to give my inaugural speech. Unfortunately, it coincided with the date I was

supposed to have my baby. And my colleagues told me if I wasn't there for my inauguration that it would completely destroy my credibility as an academic. So I had an elective c-section a week before to go to the conference.”

And we all sat there and there was this realization as we talked that we had all done so many insane things just to be women academics. And I felt so much solidarity with those women. In the old feminist sense. Solidarity. Consciousness-raising. It's like, “We did these things” and the sense that, “I'm not going to do this anymore. I'm not going to be a second-class citizen anymore.”

So, these women found one another—found a community of women in whom they could confide about their struggles being female faculty for possibly the first time. Wakonse was a place that was safe and where they had the time to discuss their experiences without the fear of political consequences. They opened up with one another and found common ground. Instead of competing for resources or worrying about perceptions, they were able to be honest and open about their experiences. Wakonse offered them these aspects of community which, Barb shared, she had never experienced before.

The mentoring of women.

Sometimes the connections made between women at Wakonse were more intimate and sustained than the group sharing Barb described. Dara said she reconnects with her mentor at Wakonse each year. She said that the relationship she and her mentor have is grounded in their identities as women working in higher education, but in other intersectionalities of their identities, as well. Additionally, the fact that her mentor attends Wakonse each year is a significant factor in Dara's motivation to return.

If she wasn't going, I'd have to think really hard. Or, shall we put it another way, I think, "Oh. I've done this. I've heard these speeches already, but oh—well, I'll have time with Hope." And if you don't—she's so introverted and when you're not in her sight, she's not really, necessarily thinking of you that much. And if we're not physically in the same place, I'm not going to get the kind of mentoring I need.

Women's connections through activity.

Not only has Wakonse provided a space for women to dialogue, but the activities and the setting provided opportunities for other types of engagement. Barb described a hike up one of the dunes and how it symbolized the unified experiences of women in academe.

A metaphor for it was when a bunch of women climbed Old Baldy [sand dune at Camp Miniwanca]. And I had my little baby. And it was really hard carrying a nine month old up the sand dune. And the women all took turns carrying my baby. And it was like this perfect metaphor. It's one of the first times of my life I ever saw myself as potentially getting support from other women. Because until then, it was queen bees who not only were not there to help and support me, but they were there to actively obstruct me. Actively. It was a woman department chair who made the decision the last years I was at Nebraska not to let me be tenured. I hadn't had experience with that kind of support.

Barb stressed that since those initial experiences, she always makes an effort to spend time with female participants. While there are sometimes sessions dedicated to the experience of women in academe, the nature of dialogue and community at Wakonse lends itself to spontaneous conversations around these issues, as well. Barb put it this way, "It's not like you have to organize it or anything, it just naturally happens... You're just sitting

there on the beach and all of a sudden there's a bunch of you lying there with your books and your sunglasses and the talking begins." The time set aside for reflection, therefore, is not just about being in solitude, but also about being in community with others with time to connect and share.

The inclusion of other groups.

Non-tenured faculty.

The importance of dialogue between women in academe is mirrored in other groups of people who built connections and found community at the conference. While Wakonse includes a mix of people across the higher education career spectrum, there have been recurring questions that come up year after year from subcommunities. The discussions have taken place as parts of larger-themed sessions and in dialogue group conversations. In some cases, they have also been formalized for specific groups.

Bill described how conversations related to the specific experience of faculty members seeking tenure evolved.

I don't know how long ago it was somebody said, 'Sunday morning, let's put out word that the pre-tenure people can get together and talk.' No one thought of that before. It was incredibly successful. And they all got up and talked about what they were going through and what their process was like and we have had it almost ever since. And that pre-tenure process feels like—they are all trying to do the same thing. Fighting the same battle.

This is an example of where the distinctions between rank in higher education *have* emerged; however, the pursuit of communities and safe spaces continued. Pre-tenure faculty were brought together on their own to share their hopes and fears. In other contexts, those

who have been through the tenure process are able to provide insight and guidance and support. Connections have been made that sometimes continued beyond Wakonse as people navigated their professional experiences and campus processes. Particularly with the advent of social media, connections have been made at Wakonse, built through Facebook or other venues, and continued as individuals move forward in their careers.

Not only is there space for those going through the same struggle to connect, but those who have gone through the process are available as resources. Bill talked about how the experienced faculty members in the situation above engage with the junior faculty members. This was consistently described by other participants, as well. Rather than being dismissive of those going through the tenure process, senior faculty serve in the role of “elder” according to the founders. They advise and counsel rather than minimizing the experiences of others. Barb, in fact, said that her role at Wakonse has begun to shift and she now offers one-on-one time to provide advice and guidance to those going through the tenure process, exploring their academic career options, or struggling with work-life balance issues. This kind of role reinforces the idea that Wakonse is a safe place to discuss concerns without worry about the political implications one might find on his or her own campus. That type of environment has helped to sustain Wakonse over time since it is unique in both the location, the time allotted to self-exploration and reflection and the offering and follow-through of senior faculty and staff to provide support and guidance to others.

Students.

Another group that could find itself marginalized at Wakonse is students. For a conference which was founded based on the idea that the camp experience “would be more fun without the kids,” the fact that students were re-introduced is very important. The initial

planning was done and the first few Wakonses took place with only faculty and staff as participants. However, it became clear over time that it was important to have students there to fully engage in teaching and learning dialogue and thinking. When asked why this happened, Barb responded simply, “We needed them.” Barb went on to explain that the other attendees benefit from the enthusiasm of the students. Jean shared that there is a great deal of learning that can take place by hearing about the teaching-learning experience from the perspective of students who are in the classroom.

While I was unable to identify any participants who attended as undergraduates, there are some who have attended Wakonse as future faculty who now attend as faculty members. This sense of connection implies that there is a perceived benefit to those individuals. Not only did they gain something as graduate students, they realize there is more for them to learn or an additional need for them to participate in the time, dialogue, and reflection Wakonse has to offer—enough so that they return as they move through their professional careers.

Undergraduate student participants.

The undergraduate students at the conference participate in their own training, learning, teaching, and development away from faculty and staff. As a part of that, they develop teamwork and teambuilding activities that they then facilitate with the dialogue groups at the conference. This not only provides them an opportunity to take the lead for part of the conference, but the activities they facilitate bring the dialogue groups closer together.

Students participate in other events as well. These include the Chautauqua, the optional “challenge by choice” activities described later in this chapter, and the dialogue groups. While students do not attend every dialogue group meeting, they can be invited to

engage with faculty and staff in one or two dialogue group meetings. Students also, on occasion, invite a faculty or staff member to lunch to engage one-on-one in dialogue related to higher education and student engagement.

The ways in which faculty and staff connect with the undergraduate students varies a great deal. Kai described how Reg takes on a mentee each year. While Kai does not take that approach, he does use that time to build relationships with undergraduates from his institution. Kai has met students from Missouri there with whom he remains in contact. According to him, students appreciate the faculty who think undergraduate education matters. He said the students are interested in “the process of teaching and learning as well as the leadership stuff that they do up there.”

Wakonse provides an opportunity for students and faculty to connect—again without an unfair power dynamic. While it is possible that students could have some of the Wakonse faculty in classes or work with some of the staff at Wakonse when they return to their campuses, for the time that they are at Camp Miniwanca, there is an opportunity for a different kind of dialogue. Students who spend time with dialogue groups are assigned to groups of people from other institutions when possible. This further minimizes the likelihood that students will feel stifled by being around people from their campuses.

From my observations, the dialogue group meetings with students have been exchanges of expertise. Faculty members ask students what they want in the classroom or from relationships with faculty and genuinely want to know the answers. Staff ask what students’ concerns and goals are and how they can partner more effectively to achieve those goals. Students are the experts on being students and their knowledge is respected in that context. Students, in turn, ask about assumptions faculty make about classes and students.

The exchange is enlightening for many as there are not always opportunities to have these conversations on the home campus.

Again, this is another unique aspect of Wakonse. It is a conference about teaching and learning, but one which does not overlook the role and contribution of the learner. If anything, it puts everyone in the role of both teacher and learner. It provides space and again *time* to have these conversations and gain knowledge.

Graduate student participants.

While undergraduate students are there to provide the student perspective and to learn about higher education in a very broad way, graduate students attend as future faculty members. When graduate students were first brought to Wakonse, they had their own dialogue groups. Kai said he worked with those groups around issues they might be facing as they moved into academic jobs. He said that over time, the staff realized that it wasn't necessary to separate out graduate students and that they would benefit from the conversations held by faculty and staff and that faculty and staff could ask questions and learn from graduate students, as well.

Kai said he recalled that the initial invitation went out 15 years ago to graduate students in connection with a Kellogg grant. The grant was written to help target underrepresented groups in science and mathematics. The idea behind the grant was to create mentoring relationships between graduate students and faculty in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. When Wakonse received that grant it was the first time graduate students were included in the conference.

Additionally, graduate students shared the common ground of working with students in an academic setting. Most of the graduate attendees were teaching and lab assistants as

well as research partners to faculty. At that point, graduate students became identified as “future faculty.” Joe explained that the delineation and hierarchy worked against what Wakonse was founded to bridge.

Then we started calling them “future faculty.” FFs. I think that goes back quite a ways. We now deliberately say that probably ought to be a bigger part of—it depends on being able to attract senior faculty—somebody to mentor them in that part of their life as opposed to being “above them.”

Disagreement about the student role.

Jean discussed the important roles students play in the experience at Wakonse. “I feel really strongly about the fact that that they make a contribution.” She added that most attendees appreciate the presence and contributions of students, “But others say, ‘I want to get away from students. I don’t want to have anything to do with them.’ Classy.” So, even at a conference focused on teaching and learning, not everyone agrees on the value of having students present.

While some Wakonse fellows may see the students’ presence as a burden or inconvenience, Barb discussed the role that students play *for* faculty and staff at the conference. The energy, enthusiasm, questions and perspectives students bring adds value to the experience. “There’s also a generative aspect of community—of nurturing those who are younger and are coming along. Which is why I think we adore the undergraduate part so much... To me community is about generativity. Nurturing the next generation,” Barb said.

The role of the participants in the continuation of Wakonse.

The “who” of Wakonse is the foundation for how community is built at Wakonse.

The contributions of each person are identified and used—as a staff member or a session

presenter in the context of “internal expertise” discussed previously. The contributions of different groups are identified and maximized—undergraduates as leaders during team building activities, graduate students as mentees and sources of new energy for faculty and staff. Faculty and staff become mentors to one another and to the students. Sub-communities emerge and connections are made to reinforce the collegial and supportive nature of Wakonse.

What: Wakonse Activities

Having people at the conference and making them feel a part of something larger than themselves is important, but once they have arrived, there must be something for them to *do* at the conference. There are three different types of experiences in which they have the opportunity to engage. There are structured sessions, the dialogue group meetings (which are the only “required” events at the conference), and a variety of other communal experiences designed to bring together the Wakonse group, while still affording individuals some freedom of choice in terms of participation.

One of the ideas behind Wakonse is to have a space where participants feel safe to take risks. The main risk discussed thus far has been sharing ideas about learning and teaching and the vulnerabilities related to those issues. However, there are other risks that can be taken—from facilitating sessions to high ropes experiences to performing in front of the group at the Chautauqua. Renee contextualized her risk-taking at Wakonse in this way,

Do something up there that makes you uncomfortable... And if that’s standing up at Chautauqua and singing a song or reading a poem or if that’s sitting with someone at breakfast and talking... do something that takes you completely out of your comfort level because that’s the place to do it.

The fact that the conference is long enough for people to become comfortable to take these additional kinds of risks is important. Dara said that people come and are surprised by the experience “being a little bit in shock at first of what it is, but then easing into it because the four days allow you to.” The fact that there are specific activities designed to simultaneously create a safe space and afford people the opportunity to take risks is an important part of Wakonse. This section will explore the role of the dialogue groups, the sessions, and the communal and optional activities that create the experience and incorporate participants into the unique community and experience which is Wakonse.

The role of dialogue.

The only required activity at Wakonse is participation in the dialogue groups. This expectation indicates the importance the founders and staff put on this part of the conference. So, what is the point in having people talk with one another? Why is that so central to the Wakonse experience? And what does it have to do with teaching and learning?

The dialogue group.

Those interviewed agreed that the dialogue group is essential. A recurring theme through the interviews was that the dialogue group makes or breaks the Wakonse experience. This is a focused effort at encouraging people to open up and share. Many participants might not be comfortable asking questions, answering questions or showing vulnerability in front of a group of 125 people. However, in a group of eight people, there is a chance to make connections and feel safer. This is another aspect of the conference that makes Wakonse such a rare opportunity. At most other conferences, there is not time dedicated to communicating with others beyond the sessions. If those opportunities exist, they are rarely

as interdisciplinary as the groups at Wakonse that include faculty, staff, future faculty, and—as has been mentioned—undergraduate students.

Hope said, “I don’t know if [dialogue groups are] a ritual, but the dialogue groups are certainly integral.” Dara agreed, saying, “The dialogue groups being the hub is, I think, the important part. Because you could just go off on a dune by yourself.” And Renee said she tries to stress the importance of this part of Wakonse before new attendees even arrive at the camp.

I can’t really place enough importance on the whole dialogue group thing. I’m telling people on the bus up there, “Make sure you go to your dialogue group meeting ’cause that’s really important.” And it’s not important because it’s a rule, but because I think so much stuff happens there when you’ve got a good group. And I’ve been lucky that I’ve pretty much always had really great groups.

Dialogue groups are where the deeper conversations happen and are in essence the foundation of the Wakonse community. At least an hour each day is dedicated to the dialogue groups. The members of each group get to know one another. As the group evolves and members trust one another, conversations about struggles—personal and professional—begin taking place. Faculty and staff find that they are able to share their worries without worrying about repercussions. Since most members of a dialogue group are from different campuses, the political implications for asking questions or asking for help are minimized.

The community built in the dialogue groups serves as the foundation for the larger Wakonse community. This unique aspect of the conference helps people connect with others relatively quickly. It also provides an example of the ways in which people at the conference

are encouraged and allowed to talk with one another. Those broadened parameters carry over into session interactions, conversations over meals, and puts in place a set of conditions where participants feel empowered to take other risks as well.

The importance of these groups and the time and energy dedicated to them does not ensure that things always go smoothly, however. Renee shared her experience about the first time she was a dialogue group leader. At the very first meeting, her co-facilitator said that the dialogue groups were “a waste of time” and left the group.

Then the dialogue group turned out to be a great experience. But it was trial by fire. And Joe just said, ‘cause when I went back, I said, “What do I do? The guy just left.” And Joe said, “Just keep going. Just keep doing what you’re doing.” And so I was able to do it.

Kai agreed that leading a dialogue group is a big responsibility given the role it plays in the Wakonse experience.

There’s a lot of work... I’m not studying at night to figure out what I’m going to say, but there is some pressure to doing that and being—not responsible—I’m not *responsible* for the time people have up there—but I’m a little bit responsible for making those 8 hours [of dialogue group meetings], if not extremely productive, not bad.

The experience of individual dialogue groups varies. It depends not only on the leaders, but on the members of the groups, as well. Jean called the dialogue group experiences a “wild card.” Building relationships takes time and it takes some participants more time than others. Finding common ground and the trust needed for open and authentic sharing is less science and more an art to which everyone contributes.

Kai acknowledged that the experience is a challenge because it is not necessarily easy for Wakonse attendees. “In terms of the things I think people are maybe a little uncomfortable with at the beginning, is going to a dialogue group and talking with this small group of people for an hour right after you get off the bus,” he said. He compared it to going to a chemistry conference where one presents for a short period of time and then is in the audience the rest of the time. Wakonse is different that that. He went on to say, “And [just sitting and watching] doesn’t really happen at Wakonse. So the requirement to be active is definitely one of the rituals that goes on at camp.”

Classroom connections to dialogue groups.

Participants talked about how working with dialogue groups mirrors what faculty do in the classroom. A dialogue group leader tries to create a space where participants feel safe and comfortable sharing their thoughts. Similarly, educators focused on teaching and learning try to create classrooms where students feel comfortable asking questions in order to learn. Jean said,

Every classroom is different. You don’t know the mix of what you’re going to get in there personality wise, gender wise, whatever. So you don’t know that with a dialogue group either because they’re so open-ended. Unique. Unique discussions and experiences and sometimes you can get one person in there—just as you can in a classroom—that throws the whole thing.

I was telling somebody, I had a group one year that I just was pulling my hair out... They would NOT talk. And there would be these huge long silences and I was just working so hard to draw them out. I was probably sweating, and you know we weren’t doing the strengths finder at that time. I think if I had known something

about the types of people that were there, but I—oh my, gosh—I worked more then. I just hated going to dialogue group because I just thought, “Oh they, they are miserable; they don’t want it.”

Ended up I got the highest evaluations I’ve *ever* gotten. They were just different—they all happened to be introverts. They all happened to be different personality types. They were just loving it! They thought it was great. And I was miserable... I kept in touch with that group for two years, I think.

But it’s like a classroom. I’ve had that happen in the classroom, I’ll think, “Oh, I’m going to get terrible evaluations this year ‘cause I’m socially engaged, so I don’t feel the connection unless they’re socially engaged and really actively engaged. They may be real deep thinkers, really bright, really thoughtful introverts that are taking it all in and processing it, but I can’t get any visual cues. And I get high evaluations and I’m dumbfounded. Then I’ll have a class I’m so connected with and I’ll think, “Oh, wow!” And—boom—they clobber me.

Not only does Wakonse provide space for dialogue and dedicate time on the schedule to this, by creating this component of the conference, it provides an experiential example of how a faculty or staff member might connect with a group of students. This is not necessarily stated overtly during the conference. However, the connections are there. The dialogue group leaders do things to promote conversation and interaction and to create trust with the group. This is the same set of goals many Wakonse attendees have for their classrooms. As Jean said, “So, I think [dialogue groups and classrooms] are similar... You don’t know the chemistry of what’s going to come together. It’s different every time.”

There are few opportunities—conferences or other professional development experiences—where faculty and staff get to spend four days in a laboratory participating in group dynamics experiments. They get to see how community is built—quickly. They can not only learn about teaching but they can learn about learning. This innovative experience remains unique in higher education and something participants value and to which new faculty and staff continue to be drawn year after year.

Other forms of dialogue.

The nature of dialogue and the role it plays at Wakonse go beyond the structured dialogue groups. There is free time for participants to talk with one another, community meals provide opportunities for conversation, and there are other activities in which participants may engage that lend themselves to conversation. Barb described the importance of talking in the following way:

It works. At Wakonse you have these little short conversations that you would normally blow off. It's not like I'm an introvert. I'm an extrovert and all that, but my tendency is if people don't amuse or entertain me, I just blow them off. But at Wakonse, you can't. Something about that captive thing. It makes people really uncomfortable at first, but then it turns out to be really good.

Barb shared an experience that provided some context to how the conversations take place. They are often spontaneous, unstructured, and random. She described one such interaction with Bill.

We ended up singing show tunes. Bill and I standing at either end of the building shouting "Some Enchanted Evening..." But in between all that were some of the most amazing conversations I've ever had.

I can remember that night, talking with Bill about the course he had taught on Descartes. And I remember talking about how rational consciousness was privileged. We—I always had these big arguments when I was at Wakonse because I was really getting deep into Native American spirituality so I was pushing against the privileging of rational consciousness. So I could quarrel with Bill about that and we were having these amazing conversations about music and philosophy. Best conversations of my life.

This is an example of the founders doing exactly what they hoped the other participants were doing. They had built an experience to afford the opportunity to engage with like-minded people in academe to struggle with issues—philosophical, occupational and vocational. Barb described having “big arguments” at Wakonse because it was a safe place for her to do that. The founders built Wakonse for themselves, but they wanted Wakonse to be a safe place for others to have open and risky conversations as well.

One of the outcomes of the dialogue at Wakonse is the relationship-building that takes place. Kai described some of his connections as having more practical implications for how he engaged with his home institution. He discussed talking with the Director of Residential Life and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs on his campus.

They were both at Wakonse and I kind of hung out with them... And then I got really involved in a lot of on-campus activities because of my interaction with them. So I got into the student booster groups for football and basketball and I know the director for student life and student activities and really have been tied in with res life because of my original meeting with [the director].

That was—in that first case, that was really the big connection. The big networking step of the conference. Not so much intellectually transforming, but really there was no way I would have met [people in student affairs] just hanging around campus as an assistant professor in chemistry.

Kai summed up his dialogue-based connections from Wakonse pragmatically. He acknowledged that not every connection he makes at the conference becomes a long-standing relationship or deep friendship. However, that idea of community through conversation is essential to the experience. “And a lot of time I don’t stay in contact with them, but there’s a spirit and a sense of community about—here’s 120 people who really are dedicated to something that I feel is important.”

The conversations at Wakonse are one of the things all the participants referenced as being special and important at the conference. They were able to make connections between the different types of dialogue and their work on campus. This is another reason they continued to be invested in Wakonse and that Wakonse has persisted. Some of the participants talked about their connections with other attendees or staff. Those dialogue-based connections provide support for the continuation of Wakonse. It is a place and a space where people can connect and reconnect, a place where new conversations take place every year based on the needs and interests of the attendees. This dialogue is a key element in the continuation of Wakonse.

Communal experiences.

While the dialogue groups help attendees build connections with a small group of Wakonse Fellows, there is a sense of belonging cultivated with the larger group, as well.

There are other opportunities designed to inspire Wakonse Fellows and make them feel a part

of the larger experience. These communal events include the daily routine of the camp; optional activities, which Hope described as “challenge by choice”; the Chautauqua; and, finally, the Virtual Wakonse at the end of the conference. In this section I discuss each of these experiences and how they play into the development of community at the conference.

Lodging and dining.

Part of the daily routine of the camp includes the accommodations. As has been referenced earlier in this study, the facilities at Camp Miniwanca are rustic. Wakonse Fellows share small rooms that include two twin beds, a dresser, closet, and shared nightstand. The bathrooms are community facilities. The accommodations have sand on the floor from the traffic in and out of the buildings. And people interact there. Some of the participants may not have had a roommate (aside from their partners) in years. Living with another person in a small space, even for a few days, is a transformative experience for some. Jean described this experience.

Heck, living in a camp setting in a bunk bedroom or a room with someone you don't know or with people who snore. You can hear them in the next room. You don't have the amenities that distract us so often. Or this level of comfort that we seek that really keeps us separate... It's not a conference as you think of a conference.

Dara echoed Jean, saying the accommodations are actually a catalyst for conversation. Where you are staying and how you are living is a significant part of the experience. She described the interactions in the facilities this way,

There are no locks on the doors to your room. And the walls are paper thin. And there's sand everywhere. So it's the *unconference* conference... you just have to get in a really different mindset. And the no locks on the doors is kind of indicative—it's

symbolic of an openness that you can also have in your dialogue groups—potentially.

That there's a safety...

Dara added that the community bathrooms contribute to dialogue, as well. Having limited shower facilities or sinks or toilets means that participants run into each other as they are coming and going from the restroom. She said that participants encounter one another while brushing their teeth or coming and going.

Kai said the lack of extravagant accommodations usually encourages people to open up rather than to shut down. He put it this way, “And maybe the rustic nature of the accommodations adds to people's wanting to be out of their rooms and socializing and talking. The idea that the rooms are not luxurious encourages people to engage with one another.” Since the rooms are not a place one would spend a lot of time and there are no TVs or other technology to distract from human interaction, people are forced to connect with people or spend time alone reflecting. The small town on the edge of camp has a small store, an ice cream shop, and a bar, but not much else. The focus in being at Wakonse is on the beauty and solitude of the place and the fellowship with other participants. Unlike other conferences where one can be shut up in a hotel room watching TV or out on the town when not in sessions, there is no escaping Wakonse. Participants can find space for themselves to be quiet and reflective, but they are not likely to do that in their rooms.

This part of the experience can be uncomfortable for some participants. Joe said it was important to be honest about the setting and the accommodations attendees could expect. He said, “Early on we realized how important it is to describe this as a camp. It's not the Hyatt.” He went on to share that at least one participant left after seeing the venue and accommodations. He said that if they were not forthcoming about what the experience

entailed, people would raise concerns, saying, ““What is this? Camp? With a roommate? And showers down the hall? No-no-no. I’m outta here!””

Similarly, meals are a community event. People eat in one large dining hall, getting their food by going through lines and sitting in non-assigned seats. Kai stressed that everyone eating together was important. Some dialogue groups eat together on occasion, but for the most part, Wakonse Fellows get their food and choose where to sit and with whom to eat.

Bill, on the other hand, commented on the quality of the meals, saying, “The food’s gotten better, I think. Marginally better. I’m not saying it’s great, but it has its magic moments. You know, grilled cheese sandwiches and you try to find the cheese between the slices of bread.” Again, however, this stresses the role of community over luxury—in terms of accommodations and dining.

The shared experience is the most important thing. This is not a conference that will boast about luxury in accommodations or exotic dining options. This is a conference that focuses on the people, not the trappings of the event. These are just a few other ways in which Wakonse sets itself apart from other experiences and focuses on community and togetherness rather than individuality and separateness.

Low ropes

The notion of community is so central to Wakonse and the dialogue groups are the primary place of belonging for many participants. With that in mind, the founders dedicated time to building a sense of team within the dialogue groups. The undergraduate students develop teambuilding activities and facilitate them as a means of connecting with faculty and staff. This is put together as a low ropes experience for the Wakonse Fellows.

Kai discussed how this developed over time. He said that teambuilding activities have always been a part of the Wakonse experience. According to Kai, “The low ropes course is a ritual that I think is really important in terms of group bonding.” Hope echoed this sentiment,

Those team building exercises which the students do I think is an important rite of the conference, as well. I think the conference would be-it would not be devastated without that, but it would be a loss. It would feel something’s not quite there.

The low ropes experience was developed to help the dialogue groups feel a stronger sense of connection. Each group introduces itself in some way and then members engage in a series of activities—physical, artistic, problem-solving—as a team. This creates a stronger connection and sense of trust among the group. That trust is crucial when it comes to sharing with one another in dialogue group meetings.

This experience affords groups the opportunity to connect quickly. Barb said that the shared activity is important and a turning point when the community really begins to come together. Spending time doing these sorts of getting to know you activities is essential to the connections people feel and make. This set of activities is very important to the success of Wakonse and sets Wakonse apart from other conferences.

Sessions.

Most conferences focus on the presentations and poster sessions: the bulk of the pages are dedicated to what the topics are, who the presenters are and where the sessions are. That is not the case with Wakonse. Sessions are included, but are not the true focal point of this experience. There are some plenary sessions with structured presentations and activities, but the bulk of the sessions are topical conversations.

Participants find out just before they arrive—sometimes on the bus on the way to Wakonse—that they are going to be helping to facilitate a conversation about a given topic. This is done intentionally. The goal, according to Joe and Jean, is for sessions to be spontaneous and unstructured and therefore potentially more responsive to the needs of those who attend that session.

The participants' main comments about the Wakonse conference sessions were that the sessions honor and value the knowledge within the group of attendees. That said there were some references to particular moments within some of the sessions which are valued by participants. For example, Hope discussed Bill's talk about the importance of teaching and said, "I think of the Bill Bondeson history talk as maybe a rite or ritual of the conference. That message, very early, says, 'Teaching matters, and you matter.'" So this idea about the knowledge from within the group as opposed to bringing in outside speakers is role modeled by the founders. Some of the sharing is from peers and others takes place in a "wisdom of elders" style.

Jean talked about how the sessions are conversations more than presentations. She said that there are often concerns about the fact that participants find out at the last minute that they are leading conversations. However, she said this is intentional because the goal is dialogue, not a power point or formal lecture on the topics. Assignments on these topics are made based on the application Wakonse Fellows submit before attending the conference.

Another benefit of this type of session is the example it provides of building connections and community. When there are faculty and staff from different institutions leading sessions, they have to communicate and develop rapport to lead the conversation. This also mirrors work that faculty might do in the classroom to get students to engage with

one another with little to no notice or preparation. It also exemplifies how faculty and staff might engage with one another when they return to their home institutions.

The sessions again are opportunities for connection and putting theory into practice. Ideas about how to engage students are implemented through the informal structure of the sessions. The goal of the sessions is to get people talking with one another to further the goal of building community. This translates directly to the classroom where faculty want students to be engaged and talk with one another about the subject matter and engage in activities in class. This translates to the work that higher education staff members do in reaching out to students and partnering with them to enhance students' success. This experiential approach with practical and usable outcomes has helped Wakonse to continue since it is not offered on this scale in other conference settings.

Sunsets.

Another shared time of day participants discussed was the sunset. Watching the sunset is on the schedule every day. Those interested (usually most of the conference attendees) gather on the beach of Lake Michigan to watch the sun go down. Taking time for this as a part of the daily ritual is not something attendees do at home when they are in their normal routines. The fact that it is acknowledged at Wakonse matters. Dara described the importance of this, saying,

Oh certainly one of the most central rituals for me is meeting at the sunset. It's actually on the agenda, I think, too. And we're together down there and you actually are getting to know people you don't even know 'cause you—you're admiring this thing together. So it's kind of a blessing on the day.

This contributes to the sustaining of Wakonse in a very subtle way. It definitely brings people together; however, it brings them together in a larger, almost cosmic way. It is a moment in time when everyone watches the sunset over Lake Michigan and has the chance to acknowledge that everyone is a part of something bigger. This is never stated explicitly. However, the experience creates a shared space and memory.

During the 2012 Wakonse, there were actually very few visible sunsets because of rain and clouds through much of the conference. However, one of the last evenings, there was a striking sunset as a storm moved in. Dara talked about that as being particularly memorable. Kai said that while many of the sunsets seem the same to him, that one stuck out for him as well. Taking the time to acknowledge a shared moment is an important element of Wakonse. The common parts of the human experience and how those things contribute to community are underscored by things like watching sunsets together.

Challenge by choice.

Beyond Wakonse's daily routine, there are other opportunities to have shared experiences. Attendees are allowed to choose different events in which they can participate. Some of these activities include a high ropes course, a polar bear plunge into Lake Michigan, and trips—or “quests” as they are described—to The Yacht Club in the evenings. The Yacht Club is the bar in the small town next to Camp Miniwanca that serves fried asparagus—a local delicacy. Having fried asparagus is also a part of the Wakonse experience for most attendees.

No one is obligated to do any of these things, but they are invited and encouraged to do *something* to rejuvenate or challenge themselves. Some other opportunities available, but not discussed at length by participants included horseback riding, shopping trips to a pottery

store and market, hikes of the camp and dunes, a tour of a local cemetery, and a non-denominational worship service. Hope called these “rites of Wakonse.”

Jean explained that these opportunities were additions to Wakonse and were not options originally. Instead, there was free time and attendees figured out on their own what they might like to do. Jean described it as another way that Wakonse developed the experts within rather than bringing in outsiders to facilitate activities. Since there were participants who were experienced in high ropes, cemeteries, art, and other activities, Wakonse used their talents and skills to develop opportunities for conference attendees.

Here Wakonse not only provides different ways for community to develop, but it plays upon the strengths of the participants. The conference has adapted to provide options for attendees. The idea that people can learn from one another not just in formal sessions is a significant foundational concept for Wakonse. In fact, sessions make up a very small part of the experience. The learning and connections are developed through shared experiences. This different approach is appealing to many attendees and has helped Wakonse to persist as an alternative to other types of professional development opportunities.

High ropes.

The high ropes course at Wakonse was something significant for a number of the participants interviewed for this study. When people spoke of this experience, they connected it to teaching, learning, and community. Participating in the activities is not simply about the self and the challenge. It is about being a part of something larger. Dara specifically related the connections between completing the high ropes course and teaching and learning. She used it as an example of how she approaches her classrooms.

I did the high ropes course and that was a big deal for me. I was able to use that as a really neat metaphor in the retreat when I got back on scaffolding learning and having a team on the ground yelling up to you. And I remember yelling specifically, “Is there a handhold there behind this pole?” And they yelled up, “Yes, there is!” So it was a wonderful metaphor for learning.

Renee shared a similar experience. She talked about her active resistance to doing high ropes. She had predetermined that she would not be participating in that activity and in fact attended Wakonse for several years without doing the high ropes course. One year, however, circumstances and relationships inspired her to participate.

I have gone up there and I said, “I am not going to do [high ropes] and I’m not going to do the Polar Plunge.” I’m terrified of heights. And everyone said, “Oh, you should do it. You should do it.” And I’m like, “Nope. No. That’s fine. You all go and do it.”

And someone in our group looked at me—and she was about ten years older than me—and she said, “Let’s do the high ropes.” And I said, “Okay.”

And I have no idea why I said it. She was scared of heights. And I was scared of heights. And we went and did it. And I remember climbing up that damn pole on the outside... There’s this big pole and you climb up to the top and you walk across this beam and you run down. And I was running down the beam and Kai was standing there and I saw him and I started bawling uncontrollably—which, of course, was very uncomfortable for him. But, I mean, I could not believe I did that. I could not BELIEVE I did that. And then I could not wait to get back up there...

But it was like I went home walking a little taller. That for me was a huge risk. *Huge* risk. And I did it because someone I felt trusted me or someone in my dialogue group who I felt responsible for had asked me to do it. No one had ever asked me to do it before. They'd said, "Oh you should do it," but they never said, "Hey will you do it with me?" But when someone did, I said yes.

This story is an important example of what happens at Wakonse. People who did not otherwise know one another connect and support one another. People inspire and motivate each other. And the experience is relevant to teaching and learning. High ropes, as an example, brings the experience full circle. Participants come to a strange place and meet strangers. They share and build trust quickly. They then engage in an experience together—dialogue group, sharing a meal, high ropes. They become even more connected and are willing to share more about their successes and their fears. Wakonse provides all of the elements—people in the right frame of mind with a shared passion who are willing to talk and act and care for each other. The participants take on challenges knowing that they have support. They take risks knowing that others will not—literally or figuratively—let them fall. The ability to have a unique experience like this and to make a clear connection to teaching and learning and community contribute to the sustainability of Wakonse. It is a unique experience and provides things to participants they simply cannot get anywhere else.

Polar bear plunge.

The Polar Bear Plunge into Lake Michigan was shared as a ritual, but it was not held in the same regard as other activities. Renee made it clear that she has no interest in participating in the Polar Bear Plunge. She said, "That same year I did that first high ropes, I went and ran into that damn water. And I have not felt the need to do that again. 'Cause that

was bad... And I just hope no one ever asks me to do that Polar Bear thing because, again, I'm not doing it." Bill added, "We started Polar Bear a few years ago, but I don't know if that helped anybody do anything. Probably not."

This could be dismissed as irrelevant to the experience. In fact, Wakonse could easily continue without the Polar Bear Plunge. However, there is something that it contributes. Not everyone participates, but nearly everyone is there when it happens. Those who go in the water get a t-shirt which boasts that they accomplished the task. Others watch and cheer in support of those going in the water. This brings the community together in a different way. Not everything is done or experienced in the same way—and that is okay.

This provides a good example of how Wakonse is personalized. While there are expectations about participation in dialogue group, not everyone is mandated to do everything together. "Mandatory fun" is not a part of Wakonse. People have the autonomy to make the experience their own. If the conference was overly structured with a huge number of required activities, it is likely that fewer people would attend. Renee said she had no desire to do the Polar Bear Plunge again. Bill said he didn't know if it contributed anything. It isn't for everyone, but there are not judgments made if some go in and some watch from the shore. This parallels classroom interactions where not everyone may be able to jump in at the same time, but it doesn't mean that they can't all learn in some way. This reinforces the idea that in a classroom the role of faculty is sometimes to support and other times to encourage.

Chautauqua.

The talent show referred to by Wakonse as the Chautauqua is held the second to the last night of Wakonse. As mentioned earlier, it is a major event where people share their

talents—sometimes related to their discipline (a skit about a struggling chemistry student) or completely unrelated (playing an instrument). Some of them highlight struggles engaging with students in the classroom. People participate on a volunteer basis, but Kai described it as a rite of passage for Wakonse. “Everybody’s involved in that—whether they’re on stage or not.” Barb said it was built around an idea of “bringing professors together around food, fun and friends.”

Renee said the Chautauqua works because Wakonse is a place where people are encouraged to take risks and feel safe doing so.

And that’s why I have written and read poems at Chautauqua. And I’ve never shared them [away from Wakonse]. But I’ll go and stand in front of those people. And sometimes I won’t, but I’ve read a couple poems up there that I’ve written. And I don’t write poems.

Again the creation of an environment where people feel safe taking risks comes through in Renee’s comments. The talent show is an intentional reflection of the classroom. It could be a traditional format with a lecturer (performer) in front of the group—the performing providing and the audience receiving. It can also be interactive with the audience participating in “the act” with the performer.

The Chautauqua provides a forum for creativity and sharing of oneself and risk-taking. All of these things are stressed as valuable in the classroom as well as on the stage. These sorts of unorthodox connections between teaching and learning and performing give Wakonse a different energy than other conferences. Thus, the Chautauqua is another reason the conference continues and another way Wakonse values the whole person and everything they have to offer.

Virtual Wakonse.

One final aspect of Wakonse that is important to the sense of belonging and community is the Virtual Wakonse presentation on the last night. Throughout the week there are several people taking photographs of events and participants as they attend sessions, engage socially, and dialogue around a variety of issues. On that last evening, the photos are put together with music and presented for the participants to watch. During that presentation, Wakonse attendees *literally* see themselves as members of the Wakonse community.

Bill, Dara and Hope identified the photography as an important part. Bill commented on the beauty of the images. Dara talked more about the process of being in the photographs. “You are photographed from the minute you step out of your vehicle until the minute you step back in.” Dara shared. Hope took this further and integrated the images, the sense of self and the larger community.

I think the virtual Wakonse at the end is an important rite—a ritual maybe. More of a ritual. Because then people are seeing themselves. Because at the end you see, “Hey, I really am a part of this conference.” I think that’s important.

So the sense of community involves the people and the activities at the Wakonse conference, but culminates in a literal and tangible set of images capturing the belongingness of the Wakonse Fellows.

Where: The Role of Camp Miniwanca

Thus far the study has explored the *who* (founders and participants) and the *what* (activities) of the Wakonse conference. This experience, however, cannot be separated from *where* Wakonse takes place. The role of Camp Miniwanca in the lives of the founders is an important element related to the foundation for the conference. The conference was

developed while the founders were at Camp Miniwanca for the youth leadership conference. It came to fruition in response to a possible “banishment” as Barb described it, from this particular camp.

Founders’ perspectives on place.

Each year, Joe gives an opening speech in which he welcomes the conference attendees. Among the things he shares is the idea of the “magic” of Wakonse, referring to Camp Miniwanca as a “magical place.” Wakonse has never been held anywhere else. It always happens at Camp Miniwanca. So what role does the location play in the Wakonse experience and persistence of the conference?

Joe, Bill, and Barb discussed their connections with Camp Miniwanca in different ways. Joe’s comments were more factual and less personal or emotional. Bill commented primarily on the beauty of the location. Barb talked about her personal connection to Camp Miniwanca as a refuge from other things in her life.

Joe shared that his association with the American Youth Foundation made for a natural connection with Camp Miniwanca. Not only was the setting itself appealing for professor camp, the costs would be more manageable since the facilities were basic. “It’s a rustic, camp setting. It was reasonable to talk about a conference relatively inexpensive.”

His comments, however, were not purely pragmatic. There is something else about Camp Miniwanca that Joe said was significant to him. He discussed his original connection to the place. He talked about being familiar and comfortable there. He talked about the relative convenience of the location for the institutions that participate. He also talked about the important role of nature and finding the magic at Miniwanca.

I think probably I discovered the magic of the place there and I wanted to see that shared. I spent ten years there doing the leadership stuff and came to know—if you will—all of the trappings of that environment. I don't know that I can get those across to people in five days, but always felt there was more to it than we were able to explain.

Joe said “Faculty like Bill Bondeson would come up and he'd say, ‘Boy this is a beautiful place.’ And it became very attractive just to spend another day there.” Joe said that Hope has shared that the first thing she does when she arrives at Miniwanca is to go to the beach and walk in the sand. He added, “And that's something that a lot of academics at a lot of places—they've not had that experience. So that's—that makes the appeal of the place somewhat unique.”

Bill said that the natural beauty of Wakonse is definitely an attraction. He added that returning to the same site year after year provides a sense of consistency for the staff. There was not a need to figure out the details and logistics in the same way as if the location changed from year to year.

Barb's description of the relationship with Miniwanca was different. Rather than simply being a beautiful, convenient, familiar, and affordable location, her desire to stay connected with the site was highly personal. She became very intense and emotional in describing her passion for this location. She shared that there came a point when she and Joe and Bill might not be allowed to return to the camp because of fall-out with the leadership of the American Youth Foundation. She shared that her husband was struggling with mental health issues and the camp was a refuge for their family. This made the place very important to her.

We were all vulnerable to losing Miniwanca. Now remember this was the most precious place on earth to most of us. And we were all vulnerable to losing it. So, now back to where I'm coming from. The only place my husband is happy is Miniwanca. So I get a few weeks—I get these two weeks to be happy. Which we'd expanded to three full weeks. I tried to make it as long as possible that we could be there. 'Cause that's when our family was happy. As soon as we'd get home, he'd go into a deep depression again...

Barb expressed this passionately when she described how desperately she and the other founders fought to maintain their connection to this community.

[We were] in danger of losing this place which is our community. It's our village.

By this time it's our tribe. And we were in danger of losing that.

As was discussed in connection with why Wakonse was founded, the feelings about Camp Miniwanca provided part of the catalyst for the creation of Professor Camp. The fact that Wakonse has continued to be housed at Miniwanca has also contributed to the continuation of the conference. Wakonse has been sustained over time in part because of the passion and connection the founders and other participants have with this location. The non-founders who participated in this study all talked about the importance of a place in nature. They all had developed their own connections to Camp Miniwanca.

The conference has also been easier to manage from one year to the next due to staff familiarity with the facilities and site. This frees up time on the part of the staff to focus on attendees and the development of community rather than the logistical details of running a conference.

Role of nature.

The new world of Miniwanca is not just about the facilities and the routines Renee described. There is a literal change of environment. The fact that the camp is located in the woods on the shores of Lake Michigan was significant to participants. Hope talked about how the beauty of the place was what inspired her to continue to be involved with Wakonse. “It’s that gorgeous place. I have to be honest it’s that gorgeous place that brought me back year after year initially.”

Renee said that the location is peaceful and part of the allure for her. She suspects that the quietness of Camp Miniwanca is part of what is appealing to others as well.

I think the place plays a big part in it... I don’t think that people get enough of [nature] in their everyday life. And forcing them to do that... You know, if it were in a conference center, can you imagine? And going room to room? It would not be the same. If it were in a city, it would not be the same.

I think you have to have woods. You have to have the chance for people to go out and get away from everybody else and think, “Okay, maybe I’m going to pass somebody on the beach, but I don’t have to talk to them if I don’t want to.” And if you were in a—I just can’t imagine if you were in a hotel or something—where conferences are often held... It just wouldn’t be the same.

Dara talked about how the place itself inspired a desire for her to return. She said, “Even if I think, ‘Aw, I don’t need to go again. It’s going to be the same old things...’ Something about those waves aren’t the same.” She went on to talk about how the history of the camp itself does not provide significance for her, but that certain experiences do trigger a connection.

The name of the camp... The Indian associations or the Native American associations and the American Youth ... Foundation. None of those have meaning for me. But pulling into that parking lot and walking up those steps... You know, those sandy steps, with luggage in arms or filling the pickup truck or whatever—all of those things, you know, there's already—after four years—a nostalgia for me... So, the fact that it's in the same place I think, is important.

And there is something just unbelievably beautiful about having the gnarly hemlocks and the gnarly kind of forest and then the dunes and then the beach and—I mean it's quite an incredible combination. And so it wouldn't be quite the same without—well certainly without the lake. The power of the lake.

The connection to this location has certainly contributed to the continuation of the conference for the founders and the staff. Returning to a place that is nostalgic as Dara described it or safe as Renee said, matters. The fact that the staff are comfortable there lowers the anxiety around the details of the experience so that they can focus on the needs and questions and concerns of the participants. Not simply attendees' accommodations, but their needs as faculty and staff and their needs as people who care passionately about student engagement. This has served to increase the quality of the experience and again encourages attendees to speak highly of the conference when talking with peers and potentially recruiting new attendees for the future.

Safe space.

In order for the conference to be a place where attendees could share and learn and grow in the way the founders envisioned it, Wakonse had to be not only beautiful and familiar, but a safe place for risk-taking. Participants shared that it is not always safe to share

struggles or fears with colleagues on one's own campus or in their own departments. Campuses can be unsupportive of faculty who are passionate about undergraduate teaching.

There are a variety of personal, political, and other issues that contribute to this. These include the push for research and grant money and the competitive nature of the promotion and tenure process. Hope explained the importance of the environment for this conference; it had to be carefully developed and attended to in order for attendees to maximize their experiences.

You have to figure out how to create that place where people can voice their fears, their anxieties, their things that they feel like they don't do well, things that frustrate them about students or whatever, along with the things that they do think that they can do well and they get heard.

Creating this kind of space is critical because it doesn't necessarily exist anywhere else. One of the things that Wakonse does exceptionally well is to create an experience where people feel comfortable voicing their fears. This is a tremendous accomplishment and a significant contributing factor to the conference's persistence.

Renee said that the transition to Camp Miniwanca came easily to her, though it isn't immediate for everyone. She said, "I think it was a safe place to be. And I think you feel that just walking around the camp. Some people, it takes them a couple of days before they feel safe there, but I felt safe immediately."

This safe space afforded those who attended the conference the chance to come together with others who had similar values in terms of education and their own priorities. For many of the participants, Wakonse was a transformative experience because they hadn't found a large group of others who shared their passion around student engagement and

teaching and learning. It was one of few places where they found like-minded people who cared about the in-class experience of students. Jean, in particular, shared a great deal of her personal story as the setting for how and why Wakonse had such a significant impact on her.

But I remember for me it was the first time anyone in the university setting had paid attention to teaching. And that meant a lot to me. I couldn't believe it. And talking about ways you could make your teaching better. Pedagogical strategies.

Now, I taught kindergarten and I was into teaching and education, but it was the first time I'd been around a group of multi-disciplinary faculty that were talking about teaching at the college level. And I couldn't believe it.

Renee described a similar disconnect at her institution around the value of teaching. She said that Wakonse filled a void by providing a group of peers who valued the work in the classroom as much as what was done outside of teaching. She described her experience in this way,

You know it was my third year, people had been saying, "Don't worry about your teaching. Only worry about your research." And I knew that wasn't me. So finally you go somewhere where everybody talks about teaching.

And then when I went back to campus and I'd realized that's what I'm focusing on. I'm focusing on teaching. And if then I don't get tenure because of that, so be it. I'll go somewhere else that allows me to focus on that, but that's what I'm going to do.

And I feel like I now have the support of people. And it's not like Wakonse denounces research, but when you are a better teacher, I think you can do better research. Or for me it worked that way.

In this passage Renee highlights something central to Wakonse. While the conference provides a setting for educators to connect around student learning, it is *not* done at the expense of research or service. The participants expressed an understanding of the value of research and the importance of obtaining grants in order to sustain research and thereby sustaining institutions of higher education. Rather, the point was made over and over again that those who attended Wakonse were looking for others who also valued teaching. With many of the participants working at research intensive institutions, this point was made over and over again.

Hope shared that teaching was a central point of connection for participants from her institution, as well. She was unable to recall the initial recruitment strategies, but Wakonse took root and grew at her institution. Hope acknowledged that there was a necessary predisposition to valuing student engagement in the classroom in order for attendees to maximize the Wakonse experience.

I don't remember to what extent they were just people who were already interested in teaching and so we got them for that purpose, so that was probably the main reason.

But there were departments that wanted to encourage their faculty in regard to teaching.

Many of the participants in this study made connections at Wakonse. These connections were often interdisciplinary and with diverse groups from a variety of institutions. The conversations in these dialogue groups often brought individuals together in their struggles and experiences within academe. As Hope said, Wakonse filled a void—this means it served a purpose and met needs not being met elsewhere. This is important to the reasons behind why Wakonse has continued.

It is important to note that conference attendees also carried those experiences back to their work lives on their individual campuses. Often participants discussed that they met people from their own institutions whom they did not know before traveling to Wakonse. While this could affect the sense of safety people felt in sharing at Wakonse, the structure of the dialogue groups—separating people so that they are not in large groups with others from their institutions—helps prevent politics from intruding too much. However, for those institutions who send a number of people, the travel to and from the conference as well as time spent socially and in activities with people from one’s own institution open doors for additional and ongoing collaboration, partnerships and support.

The idea of student learning and engagement is not only discussed at Wakonse, it is part of the experiential program of the conference. Hope discussed that the way participants experience Wakonse mirrors the experience of undergraduate students in the classroom.

You get people who love to teach and love students and love to learn and get them all together rubbing shoulders with each other and talking with each other and great things happen...

I’m immediately reminded of my own class that I had this morning which is my math class. You have students who are coming in feeling very anxious about math and not feeling very confident about math. And I depend on them to talk with each other and let me hear what’s on their minds. And you have to create an environment where that’s okay to do.

In much the same way, rarely do you have faculty who will claim, “I am an expert on all things related to teaching and learning. I never have a down day. I know exactly what to do in every situation.” So you have faculty that are somewhat anxious about

the teaching aspect of their career in that sense—that they don't necessarily feel super-confident—which is very different from their research. That is something that they were well-trained to do and they approach it with a great deal of confidence. I think often—you know faculty don't necessarily believe that they have all of the answers when it comes to teaching and learning, so part of what has to happen in a dialogue group is-it has to be a place where all those voices can be heard.

Renee made a similar comparison and focused on how she hopes her students will take risks in her classroom. Renee said Wakonse is a place where people should do something that makes them uncomfortable, whether that is “standing up at Chautauqua and singing a song or reading a poem or if that's sitting with someone at breakfast and talking...do something that takes you completely out of your comfort level because that's the place to do it.” She went on to say, “That's my whole teaching philosophy in a nutshell... That if I can make my classroom the most comfortable place then they can try anything because they know I'll catch them.”

By taking educators who care about teaching and learning and giving them a forum to safely discuss their challenges, Wakonse helps them walk in the shoes of their students. Students may come into the classroom wanting to be successful, but being afraid to engage and ask questions. The fear of asking questions is based on a fear of looking foolish. As an example, a faculty member might have the same fear asking questions about his teaching. Not only might he fear his question will reveal him as foolish because the answer is “simple,” so might he fear being seen as foolish for even caring enough *to ask* about teaching and learning in the first place. This concept was conveyed by a number of participants in the study.

Students experience the same thing. They come into classes and may be afraid to ask questions because they think everyone else in the room already knows the answer. Or they may fear that others will be annoyed that someone cares enough about learning to ask for clarification. Wakonse not only discusses how to create safe, engaged, and productive classrooms, it puts attendees in a place to better understand their students. Wakonse tackles the topic of teaching in a broad way—from sharing passion to sharing strategies to practicing strategies. This unique way of caring about the classroom as a community of teachers and learners and not only getting ideas (as attendees at most conferences do), but getting the opportunity to see those ideas in action sets Wakonse apart. Wakonse goes beyond the storytelling or case study methods of providing examples. Empowering people to speak and participate fully happens throughout the conference. Faculty and staff are able to adapt their Wakonse experiences in their work back on campus. More than hearing someone talk about a topic, Wakonse provides a laboratory where participants experience first-hand how strategies are used. This does not happen in other settings according to the participants of this study. This is another example of filling the void Hope identified, which is significant in terms of why Wakonse has continued—it provides some things participants get nowhere else.

Camp as a place of connection.

The rustic nature of Miniwanca lends itself to community building and human connection essential for the creation of a safe space. Taking people out of their comfort zones and putting them at a site with very limited technology access enhances human interaction, according to the participants. They stressed that the conversations that happen at Wakonse would not happen on their campuses or in traditional conference settings. Renee discussed how the place led her to being open to making connections and accepting what

others had to offer her. She said this was particularly striking to her the first year she attended Wakonse. She described the experience as follows:

And I felt like every person I was talking to was giving me something really important. So everybody I talked to, I would come away thinking, “Wow, I didn’t know that,” or “I never would have thought of that.” And it was just every single person I talked to, I felt like I got something. And I was probably hungry for that...

Hope talked about the importance of the place as a means of helping participants find common ground. She mentioned place both in terms of the grounds on which the camp is located and in terms of removing hierarchical structures.

I think the informality of the space. The casual dress. The leveling of the playing field. You can’t tell who’s a full professor and who’s an assistant professor and who’s a graduate student and who’s a student, for that matter because you can’t tell by appearance or by name tags. So everybody—the place itself puts people at their ease. They can breathe.

Repeatedly during interviews the idea of having to go all the way to Camp Miniwanca to meet people from one’s own campus was brought up. Nearly everyone mentioned it. Renee described it in the following way,

You go all the way up there and you suddenly meet people on your campus that you didn’t even know. I mean, that’s where I met Kai. That’s where I met all the staff people. And they’ve been personally and professionally just—I wouldn’t, I don’t think I’d be tenured if I didn’t have those connections.

The participants identified different connections with Camp Miniwanca based on their own lived experiences. They did identify themes of the rustic setting and the important role of

nature in the experience. Opportunities for solitude combined with time and space to make human connections were also mentioned in multiple interviews as part of what makes Wakonse work and persist.

Letting go at Wakonse.

Being in an isolated, natural venue not only frees up people to connect with one another, it also affords participants the opportunity to reconnect with themselves. Because of the lack of distractions related to work, family, and other obligations, participants are able to let go. Jean credits the continuation of Wakonse over the years to this aspect of the conference. She said, “It is the uniqueness of the experience that’s kept it going. You’re taking people to a camp setting... and people sometimes resist that at first or have a real transition problem, but once they let go [it works].”

The letting go presents itself in a number of ways. Attendees are forced to let go of their constant connections via email, text, and phone because the camp does not have reception or many computers. People let go of their responsibilities as outlined above. People also let go of their preconceived notions of what conferences are or should be and how they ought to interact with other faculty and staff. Finally, participants let go of the labels they have for themselves or others have given them. They have the opportunity to share and engage with students without the formal trappings of position or title.

While Jean talked about “letting go” as important in engaging with the camp, Renee talked about things in the environment itself that encourage faculty and staff to let go. She highlighted things about the experience that force people out of their normal routines and expectations and ways of engaging with other and with the world around them.

I think that place is really important on a number of levels. I like that it's a kid's camp. And we're coming into it. There are hands of children everywhere. I think as faculty we're always sort of above that. And now we have to do the same little composting chores. We have to do the same things little campers are doing. And I think for some people that takes some getting used to. And for some people just—"Yeah!" and they really get into it.

When: Time of Year and Developmental Milestones

Previously in this study, participants talked about how it takes time for attendees to feel comfortable in the setting or with their dialogue groups. This section explores these two concepts of time further. The two ways in which the "when question" is answered here have to do with the time of year the conference is held and the development of participants while they are at Wakonse.

Time of year.

Joe discussed that it was important to plan this conference at a time of year that would work for faculty and staff. With that in mind, immediately after the spring term is over made the most sense to the founders. The conference has always been held during the Memorial Day weekend. Participants arrive the Friday before Memorial Day and return home on the following Tuesday.

Kai shared that, "It's a nice vacation in the sense of not being in Columbia right after the semester is over." The timing positions Wakonse when people are most ready and able to reflect on their past year. It also is timed so that attendees can collect ideas and lessons learned from their colleagues to integrate into their future teaching and learning experiences with students.

Reg discussed how the timing not only fits with the academic calendar, but how participants are willing to be vulnerable in ways they might not be at other times of the year.

I think that's been part of the secret of Wakonse. It's been right after final exams, commencement. Faculty are tired. They are willing to do some things they wouldn't think of doing in October. That spirit of sudden freedom we have after a year of slavery. It means a lot for the toll that's taken.

Wakonse takes place when people are recovering and recuperating. The end of the spring term is a taxing time for everyone who works in higher education. Faculty have concluded classes and submitted grades. Staff have seen students struggle and succeed *and* struggle and fail. Students have their own experiences on which to reflect. While participants acknowledged that coming to Wakonse over the Memorial Day holiday does come at a cost to friends and family, the timing of the conference is important because it happens when people are in need of renewal and inspiration to move ahead in their teaching and learning.

Wakonse development.

Wakonse comes at the end of a year when attendees have tried to figure out ways to help students develop skills in and out of the classroom. That said, faculty and staff go through their own developmental processes during Wakonse. Barb discussed "Wakonse Development" as the founders have identified it.

We've long observed—Joe and Bill and I, we've talked about the stages of Wakonse Development. In fact, there's even a time we call "High Wakonse."

First there's this moment where everybody buys in. Where you can feel it. Where people go, "Yeah, I'm gonna flow with this. It's kinda cool." Sometime after the teambuilding stuff.

Then another day goes by and you get High Wakonse. And that's this moment where people are almost literally high. They don't want to go to bed. They—they're running around talking to everybody. The conversations. They're doing spontaneous things in their free time. Like, "Yeah, I'll go on the hike!" Or "Yeah, let's go to Cherry Point." "You know, I've never ridden a horse. I'll do that." Where all of a sudden people are doing things they've never done. "Yeah, I'll go paint a picture."

And they've become spontaneous. They've formed spontaneous friendships. And they're so wired up that they talk clear through dinner. They start being late to everything—or skipping things in order to spend time in those conversations on the beach... The feeling is a high—an almost ecstatic feeling of community.

Renee shared these same concepts, starting with the moment attendees arrive at the camp. She has observed the excitement of new attendees and how they are transformed after Wakonse.

I love watching someone who has never been there before. And watching them change. I love watching that in the context of the dialogue group. I love watching them come up and sit there like this [closed posture, folded arms].

I mean, this happened last year. We had a guy who was just sort of belligerent on the first day. And by the end he was hugging me. Complete—*complete* change. "I was not open to this. I was not going to enjoy this. I'm not going to do it." And then, in every dialogue group there's someone who's like, "I'm not playing this game."

And then something happens. A lot happens—it's usually in the interaction with the undergraduates [low ropes teambuilding]. Suddenly it clicks. I like being able to go back and be a part of something and I get the pleasure of watching the people experience it the first time.

The “when” of Wakonse, then is not simply when it happens in the calendar year. There are moments throughout the conference when different things happen. The low ropes experience with the undergraduate students is a time when new bonds are built in the dialogue groups. The transformation of attendees throughout the conference happens in connection with the activities and events they experience.

This pattern is established and takes place over and over again each year. Again, this consistency adds to the experience of Wakonse and its continuation. Since the same evolution takes place year after year, staff know what to expect and people can share with potential attendees about what the experience entails.

Why: Isolation in Academe

So far this study has explored the people, the place, the activities, and the timing of the Wakonse conference. At the heart of the research questions, though, is *why*? Why was the conference started? Why does it continue?

The answer to this part of the research questions ties closely with the concept of community explored earlier. The theme of community was an unexpected one for me as the researcher. I thought that this would be primarily an added bonus building on connections and communities participants were a part of. Rather, every participant talked at length about the fact that Wakonse provided them something they did not get elsewhere in most cases or at the very least Wakonse engaged them around teaching and learning in ways that they

experienced no where else. This section highlights one of the key components behind why this community is needed or develops or is valued. Over and over again, participants talked about a sense of isolation experienced by those who work in academe—particularly faculty. Isolation in academe—or Wakonse as a venue for overcoming the isolation—is explored here as the primary reason behind why the Wakonse conference continues.

The founders' perspectives.

The founders strongly believed there was a need for bringing together faculty and staff into a community when they were organizing Wakonse. Connecting with like-minded educators to engage in conversations about good teaching was a primary goal of the conference. Joe described the situation in this way,

I think a good number of academics live a pretty lonely life and the idea of getting outside their discipline and looking at [Wakonse] as a social opportunity to connect with some people outside. And there's a lot of catharsis that goes on at Wakonse. Whether it's at the Yacht Club and coming to realize that you're not alone—you're with colleagues you can talk to about your teaching. I think that is a big draw.

Bill concurred with Joe, but maintained that the sense of connection may not be one affecting the day-to-day experience of academics on their individual campuses. He said the connections matter and are remembered, but that the struggle goes on.

[Attendees] get to Wakonse and they meet other people who are interested in the same kind of thing and it's a very bonding kind of experience. Of course, when they go back home, they're just as lonely as when they started out... I guess that's good. If you're miserable at least knowing there are other people just as miserable—that makes you happier.

Barb took a different perspective on the idea of connections made through the conference. She considered faculty members in terms of their personalities and factored in the time and space that might be needed to generate openness, communication and community. Instead of seeing higher education staff and faculty as isolated, she defined them as introverted.

See professors... scholars tend to be more introverted than extroverted. And they tend to be higher in openness to experience—curiosity and openness. But because of their introversion and because of the structure of the modern university, they have very little opportunity to talk with people outside of their own departments. But when you take a group of professors from many disciplines and you force them to stay together [where] they *have* to be together, introverts will start talking. Given time. A beach. The freedom from humiliation. The lack of authority figures.

Regardless of whether the catalyst was catharsis, connection, or communication, rebelling against both the isolated nature of research and the lack of an interdisciplinary focus on campuses was important to the founders. Bill often quotes feedback he got from one participant “I had to go all this distance to meet someone at my own institution.” He said that this kind of sharing, “Speaks to the loneliness issue, as well.” Bill added, “I think people who are interested in teaching at [research-intensive institutions] often feel themselves as sort of isolated without a lot of institutional support.”

The perspectives of other participants.

Kai shared a similar version of Bill’s quote, but emphasized the idea of finding others with shared values. “I didn’t realize I had to go 500 miles to find someone at my own school who cared about teaching and learning as much as I do. Or in the same way I do,” he said.

Here it is not solely about relationship building and networking with others on one's own campus. Instead, he drives home the fact that it can be challenging to meet others who value undergraduate education.

With that in mind, it can be challenging to find a support group to encourage good teaching at some institutions. Reg summed up the need for Wakonse in this way, "I think there was the desire for a sense of community among people—particularly at research universities who felt they were isolated because they were into good teaching."

Isolation. Loneliness. Alone. These words came up again and again in the ways that participants described life in academe. Wakonse fulfilled a need for community in contrast to the isolated life academic work can require. This was a major theme of the study. Each participant described this part of the academic experience differently, but a desire to come together with others in opposition to the alone-work of a career in higher education was a common thread connecting the stories they shared.

Kai disagreed with the use of the word loneliness. He rephrased the concept and stated, "I would say alone more than lonely because lonely to me, well I've been alone a lot, but I've never been lonely." He went on to provide specific examples about how universities structure the work life and workload so as to maximize and privilege the time scholars spend in isolation.

In fact we've institutionalized [working alone]. I know this for a fact because we do this even more in the sciences than say in the humanities, but assistant professors are *discouraged* from collaborating in research projects because then the people that are going to decide on your tenure decision, they won't be able to determine what your intellectual contribution to the project is. Which seems completely ridiculous. But

we're encouraged to and we're evaluated on what we do *by ourselves*. So that's engrained...

So that's something where you're actually told *not* to be in community with anybody. That if you are, we're going to judge you harshly; if you're in community with others. I think that's a really interesting point.

And especially that it gets worse at a Research I institution about teaching because that's even lower on the totem pole. I mean, you can't be collaborating in research, so you better not be putting a whole lot of effort into doing anything else... I'm sure that's part of why [Wakonse] has the sustaining power that it does.

Renee shared specific examples of experiences in her department where community was looked upon with suspicion. She said that the faculty in her area are mistrusted, and the chair of her department provided the following explanation for that mistrust.

He told me it was because we all loved each other. And other people were threatened by this. [He said it in] an "I wish everybody would be like you," way. He's like, "You guys are a mutual admiration society. You can't do anything wrong in each other's eyes and if you did something wrong, the other two would be there to support them." And people don't trust that... I think that there's that sort of strange thing if people seem to like each other an awful lot and get along a lot. And I think that's mistrusted.

Additionally, Renee said that there are mixed messages at different levels of an institution about collaboration in research. She said, "People want you to collaborate with other people, but they don't want you to collaborate. It's like, 'Do this, but *don't* do this.'"

Despite the discouragement by some individuals and in some processes, Renee stressed that collaboration in her work produces a more successful and creative result.

So, given all the barriers to collaboration and community in academe, why does it happen? Even more specifically, why is Wakonse a place where it can happen? Hope discussed this at length.

It happens at Wakonse partially because the time and space is set aside for that to happen. In contrast to our campuses where we find it challenging to set aside that time and space for community to develop.

It happens at Wakonse both because of the dialogue groups, but also because of the nature of everything else that we do. Where the message is very clear that it's not an "us against the world kind of a thing," but you definitely know that we as people in the academy believe strongly that teaching is very, very important...

Then that community of people—knowing that you're not alone—becomes very important and very uplifting. And I think—now of course with technology—when you can stay connected to people more easily, that also is an important part of it.

The common interest in teaching and learning and the connections and communities that developed as a result are at the core of Wakonse's ongoing success. These are real relationships with significant investments made by the Wakonse Fellows. Renee summed up the nature of these myriad partnerships saying simply, "Wakonse people completely stick together. No matter what."

How: The Magic of Wakonse

Joe welcomes attendees to the Wakonse conference and tells everyone on the first evening that Wakonse is a magical place where amazing things happen. Wakonse has made

an important difference to the individuals interviewed for this study. The impact Wakonse has had is highly personal. This section focuses on three aspects of that personal component. The first deals with the fact that Wakonse attends to the “whole self,” rather than just the individual as a teacher or researcher or a part of a particular field or discipline.

The next section focuses on the role individuals have played in continuing and expanding the Wakonse experience on their individual campuses. At the end of each Wakonse, individual institutions meet to discuss how they can “take it home” and continue the energy and enthusiasm about teaching and learning on their campuses. In order for this to be successful, however, participants reported a “single champion” is required to keep the energy and enthusiasm going and to secure the resources needed to sustain involvement with Wakonse.

Finally, the relationships built provide significant support structures as individuals move through various life experiences—both related to their work and separate from academe. This section will provide information on how Wakonse’s “Whole Self” concept, how three individuals played key roles as “single champions” of Wakonse on their campuses, and examples of the personal role the Wakonse community played for two individuals.

Whole self.

One of the mottos of Wakonse shared by participants is that in order to teach well, a person must take care of herself as a human being. Good teaching is not just about knowledge or strategies related to a specific subject area. With that in mind, Wakonse encourages participants to do what they need to do to take care of themselves.

Joe tells attendees at the welcome, “If you need to skip a session to walk on the beach or in the woods or take a nap, do that.” It is not about attending every event on the schedule,

but focuses on self-care. This is a concept which does not necessarily come naturally to people who work in academe. Renee shared that she tends to go “by the book” when it comes to conferences and the Wakonse experience was different from anything she had done before.

At the first Wakonse meeting they said, “You should skip some things and go for a walk.” And I’m like, “What?! Are you crazy? This isn’t in the schedule. I’m not supposed to do this.” But I did it. And one day I went for a long walk on the beach. And one day I went and read a book. Just the act of doing that changed a lot of things.

Hope agreed. She said that when she goes to a research conference, the content connects people. At Wakonse what connects people are their identities as individuals.

Wakonse is the whole person. And I think community develops more readily when you bring the whole person. And that’s probably another piece of the philosophy of the conference... an attention to the whole person, which is really important.

This theme emerged in other interviews, as well. Jean used the same language Hope did in providing a description of how she defined what makes up one’s “whole person.”

[Wakonse] addresses you emotionally, socially, physically... along with the whole cognitive arena that we’re in so much. You’re still in your head, but it gets you out of your head and into those other human needs. So I think it’s that holistic approach.

That ability to breathe and to address and take care of yourself that has kept it going.

Barb expressed it as a time of rejuvenation. “One element of it is the perpetual renewal—with new voices. Perpetual renewal. New voices. New ideas.”

Reflection.

Reflection plays a part of the renewal Barb referenced and other participants talked about the idea of getting time away from campus to rejuvenate and recover from the stresses of the year. Those interviewed found time for themselves at the conference to think when they did not have time for that in their daily routines. Jean shared about the time away and reflective nature of the Wakonse experience for her.

And then the other thing that struck me was [Wakonse's] emphasis on reflection time. Going out to the dunes, finding a sand dune, getting quiet, and just reflecting. And that was significant.

I remember being exhausted. I was a single mom at the time. I was teaching, and I was trying to keep everything together. And, I just never stopped. And that was significant to me. Just being out there and being alone and not having any phone calls, any interference, and just being able to think about my career and my teaching.

Dara shared some similar ideas and said the first year she went to Wakonse she “needed to get away from the stress of home.” She explained what this meant and how the conference provides this for attendees.

[Wakonse is about] the focus on the whole person. The beauty of the place and the people... the opportunity for rest away from the work of home and work. It's just completely different from the rest of the year, in every way—the pacing, being served food.

For those interviewed who have become a part of the staff, Wakonse represents a recurring chance to slow down and recover. Renee discussed how she now anticipates going to the conference. She described it as a light at the end of the tunnel of the academic year.

It's definitely recharging. I mean, there's a point in the school year depending on how the year's going, when you start longing to get up there. And a lot of people I've talked to feel that way—people that have gone back up. There comes a point in the school year where you're like, "Okay, if I can just make it through this last part of the semester, I can... I can go to Wakonse."

The conference provides participants notebooks so that they can not only take notes during sessions, but reflect on the year past and the year to come. There is time set aside for reflection, but participants are also encouraged repeatedly to use Wakonse in the way that they need it. The ability to be given the gift of time is important to Wakonse's longevity. It is not a conference that has tremendous structure, so it is something each participant can make his or her own.

Goal-Setting.

Wakonse is not just about reflecting on the past and recovering from it. It is not just about being in the moment and breathing and appreciating the beauty of the place. There is also forwardness in the thinking done by attendees.

Goal-setting is a formalized part of the experience. There is time set aside at the end of Wakonse when people are told to go off by themselves and write down personal and professional goals for the upcoming year. They take one copy with them when they leave Wakonse. They put the second copy of their goals in a self-addressed envelope. The Wakonse staff then mail the goals to attendees in December or January. This serves as a reminder of the goals set and also a reminder of Wakonse and what the experience was like and provided participants.

Each person sets the goals and shares them as they are comfortable. It is not required that attendees tell anyone what their goals are. Some people keep these very private and others share with dialogue groups or others as a mechanism to keep them accountable to their goals. Dara talked about her goal-setting time being something she does in a mentoring partnership.

So that is a time each year that I set goals. And then the mentoring I get from Hope. And she and I set our goals together. Or at least talk about them, and sometimes the last day we'll pray or we'll spend time that day praying over each other and our goals. So that's a HUGE thing for me. And she and I have been doing that kind of thing together for years... So that's really central to me.

Barb said she sees Wakonse as a beginning of a year rather than the culmination of one. "It's seriously the peak of my year. That is the best five days of my year. It's like Christmas. For me it marks the break between the old and new year. That's when I make my New Year's Resolutions."

Kai discussed how just setting goals is important. He argued that this matters regardless of whether or not participants follow through and achieve the goals.

The goal-setting at the end—both personal and professional and getting your goals sent to you in January—[is important]... To at least identify some things you might want to do when you get back to campus. Whether they actually happen or not—I don't want to say it's not important because it *is* important if they don't happen, but *nothing's* going to happen if you don't have some sort of a plan. So getting the plan in place is the first part of it and whether it runs into logistical or financial or temporal problems—that's something else.

Bringing it home.

The experience has mattered to participants beyond the annual Wakonse conference in Michigan. It has mattered enough that some participants have worked to bring the experience of Wakonse back to their home campuses.

Missouri—as the home campus of Wakonse—has done several things on their campus. Activities have included Colleague Circles (experienced faculty mentoring new faculty), Rock the First Day (an initiative to make the first day of class—or “syllabus day”—more than just a time to go over the schedule for the term), and Mutual Expectations (a way for faculty to partner with students in the classroom learning and teaching experience).

Other institutions have tried to bring the concepts related to Wakonse—particularly the desire to teach well and engage students in the classroom—back to their campuses. In each case, the success of these initiatives has relied on the dedication of a single person on a campus. This individual has had to have a passion about Wakonse, but also the ability to cultivate support (financial and other) on campus.

Single champions.

At other institutions there have been individuals—Joe referred to them as “single champions”—who have developed Wakonse-like experiences. These commitments by other institutions have been instrumental in perpetuating Wakonse over time. Bill described the importance of a leader invested in Wakonse on other campuses in this way,

It’s often a single person who gets the group together when they get back. And it’s fair to generalize that the faculty development or their center for teaching excellence person has really pushed it.

Three individuals who were successful in taking Wakonse home and creating institutionalized programs which were sustained over a long period of time are Jean, Hope and Barb. Jean and Hope both served as the teaching excellence directors at their institutions at the time they developed their own home campus Wakonse programs and cultures. Barb helped create these experiences in her role as a faculty member. Kai reiterated the importance of that single person as a catalyst for the program on other campuses.

[Jean] was—arguably—as successful as Joe was in terms of institutionalizing [Wakonse]. And there are a few other places now where it’s institutionalized, but it’s absolutely based on one person. Jean at Iowa State, Hope at Texas A&M... And so that—it really takes one person to champion it to the point where it’s then sustaining without that person.

Jean went on to say that not only does Joe empower people at the Wakonse in Michigan, but he identifies people who have the talent, connections, and passion to take the experience home. He understands that in order for Wakonse to continue, it is important to have people engaged at a variety of campuses. That keeps the attendees coming and keeps the momentum of Wakonse going.

Joe’s very good at watching and identifying people that need to come back because they’re going to play this role then on their own campuses. And then he—he makes you feel valued and he makes you feel honored to be able to play that role—with Wakonse, but then also back at your home institution.

Joe spoke about the role that Jean played at her institution. He reiterated the importance of a single champion at a given institution. “It’s always about finding a key

person. Jean is largely responsible for anything that happened at Iowa State. She negotiated it and supported it.”

Similarly, Hope cultivated a Wakonse experience on her home campus. Her focus was on the team from Texas A&M who became invested in the experience. Hope discussed at length the core group who worked to build and sustain a feeling of Wakonse on her campus. Like Jean, she shared that this group became very involved in the events sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence on their campus. This was consistent with what Joe said often took place—the CTE or equivalent as a hub for people who were passionate about teaching. These centers on campuses were places where faculty and staff could go to find others who cared about the student engagement part of the higher education experience.

Barb provides another example of a single champion who took the Wakonse experience home. At her institution she worked to find the right people to connect with Wakonse. She did this in order not only to sustain her own connection now that she was out of the Midwest and working in Arizona, but to bring that experience to her new campus.

All three of these women discussed the importance of the role of the center for teaching excellence or campus equivalent in institutionalizing the program. And all three of them shared that once they left, the programs underwent changes. Jean said that there is not a local Wakonse retreat, though institutional support for sending faculty and staff to the main Wakonse continues. Hope said that she continues to build connections with Wakonse in Michigan, but budget and staffing changes on her campus have decreased the number of faculty and staff who attend. And Barb shared, that Wakonse West continued for 15 years, but the camp where they went has since been sold and the director of the teaching excellence center at that institution has retired. That being the case, the future of Wakonse West is

unclear. While the single champion is crucial, the connection of Wakonse to a campus can rise and fall with that one individual.

That said there are new connections and new champions being groomed. Joe said, “If you could find half a dozen Jeans and Hopes, it’d be a piece of cake.” Kai acknowledged that it is difficult to bring in new people and new institutions.

It’s hard to get somebody from a school that hasn’t been represented before if you don’t have any sort of connection to it. Cause it’s a little difficult to explain. “You want me to go where? When?” And so, it’s a little bit difficult to explain. If you have someone who is an advocate there, it can be really useful. It has been really useful in the past.

Jean identified another challenge to continuing Wakonse on a home campus. The role of place as discussed earlier clearly matters. Even if it is not Camp Miniwanca, the fact that faculty and staff tried to recreate the magic of Wakonse in a local setting can be an obstacle to having a similar experience.

The challenge is they bond so much there and they have this experience and how do you carry it back. And maybe you can’t. I don’t know. Maybe the reality is it’s getting away to a place.

Reg followed that up stating simply, “I think the one thing Wakonse has not done well is to have an impact back on those campuses.” The experience has meaning in the moment, but there is not widespread evidence that attendees have taken what they have learned and transformed their institutions as a result.

Wakonse continues despite these challenges and new institutions find themselves connected to the experience. Kai also mentioned a former Missouri faculty member who

now brings people from his institution each year. “So that happens a lot, too. Where people will move that have been associated with [Michigan Wakonse] then start their own.”

So, even though some of these programs may have ebbed in recent years, others continue to develop. Dara has worked with faculty and staff at Duquesne University to create a homegrown Wakonse experience—DUkonse—as an example. In fact, Dara says this Wakonse outcome is significant. When asked how Wakonse has changed her thinking about teaching and learning she responded, “Perhaps the biggest impact has been us doing one here.”

Dara came to Wakonse and returns to Wakonse because of her mentor/mentee relationship with Hope. So the first generation of attendees took Wakonse home and created an experience on their campuses. That group is now fostering relationships with the next generation of faculty and staff in hopes that they will do the same.

These branch programs not only create similar (though not exact duplicate) programs on campuses around the country and help to sustain Wakonse. They replicate the time and dialogue and reflection aspects of the larger conference. There may also be things to be learned from watching how these conferences have evolved that could apply to the larger Wakonse. If the programs at Iowa State, Texas A & M, and Arizona went into decline when the single champion left, might the same thing take place as Joe and the other founders leave Wakonse?

Wakonse as a support system.

In this study, I have discussed the role that Wakonse has played in a variety of contexts—for institutions and for groups of like-minded educators. It has also explored how the experience has been significant for individuals who needed time for reflection and an

opportunity to spend time with themselves away from other distractions. As Renee said, her husband told her when encouraging her to continue her involvement with Wakonse, “You know, that’s your deal. That’s what you like to do. That’s your time away.”

What is equally if not more important, however, is the role that the Wakonse-based and Wakonse-inspired relationships have played for individuals in their personal lives away from Wakonse. This network of support goes beyond the conference to the lived academic experience of the participants. The nature of these relationships provides additional insight into why the conference has continued over time. This section will outline the stories of two individuals—Jean and Renee—who relied on their Wakonse experiences and relationships to help them navigate very challenging personal circumstances.

Jean: The case for full professor.

Jean’s promotion and tenure process was different from that of many of her colleagues. Jean was encouraged to move ahead for full professor based solely on her teaching and her scholarly work related to teaching and learning. The experience was very challenging and she recounted going through that process.

In the mid-1990s, I applied for full professor based upon 100% teaching assignment, and was encouraged to do that by my then co-department chairs. I would have never thought to do that. I was always just busy doing my business, doing my teaching. Absorbed in teaching, and I had been an administrator of the laboratory school. I’d directed the lab school and decided I didn’t want to be an administrator, I just wanted to teach. I was teaching large classes and I’d gotten a LOT of recognition for my teaching in terms of awards at the university.

Jean went on to explain that she had developed a human sexuality class which was very popular. It started with around 30 students and had grown to more than 400 each semester. This added to the attention being paid to her and her teaching. She said, “There was a lot of attention being paid to what I was doing in teaching, so I went up for promotion and it was bloody. It was really bloody. I was kind of strategically placed to be challenging the old system of just promote on basis of research.”

At the same time, the promotion and tenure document and process at Iowa State was undergoing review and revision based upon the work of Ernest Boyer. There were others interested “in this whole revolution” as Jean described it. There were people invested in the undergraduate experience and in improving teaching and learning in higher education. At the same time, Jean was going up for promotion. She described her career as a faculty member as falling outside of past norms and traditions.

So here I am going up for promotion. It was rare then to even have a female full professor, much less based on 100% teaching and not based on the grants. I had scholarly work that was juried, but that was based upon teaching and learning. I’d written things, given national and international presentations and done textbooks, but I didn’t have the traditional path.

Given all of this, her chair encouraged her to go up for promotion to full professor. As a part of that process, four review committee members within her department—colleagues with whom she had co-taught—had to vote on her promotion. They voted unanimously against her.

And it was devastating. Devastating to say the least. I wanted to stop it. ’Cause it wasn’t for tenure—I didn’t have to go on [for promotion to full professor]. And my

department chairs said no to stopping it. So then they put the vote up to the whole departmental faculty and they supported it. Supported me. And then the department chairs supported me. Then the college, the associate deans and dean supported it. And I know that the dean had to go to [the Provost's Office] several times and really represent me to the provost—represent the case. And they did finally pass it and I was dumbfounded. It was pretty exciting.

Wakonse's role in her process.

After providing the context for her promotion to full professor, Jean shared more about the role that her Wakonse colleagues played in helping her through the challenging times. She said she “built this community of faculty that had been Wakonse fellows and staff people who had been Wakonse Fellows and... It was a real important group for me to rely upon.”

She explained the importance of this community to her as she was figuring out her experience in academe. She said the communities with which she connected were important because for her to be successful the work required “building connections because teaching and learning to that point had been a closed door affair. You went in and shut your door. Taught. Didn't talk about it much. Didn't share the challenges or the joys.”

Bill reflected on Jean's promotion process, as well. He recounted the role Reg had played in helping her. He also acknowledged the exceptional circumstances around someone getting promoted based on teaching and scholarship related to teaching and learning alone. He also shared how the Wakonse community respected Jean's achievement.

Well, you know, one interesting thing about it—and Reg was very influential in this—was Jean is one of the first people I'm aware of who got full professor on the basis of

her teaching... And the Wakonse bunch was a big bunch of supporters to get her through all that... Which I think is an interesting new development. She really did it. I don't know if that's been replicated anywhere else, but it's at least one case where it's happened.

Barb echoed Bill's admiration and respect for Jean's achievement.

We were so proud of Jean. We were so proud of her because she was the first person to get promoted to full professor on the basis of her teaching. Oh my God. I don't know if she felt it, but we—we radiated, we glowed support for her at Wakonse. I'll never forget when she said that she was building this [teaching] portfolio and we gave her a standing ovation. And I thought, "Wow, what a woman!!"

Jean was able to find support in the midst of a career struggle. Just as importantly, the Wakonse community was able to celebrate her success. They also celebrated the fact that one institution in at least one instance found value in scholarship around teaching and learning. And not only did the institution value this work, but it was rewarded, as well. Just as Jean drew energy from Wakonse, so did Wakonse get energy from Jean's experience.

Renee: Support in work and beyond.

Another example of the kind of support provided by Wakonse goes beyond experiences in academic life. Renee shared stories of how she has turned to Wakonse fellows and staff in times of personal crisis as well as for support through professional challenges.

Personal support.

Renee talked initially about the process she and her husband went through adopting their two daughters. She acknowledged that her Wakonse community was a key area of

support during that time. Other participants shared the importance of the connection between Wakonse and Renee, as well.

Bill described the situation this way:

Well, she has two of the cutest girls you ever saw. They're sweet things... We've been through at least four years, maybe longer with her and the girls. See she was a foster parent to them... And they had to really put up a battle to adopt them. And so, for a couple of years it was—Oh, it was just painful.

Renee explained that she had first gone to Wakonse before either of the girls was placed with her and her husband. She added that through the adoption process she could not leave.

I wouldn't go when they were with us as foster kids because I had a feeling that if I went, they would get taken back to their parents while I was gone. So I never—I didn't go back until the adoption was finalized... Because I knew that I could safely go.

Bill shared the excitement Renee's supporters had when the adoption came through in this way,

Now, I'll never forget the day when we all got the message, "We can adopt them! They're going to be our kids!" And you see the four of them together now and they're just natural. They belong together. But it was a real struggle and it was emotional.

Renee shared other ways that she has relied on her Wakonse community. She discussed connecting with the woman on the Wakonse staff who provides medical support at Camp Miniwanca when she had a health concern. Renee said,

I was on the phone with her. And I don't know her—I mean, we're not best buddies and we don't go out to lunch and stuff, but I was on the phone with her. 'Cause I knew I could call her.

Renee said that she felt both safe and comfortable talking with this woman—a nurse—about her health concern. She knew the woman had the expertise needed to provide her some insight into her situation, but she also knew her as someone Renee could trust.

Professional support.

While the personal support has been essential in getting through personal crises, there has also been a lot of professional guidance Renee has received as she has navigated her career. She shared the importance of conversation with trusted resources related to her promotion process. She said that one Wakonse attendee in particular—someone from her home institution—has provided support proactively as she moves ahead. Renee described the interaction she has had with him.

[A Wakonse staff member] and I had a long talk because I'm going up for professor and he was in my dialogue group and I shared some of struggles I'm going to have.

And he said to me, he took me aside and said, "Who's got your back here—in terms of these people here?"

I said, "I think I'm going to be okay."

And he said, "But if something goes wrong, who are you going to call?"

And I said, "Well, I don't know."

He said, "Well, you call me. And I'll call all these people. And we'll beat this." And he was all—he was very coach-y about it. But he was like, "You know you could call me. Reg would be there. Bill would be there. Joe."

And I was like, “Well, that’s more than I need.” Then I thought about it and I thought, “Yeah, that would be good. I think I could always ask for help,” because it is a community.

Renee said that her Wakonse support team has been there for her throughout her career at Missouri. She said, “I don’t think I’d be tenured if I didn’t have those connections.” The relationships she developed on her own campus would not have been in place without her getting to know these colleagues through Wakonse.

Maintaining Wakonse.

It is important to appreciate the value individuals have found in their Wakonse connections, communities, and experiences. People as teachers, learners, parents, partners, friends—as full human beings are valued through the experience. However, none of that would be possible without some of the more practical pieces required to sustain any organization. In the case of this study, Wakonse’s funding and its ongoing connection with the University of Missouri are central elements to its continuation. This part of the “how section” will explore these areas and their importance to Wakonse’s persistence.

Institutionalization at Missouri.

Wakonse would not have persisted in its current format without a connection to a specific institution. The support of the University of Missouri has provided a central location where staff can convene and information has been housed. Additionally, the institution provides support that has allowed Wakonse to continue beyond the length of the original grant supporting the conference.

The history of Wakonse’s relationship with the University of Missouri was described in-depth by those interviewed—particularly the founders. They spoke about the specific

contributions of individual administrators and how those administrators related to and valued (or did not value) Wakonse. Joe said that at the beginning Wakonse staff at Missouri met regularly with administrators. He understood that it was important to help administrative decision-makers and resource-holders understand Wakonse since it is neither a traditional conference nor a typical faculty and staff development opportunity.

I'm reminded that we used to have a meeting when we got back, in which we invited the administration to come have a meal with us. And we always invited 2 or 3 people from the conference to stand up to talk about it. So, we were educating the administration as to what [Wakonse] was.

Joe said there were administrators who bought in and were less skeptical. He said in some cases they were great advocates for Wakonse. Joe said that one particular advocate of Wakonse was chancellor at Missouri.

There were some ambitious years when we had agenda of things we took to the Chancellor—here are five things that we want to do... How did we do that? We went in with a proposal to the Chancellor saying here are the five or six things we'd like to do and here's what it would cost. And we were being very frugal. And at the end of the meeting—he hadn't really committed one way or the other—and at the end he said, "Oh, I'll support it all." We went in hoping for a dime. Unfortunately, he didn't stay with us much longer. It's probably because of those types of responses.

So the administrative champion was not always a resource on which Wakonse could rely in the longer term. Joe described it as an ongoing and constantly evolving process. As administrators change or budget circumstances change, telling the story of the value of Wakonse to the University of Missouri has been crucial.

The current administration continues to support Wakonse; however, there is also a teaching conference at Missouri more focused on bringing in outside speakers. When asked about the continuation of support as Wakonse moves forward, Bill predicted that the teaching conference at Missouri may get priority for budget dollars. He summarized saying, “You know I don’t think it’s gonna last forever from the campus.”

Reg observed the overlap between Wakonse Fellows and the University of Missouri teaching conference.

But it is interesting when [the administrator] has his teaching conference a great number of the presenters are Wakonse fellows. They do get involved in similar things. My worry is that his conference is going to be his first priority and Wakonse’s going to take whatever’s left over. I don’t know where that’s going to go. Reg concluded that at this point there are administrators at Missouri who, “would like to be rid of [Wakonse] after 25 years.”

Institutional administrators connecting with Wakonse.

Joe said that it is important to make university administrators as familiar as possible with the conference. He said the current individual responsible for funding Wakonse “is one that did come. Did enjoy it.” Joe quickly qualified this comment, saying, “Then life gets too complicated for him to come back. Other obligations.” So just as other attendees who have a good Wakonse experience, but struggle to maintain their connection to Wakonse or the positive energy around Wakonse once they return to their campuses, so have administrators. Those who have attended and enjoyed it are faced with multiple demands on their time, attention, and resources once they are back at the University of Missouri.

Bill shared that there have been other times when administrators were invited and things did not go well at all. He mentioned one upper-level administrator at Missouri who came and presented on the economic development role of higher education. Bill argued that that kind of thinking is not well-aligned with the “teaching matters” philosophy of Wakonse.

Funding.

The value that distributors of financial resources see in Wakonse is crucial to whether or not it is sustained. For the past 24 years, the Wakonse staff at the University of Missouri have been able to make a case for the value of Wakonse so that funding has continued. Participants from other institutions pay conference fees that also support the event. The initial funds acquired to begin the conference were just that—starter funds. Joe provided more information about his vision regarding the financial viability of the conference.

Well we had the first grant—so we didn’t have to ask [Missouri administrators] for money, but I knew this had to become self-sustaining, so we started asking administration to help pay. When we were first off, I think we had about half. It was \$500 and we asked the participants to pay \$250 and the university to pay \$250.

Joe went on to discuss how he had to provide additional information to the university. The relationship- and trust-building related to Wakonse was an ongoing process. While the founders had initial funding, the university wanted more information in order to sustain that. There were questions about how the money was being used that the Wakonse founders had to be prepared to answer.

And the administration after a year or two, I think they really got suspicious—“Are you guys making money on this or what?” So I really had to—in the interest of open records, I had to provide—we have a bank account. I said, “There it is. It’s not red.

It's not black, but it's not red." I think after that, they kind of realized this is not a venture for making money off of the faculty.

Since those early years, it appears that Wakonse and Joe have been required to provide less financial information. Wakonse has gained institutionalized support at the University of Missouri. However, there are concerns from among Wakonse members and other founders about the financial status of the organization. Bill shared that even as a founder and trustee, he is not sure what the budgetary structure for the conference is.

I don't know if I should mention this, but this is sponsored by the Wakonse Foundation. And I think Joe and I and Barb are the trustees. We don't have a clue as to what the budget is. Not a clue... I don't have the faintest idea. And Joe is not the greatest money manager who ever lived. Sort of, "Well, if it's there we can spend it." So I have no idea what the budget is. It's a minor criticism, but you wonder if we're doing okay."

The financial future of Wakonse is precarious, at best. A continued strong and positive relationship with administration is crucial to the conference continuing, just as it has been from the beginning. The conference has persisted because those involved have been able to make a case to leaders on their campuses that this is a worthwhile event—not just for individuals, but for institutions, as well. The question remains, however, if institutional support will continue once the founders—and particularly Joe—are no longer involved in the conference.

Feedback.

In addition to showing administrators that the experience is worthwhile, it has been essential to present Wakonse as a worthwhile and positive experience for attendees, as well.

Just as institutions make decisions about financial resources, so do individual faculty and staff make decisions about their own financial resources and the use of their time. Without Wakonse Fellows feeling that the experience is worthwhile, it would not have been sustained. Attendees would not have encouraged others to attend and the conference would have fizzled out early on. In order to make the experience as positive as possible, Wakonse incorporated assessment through the collection and use of feedback from the beginning. The goal was to build on the ideas the founders had developed, but to figure out what was working and what areas were still in need of development.

Barb explained that this was intentional and what the structure for providing feedback looked like. She said, “So, during the first Wakonse we had a feedback session after every talk where people would give feedback on the content of the person’s talk and the process... content and process.” Kai shared that it was not just the observations and feedback from the staff that were used. The input of participants was solicited and applied as well. “We would have representatives from each school come and give the staff and Joe a verbal evaluation feedback of the conference,” Kai said.

Hope said that the role of feedback has been important for Wakonse. The processes for soliciting feedback have been focused on improving the conference and maximizing the experience for participants. Hope said, “I think there is an openness to feedback. And I think it is, very definitely, focused on the participants. Caring that those participants as well as the widening circle of the participant students are the beneficiaries of whatever happens.”

Kai, Hope, Barb and Renee all said that the feedback was used and integrated. One example shared involved concerns about how Native American culture was represented at Wakonse. Originally, there was a ceremony at the end of the conference that drew from

Native American rituals. This made some participants uncomfortable and was described as “cult-ish” in some feedback. Other Native American scholars took issue with the authenticity of the rituals. Eventually, this part of the experience was eliminated as a closing event for attendees.

The incorporation of feedback has been essential to the persistence of Wakonse. Without it, attendees may have been alienated by perceived insensitivity to the Native American culture. Feedback also suggested more structure for the free time at Wakonse. That feedback was taken and now the optional events serve as additional opportunities for attendees to connect and build trust and community. The willingness to adjust as needed when issues arise and new sessions are identified is another way Wakonse incorporates feedback—in this case, more spontaneously. All of these things have created a stronger conference and the perception that the founders and staff are responsive to the needs to the group.

Conclusion.

The second research question in this study is “Why has Wakonse continued?” Based on the interviews conducted with the founders and the long-time participants at the conference, a variety of reasons surfaced. These had to do with the people, passions, place, and purpose of Wakonse.

The people involved with Wakonse have been essential to its continuation over time. Under the leadership of Joe Johnston, the staff has remained fairly consistent for the past 20 years. This has allowed Joe to identify strengths and talents among the staff and to capitalize on those to the benefit of the conference, but also in ways that make the staff feel valued and appreciated.

The attendees—though they change from year to year—have brought a shared passion related to teaching and learning. Wakonse has provided a unique opportunity for faculty and staff to come together and share strategies and practical ways to teach well and enhance the student learning experience. This has also allowed communities to develop filling potential voids in the professional experiences of these scholars. A community in place of the isolated academic experience has been valued by attendees who encourage their peers with a dedication to student engagement to participate. In this way the conference has recruited participants from one year to the next.

Wakonse has been a place where faculty and staff felt safe sharing their challenges and successes in working with students. This kind of setting has allowed the communities to flourish. Having this conference set at Camp Miniwanca has afforded attendees space and quiet needed for this kind of regenerative experience. The lack of distractions of technology or other luxuries related to the accommodations has allowed participants to focus more on one another and on themselves.

The concept of community is closely linked to another key theme of this study. The ways in which participants identified the academic life as being lonely or in isolation or at least being a professional life lived alone, came through repeatedly. The fact that a community of educators—whether classroom educators or staff teaching students outside of the classroom—exists at Wakonse is important to many participants who otherwise felt alone.

This sense of isolation was not just related to a lack of support around teaching and learning. It was mentioned in multiple interviews that working in higher education is something one does alone. There are processes for promotion which encourage competition

and individuality rather than collaboration and teamwork. Wakonse exists in stark contrast to these isolating factors.

The self-focus opportunities have aligned well with Wakonse's commitment to the holistic development of attendees. Having the time to sit and reflect or to recover and rejuvenate after a challenging year is something that the participants in this study described as a gift. Having the time to focus on the whole self was another gift participants identified as a part of Wakonse. Having four days to unwind and develop in community with others was seen as a precious part of the experience.

The continuation of Wakonse on campuses has been a contributing factor to its persistence, as well. This presented itself in the replication of Wakonse experience under the guidance of a single champion at a variety of institutions. It also was continued through relationships built at Wakonse. Connections made at Wakonse have served to reinforce and support participants through challenging personal and professional struggles.

In closing, Wakonse has persisted because it meets the unique needs of faculty and staff not found in other professional development experiences. It provides enough time in the right setting for communities to develop. These communities are built on shared passions—teaching, learning, and student engagement—that are not perceived as being valued and rewarded at the institutional level. Wakonse fills a void and provides support and inspiration for excellence in the classroom and in other interactions with students.

Summary

This study sought to answer two questions: Why was Wakonse founded and why has it persisted? The conference was established because of the attachment the founders felt for Camp Miniwanca. When the founders were dismissed from the youth leadership conference

at Miniwanca, they sought other ways to maintain a connection there. Their solution was to take some of the experiences from the youth camp and transform them into a camp for faculty and staff focused on teaching and learning rather than leadership. Through their connections, influence and ability to secure grant funding, the camp was established.

There are a variety of reasons why the camp has continued for more than 20 years. The two primary findings of this study are that faculty and staff who value undergraduate teaching also value community. They sought a community focused on excellence in the classroom, but they also appreciated the community to balance the isolation and aloneness of the work they did as faculty and staff in higher education. Therefore, Wakonse met their needs for support around student engagement, teaching, and learning. Wakonse also filled a void they experienced working in isolation and competition with others.

Additionally, the role of the place itself mattered a great deal to the founders and also was valued by other participants in the study. The natural beauty, quiet, disconnection from constant electronic communication, and rustic nature of the accommodations all lent themselves to reflection and human connection. Participants were not inspired to stay in their rooms, but they were inspired to enjoy the beaches, forests, sunsets and space available. Instead of staying in their hotel rooms with the TV on or working on projects on the computer, participants shared that they engaged with others in activities and dialogue.

That dialogue is a key theme of the study, as well. The dialogue groups provided a forum for sharing and support unlike anything at other conferences. The dedicated time to learning about one another, developing trust and being vulnerable is essential to the Wakonse experience and something that sets it apart from other professional development opportunities.

The dialogue continues beyond the structured group meetings, however. Participants talk during meals, with roommates in their cabins and during events such as low and high ropes activities. The daily routine is set up to encourage people to engage with one another. And this engagement is encouraged regardless of status, title or position. There are opportunities for students, future faculty, junior and senior faculty and staff members to engage with one another in an open and informal environment. Again, this is unique to Wakonse and not found in combination with the other key pieces of the conference.

A final theme from this study is the importance of time. Participants shared that in their regular lives; they often do not have or do not make time for dialogue or reflection. Being encouraged from the beginning to “skip sessions and walk on the beach or in the woods if you need to” is highly unusual. Participants shared that initially they even felt somewhat guilty about skipping things to enjoy nature or read a book or nap. Over time, they came to realize that the attention to their whole person is something that Wakonse values and values more than their attendance.

In closing, through this study I found that Wakonse provides a unique opportunity in a unique space. It focuses on relationships and community and the self in ways that other conferences and professional development experiences do not. It builds a community as it simultaneously teaches participants how to engage students and develop communities of their own in classrooms and on their campuses.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine a specific conference experience through the lens of organizational development. The Wakonse Conference on College Teaching originated in the 1990s and is nearing its 25th anniversary. As an organization, why was Wakonse created and why has it continued? These two questions serve as the research questions on which the study is based. Rusaw (1998) described organizations as “living phenomena” (p. 72). This study explores how Wakonse as an organization was born and has grown, as well as its viability in the future.

The specific research questions that guided this study were:

1. Why did Wakonse begin?
2. Why has the conference continued?

In addition to these questions, the participants for this study shared their thoughts on how the decisions of the founders affected the evolution of the conference. Founders and other participants also discussed the roles of non-founder participants. The decisions of the founders and the role of non-founder participants fall under the second question-why has the conference continued. That re-imagining of the questions is represented here in the presentation of the findings.

Through interviews with the three founders who remain active with Wakonse and six long-term participants, data were gathered to answer these questions and the results are discussed in this chapter. This approach is not unique either to this study, to higher education, or to research about organizational development. Schwartz and Davis (1981) looked at individual circumstances in studying higher education institutions. They found that

this approach provided additional insight and meaning-making for the organizations to which participants belonged. This same idea is used as a foundational concept for the approach used this study.

Findings

Research question 1: Why did Wakonse Begin?

The founders.

Founders' perspectives.

The perspectives of the faculty members who founded Wakonse were central in understanding how it was conceived, developed and first put into action. The roles and identities of these individuals are at the heart of what Wakonse was and has become. Bennis and Biederman (1997) focused on who leaders are and identified characteristics of leaders who form and lead Great Groups. The ways in which they described the leader of a great group can be effectively applied to the team of founders of Wakonse. According to Bennis and Biederman (1997) "He or she is almost always a pragmatic dreamer. They are people who get things done, but they are people with immortal longings."

Levay (2010) explored how charismatic leaders can "act in resistance to change and in defense of the status quo" (p. 141). In examining the Wakonse conference if the founders were indeed charismatic leaders, their "defense of the status quo" could help to explain their desire to emphasize undergraduate teaching of the universities of the past rather than the grant-writing and research entrepreneurial institutions that exist on some campuses today. That said, the desire to cling to the status quo might also have implications for change in the future.

Transformational leadership is sometimes seen as a part of charismatic leadership and includes a desire to influence and strong values (House, 1977) as well as the ability to elevate ideals and promote change in followers and organizations (Burns, 1978). Bass (1985) said that the attributes of transformative leaders include influence, inspiration, communication, and motivation.

The founders of Wakonse espoused the leadership traits and strategies outlined above. Joe Johnston, Bill Bondeson, and Barb Kerr developed Wakonse as pragmatic dreamers. The idea of Professor Camp came from two psychologists and one philosopher who could be described as what Bennis and Biederman (1997) referred to as “scientifically minded people with poetry in their souls” (p.19). Joe, Bill, and Barb knew that their dream would not be sustainable without research backing up their proposal and funding to underwrite the costs of the conference. The founders did the research and got both initial and institutionalized support. The institutionalized support they garnered was not only financial support, but philosophical support. Joe, as the central driving force for the conference is a transformative leader. Not only does he function in that way, but he inspires transformation through the Wakonse experience in others. As described above, he is able to influence (House, 1977), elevate ideals (Burns, 1978) and motivate (Bass, 1985). Though he was talking about business organizations and employees, what Bass (1990) wrote relates to Joe as the leader of Wakonse.

Superior leadership performance—transformational leadership—occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group.

Transformational leaders achieve these results in one or more way: They may be charismatic to their followers and thus inspire them; they may meet the emotional needs of each employee; and / or they may intellectually stimulate employees. (p. 21)

Similarly, Bill and Barb share some of these leadership traits. Both were able to elevate ideals (Burns, 1978), communicate (Bass, 1985) and influence (House, 1977). Bill did this in his role as the ultimate college professor; he was able to elevate people's thinking about what the in-class experience could be like communicating one's vast knowledge of his or her subject matter via the Socratic method. Barb used her talents to convey the importance of Wakonse through grant proposals and by recruiting her own protégés to attend the conference.

Founders' abilities.

Bryman (2007) conducted a literature review through which he identified behaviors and traits of effective leaders in higher education. One of those traits had to do with vision, specifically the importance of having a vision and being able to carry out that vision. It was the vision for Professor Camp shared by the founders, combined with their talents in different areas that provided the leadership by which Wakonse could be started.

The abilities of the founders also correspond with the competencies Spendlove (2007) identified related to effective higher education leadership. In her study of leaders in higher education, Spendlove found that those holding institutional leadership positions believed that continuing engagement (such as teaching) while serving in these roles was important. The competencies identified in this study included academic credibility, experience of university life, continued research and teaching, and people skills. Wakonse could not have begun

without the founders as a team having strengths in these areas. Each of these competencies was essential to getting the pieces in place for the very first Wakonse conference.

Academic credibility was essential if this conference was to be taken as legitimate by administrators and others providing funding. Since Joe and Bill were established faculty members, Wakonse had credibility. Similarly, their reputation and connections on campus were important in garnering support—a factor which mirrors the “experience of university life” aspect Spendlove (2007) identified.

Bryman (2007) found similar themes in his literature review and would refer to this area as advancing a cause with respect to constituencies and providing resources. His categories included advancing a cause with respect to constituencies. The Wakonse founders had to first define their constituencies and then put forward the cause on the behalf of their anticipated constituents. Bryman (2007) also identified providing resources, communicating well, and being trustworthy as being important for leaders looking to advance a cause. The founders knew they had to secure both grant and institutional support and in so doing had to communicate well and to rely on their reputations as trustworthy scholars and stewards of resources. Because of their reputations as well as their abilities to communicate and foster partnerships with decision-makers, the conference was able to be established.

The emphasis of both teaching and research skills is central to the Wakonse mission since the conference was developed to support teaching. It seems unlikely that Wakonse would have been funded and institutionalized at the University of Missouri if those proposing it did not also possess research skills. As was mentioned in interview after interview, participants at Wakonse do not value teaching in lieu of research, but as an equally respected part of the faculty experience. It is not an either / or situation, but an “and also” dichotomy.

The fact that all three founders were able to meet the research expectations of their institutions gave them legitimacy at their institutions. Without strong research backgrounds and an ability to base the need for the conference on research being done in higher education, it would have been more difficult for these founders to get institutional support for a teaching and learning conference.

Finally, the people skills identified as crucial to successful higher education leaders were present in the founders. Jreisat (1997) defined leadership as “the process of influencing the behavior of others... to accomplish defined objectives” (p. 156). Similarly, Bryman (2007) categorized these skills as being considerate, treating academic staff with integrity, being trustworthy, engaging in participatory decision-making, communicating well, and creating a collegial work environment. Bill, Barb, and the non-founder participants in this study stressed that Joe had strengths in these areas. He exemplified this in his work with Wakonse as well as his role on campus at the University of Missouri. He had access to key decision-makers and was able to build on his relationships in order to secure support for Wakonse.

Each of the founders interviewed for this study have different styles—Joe the leader, Bill the holder of wisdom, Barb the spirit—and that made their array of tools with which to build connections even stronger. They each have personalities that would appeal to different individuals. This afforded for a broader base of support from outside Wakonse and from within the Wakonse participant groups as well.

Spendlove (2007) went on to say that communication and negotiation skills were particularly important to effective leadership in higher education. Other research not only included communication as a component of leadership, but focused on it specifically in

organizations (Beckhard, 1969; Eisenberg & Whitten, 1987; Palmer, 2007; Schein, 1965). Gratz and Salem (1981) stressed the importance of communication emphasizing that it should not be an “improvised matter.”

Again, it is evident that the three founders used and focused on communication in developing support for the conference. Joe had connections with Camp Miniwanca and was able to negotiate a relationship with the camp beyond the youth leadership conference. Barb had strong communication skills when it came to research and grant writing. Because of her talent in those areas, the initial money for the first Wakonse was secured. Joe and Bill both had access to leadership on their campuses and were able to negotiate funding and other support in order to start the conference.

The leadership abilities of Joe, Bill, and Barb complemented one another and provided a foundation upon which Wakonse could be built. Together they were able to establish an organization appropriate to the educational and political climate of the times. The organization also met their individual needs and filled what they perceived to be a gap in higher education—a forum for sharing ideas about the value of teaching and learning.

The origin.

In their attempt to maintain a connection with Camp Miniwanca, the founders developed Wakonse. While this was reactionary, this approach to change aligns well with what Duderstadt (1999) found. In his work around change in higher education, he said that change is an opportunity “to control our destiny, retaining the most important values and traditions” (p. 39).

The founders adapted to a changing relationship with Camp Miniwanca as they developed Wakonse. They retained a connection with the camp and the values of time away

and nature and reflection paired with traditions related to the youth leadership conference. The traditions transferred from youth conference to Wakonse included the communal experiences in camp, goal-setting, and the Chautauqua.

Because of the deep personal connections the founders felt to this site and the experiences they had there, they were compelled to find a way to continue coming to Camp Miniwanca each year. Duderstadt (1999) suggested that change equates to hope. The change as the founders were in Barb's word, "exiled" from the camp compelled them to cling to the hope that they could create a new experience there.

When the founders' ability to go to Camp Miniwanca was threatened, they sought first to figure out how to continue to have time at the camp. Based on the interviews in this study, the idea for Wakonse did not emerge out of need to come together in celebration of teaching and learning. Rather, Wakonse emerged as a mechanism by which Joe, Bill, and Barb could continue to enjoy time at this particular site.

In developing a way to maintain that connection, they reflected on what they enjoyed about their time at Wakonse. While it was a beautiful setting, it was also a chance to teach in a different way and to celebrate the learning and growth of the students who came for the leadership conference. Additionally, the setting provided the founders and others opportunities to connect and talk and reflect and think. The founders drew on these elements—place, time for reflection, conversation, teaching, and student engagement to build a new experience that could be hosted at Camp Miniwanca.

Celebration of teaching and learning.

Previous research supports the idea that research is privileged over teaching and learning in higher education, (Best, 1989; Herbst, 1989; Kimball, 1989; Scanzoni, 2005;

Schank, 2000). Because of this, the Wakonse founders sought to identify a place and time where educators could come together to discuss teaching and learning. The founders shared that they had seen a shift in the importance of teaching as compared with research at their institutions. Simultaneously, questions were being asked by legislators and other constituents about the teaching quality of undergraduate students in higher education. The creation of the conference had to do with a response to both institutional pressures that value research over teaching and external pressures that suggested the quality of teaching was declining.

With these things in mind, the founders decided that Wakonse would be a place away from the distractions of the university and home where individuals could focus on teaching and share ideas. It was also to be a place where people would feel safe enough to share their vulnerabilities around their teaching. Wakonse was developed as a place to care about teaching without fear of political consequences. It was a place to discuss student engagement in the classroom without having to deal with dismissive responses from others that faculty ought to focus their energy on research rather than teaching.

Wakonse Attendees

In his “System of Profound Knowledge,” Deming (1994) explained that part of being effective or competitive as an organization has to do with understanding the psychological motivations of those who are a part of the organization. In the case of Wakonse, understanding the psychological motivations of attendees—or, more simply, why attendees participated—was important to this study.

The goal of the founders was to attract educators who were committed to teaching and learning. Understanding and valuing the roles of research and service, the founders were

troubled by the fact that institutions—particularly research-intensive institutions—did not place the same value on undergraduate education as they did on research and obtaining grants.

Wakonse was developed as a place specifically for those with a passion for teaching to come to share strategies, successes and challenges.

With that in mind, the founders sought to empower educators around teaching and learning. They treated those who came as experts from within rather than inviting alleged experts from outside to present. Bollinger and Wasilik (2009) found that faculty who participated in online learning valued online learning if their institutions valued it. Similarly, the founders hoped to engage attendees by showing them that Wakonse as an organization valued teaching and learning, thereby inspiring them to share more about their own experiences. This, in turn, would have the potential to empower attendees to see themselves as experts in engaging students in learning. Even if institutions were not perceived as valuing teaching and learning, the organization of Wakonse—the founders hoped—would be seen as a place where it was valued and would inspire faculty and staff to continue to focus time and effort on undergraduate students.

However, there are multiple organizations at play in this situation. While the Wakonse organization valued teaching and learning, it emerged because of a perceived lack of support of teaching and learning at universities. In other words, the Wakonse organization was developed by the founders in order to try to fill a gap in the university organization. If teaching and learning was valued more (or at least perceived to be valued more) at colleges and universities, this could have had different potential results. Either more Wakonse-type initiatives would exist or there may never have been a need for Wakonse because faculty and staff would feel that teaching and learning was valued at their home institutions. Since the

founders did not perceive that teaching and learning was being valued in the ways that they felt these things ought to be valued, Wakonse emerged.

In order for Wakonse to happen and to continue, individuals had to be recruited to staff and facilitate the conference, but also to participate. Beckhard (1969) said that an organization must have strategies for the recruitment and development of talent. The founders at Wakonse knew that they had to do the same thing. They had to identify attendees. They also knew that the attendees themselves would be the ones who made Wakonse successful (or not). Wakonse has been successful in attracting attendees for the conference. It also has developed some individuals to move into leadership roles as a part of the conference—primarily from the University of Missouri. Finally, there have been some Wakonse participants who are not affiliated with the University of Missouri who have built upon the idea of Wakonse at their own institutions.

Goal-Setting

As was mentioned in the previous section, Wakonse is an organization. There are a variety of definitions of organizations, but each contains two primary elements: a collection of individuals focused on common goals or tasks (Blau & Scott, 1962; Hicks, 1971; Starbuck, 1971). In the case of Wakonse, the individuals are faculty and staff interested in teaching and learning and the common goal is the pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, and student engagement—particularly at the undergraduate level.

To deal with Wakonse as an organization, it is important to clarify that Wakonse is in fact an organization. Using several definitions, it is clear that Wakonse is indeed an organization. Barnard (1938) defined an organization as a social system that engages in cooperative exchange in order to benefit individual needs. The social system of Wakonse is

built around cooperative experiences (sessions, activities, events) to the benefit of the development of individual faculty and staff members around teaching and learning.

Wakonse is not just about the organization itself, however. The vision of the founders was never to use participants and attendees simply to the service of the organization. If that were the case, those who attended Wakonse would focus on Wakonse and not look to take what they had learned back to their campuses. Instead, the founders initially hoped that attendees would take what they learned at Wakonse back to their home campuses and change the ways in which institutions supported and rewarded excellence in the classroom. The founders knew that the Wakonse Fellows were instrumental in creating this larger change in the culture of higher education. The value the founders put on the participants aligns with what Grievies (2000) wrote about the relationship between organizations and their members and the importance of not dehumanizing the people who make up organizations.

Grievies (2000) wrote that it is important to balance organizational and human development. Wakonse does this by encouraging individuals to focus on themselves and their own goals. It is not a place to simply convince attendees to buy-in to the Wakonse philosophy or way of thinking. Wakonse was designed by the founders to be a place where participants could get away from the distractions on their campuses and focus on themselves, their work, and their goals.

In their study of effective faculty development Bergquist and Phillips (1975) found that the development of faculty is composed of development of the group (faculty), of the tools or approaches (instruction), and of the individual (personal). The same might prove true of any groups—the group, tools, or individuals can be developed. Focusing on the

individual contributes to the organization in ways that focusing on the organization alone may not necessarily contribute to the development of the individual. Translating this to Wakonse, the development of the Wakonse community and the development of the instructional tools and the development of individuals are interrelated. All of these contributed to the development of Wakonse as an organization. The developmental aspects of the conference are seen as crucial to the experience by the Wakonse founders.

Organizing Wakonse

Wakonse was developed as a learning organization. Barb said the name of the conference itself comes from the idea of guiding an individual on his or her quest. In the context of this conference, Wakonse is designed to inspire attendees on their quest for excellence in terms of teaching, learning, and student engagement.

The idea of Wakonse goes beyond focusing on teaching and learning and engaging undergraduate students, however. It is worthwhile to examine Wakonse in comparison to what Kofman and Senge (1993) described as a learning organization.

We believe a learning organization must be grounded in three foundations (1) a culture based on transcendent human values of love, wonder, humility, and compassion; (2) a set of practices for generative conversation and coordinated action; and (3) a capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system. (p. 27)

Wakonse was designed to embrace the “transcendent human values” described above.

Throughout the interviews, aspects of love and compassion came through as themes in Barb’s comments. Joe’s humility was referenced by participants, but also is apparent in his lack of self-promotion and self-acknowledgement during his interview. Bill—in his own

words and through the descriptions of others—engages in a sense of wonder in the classroom. His Socratic dialogue uses questions to stimulate thinking—to make the wondering audible. With these three founders developing the conference, these aspects came out clearly in how the organization is structured and through conference events and activities.

While Wakonse meets the criteria for Kofman and Senge’s (1993) “learning organization” in some ways, in other ways it may or may not. For example, it seems to clearly meet the first two criteria outlined above. Wakonse is a culture based on specified human values, and this is exemplified through the holistic attention given to participants. Wakonse also uses conversation (dialogue groups) and action (striving for excellence in the classroom). However, when it comes to the third of Kofman and Senge’s components—a capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system—a Wakonse falls somewhat short. While the conference works with the ebb and flow of life in terms of addressing the individual needs of attendees at the conference, it may not have adapted as much to the ebb and flow of life in terms of the world and particularly the world of higher education. That said, Wakonse is a learning organization within itself, but probably not an organization responsible for generating or changing the larger culture of colleges and universities. What remains unclear is if Wakonse has not changed as an organization because it is not a learning organization or, since it appeared to be fulfilling its goals, no change was necessary.

Sessa and London (2006) said that “maintaining the status quo” (p. 188) is sometimes what is in the best interest of an organization. As it has continued to draw attendees and the participants in this study shared a variety of positive outcomes as a result of this conference, it would seem more likely that Wakonse has not changed because faculty members still saw the value in attending a conference that focused on teaching. Therefore, even without

changing in response to the flow of a system's life as Kofman and Senge (1993) described it, Wakonse is still a learning organization. It adapts within the conference based on the ebb and flow of the experiences of the attendees.

As has been stated, Wakonse has not changed significantly over the past 25 years. While it may be meeting needs of participants, it also may be missing out on key elements. An example is the addressing of social justice issues in terms of sessions and also in terms of increasing the racial and ethnic diversity of attendees. The global nature of the world affects every classroom and every student, faculty, and staff member on campus. Robbins, Francis, and Elliott (2003) said that the idea of global citizenship is importance in developing competence to make effective contributions "which promote progress towards concern and action for equal opportunities, social justice and sustainable development from the local to the global scale" (p. 94). With this in mind, in order for Wakonse to persist, it must align itself with the needs and expectations not only of institutions, but with the needs and expectations the larger culture has of all institutions and organizations.

Another example would be the increased attention to assessment in higher education. Wakonse emerged at a time when the focus of many constituents inside and outside of higher education was on student engagement and learning. In order to stay true to itself, this focus cannot be lost, however there are new pressures on the academy that Wakonse would be well-served to acknowledge and integrate into the experience. Social justice and assessment, then, serve as two examples where Wakonse has room to evolve and more fully become a learning organization. As budget decisions need to be made, it will be important not just for the Wakonse staff and leadership to be able to provide a rationale for the conference, but for other institutions to be able to explain the value of this program to resource allocators on

their own conference. Without data to back up why Wakonse is worthwhile, funding and participation is at risk.

The role of technology is also important to consider and Wakonse's approach to technology is somewhat asynchronous. The conference is held in a location where there is little cell phone reception, no wireless network access, and only a few computers. At the same time, there have been sessions done about the importance of technology from the time that e-mail was just beginning through current strategies related to using technology in the classroom. While these might seem in conflict, they really serve the same ultimate goal—connecting. The lack of computer access puts people in a space to connect with one another. The technology resources discussed in presentations is about connecting with students in new ways. And this approach seems to serve Wakonse effectively.

In their case study of an online global faculty learning community, Handzic and Lagumdzija (2010) found that these communities are sustained by a small percentage of active participants on a small number of issues where participants enter into dialogue only a couple of times a month. This is similar to how both Jean and Renee described their continued connections with members of their past dialogue groups. The groups benefit from not having access to extravagant accommodations—a point made by nearly all participants in this study. However, upon returning to their home campuses, a sense of connection is maintained through the use of social media and other technological tools.

The Wakonse format.

Wakonse was developed at a time when there were questions asked on a national level about the experience of undergraduate students in the classroom. While that was going on in terms of dialogue about the field of higher education, the founders were struggling with

how to maintain a connection to Camp Miniwanca and the sense of rejuvenation they got from working with the American Youth Foundation.

The pieces fell into place when someone, sitting on a deck near Lake Michigan reflected, “This would be a lot more fun without the students.” While everyone interviewed shared some version of this quote, the point behind it was that it was just as important to attend to faculty and staff in terms of their reprieve from the routines of academe as it was to take students to camp to give them a transformative experience. The timing was right in order to secure funding—based on national questions and interest related to undergraduate teaching—and to engage the founders—based on their estrangement from AYF. From this combination of circumstances Professor Camp—or Wakonse, as it came to be named—was born.

Key Findings from Research Question One.

In studying why the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching and Learning was founded, three themes emerged. The first was that the founders were looking for a way to maintain a connection to Camp Miniwanca when their connections to the youth leadership conference were threatened. Second, given the historical context of the time, there was a call for more transparency in higher education about the undergraduate student experience. Finally, the founders sought to integrate the sense of place and the calls from the public to not only explore teaching and learning in the classroom, but to treat the experience of higher education faculty and staff holistically and address personal needs as well as public demands.

Research Question 2: Why has Wakonse continued?

The second part of this study explored why Wakonse has continued over time. The persistence of the conference is the result of a combination of factors—leadership, a shared

commitment to teaching and learning on the part of the founders and the attendees, and the development of a community in resistance to the isolated life many of those interviewed shared that they have experienced.

The leadership for Wakonse started with the founders and while Joe is often seen as the primary leader of the conference, Bill and Barb each made and continue to make significant contributions. Additionally, the role of the staff in providing leadership cannot be undervalued. The individuals who help to organize the conference—including but well beyond simply the founders—have been instrumental in the conference’s continuation. The leadership provided by the staff is not simply about the experience at Camp Miniwanca, but the cultivation of institutional support at the University of Missouri and the recruiting of future participants across the country. Wakonse may have been founded out of a desire to maintain a connection to Camp Miniwanca. When the founders discovered that they were being exiled from that place, they then developed a plan for why they should return. Wakonse followed Camp Miniwanca—the idea emerged out of a desire to come back to that particular place, not the other way around.

While the place may have been foremost on the minds of the founders, the passion Wakonse attendees have for teaching and learning is at the heart of why Wakonse continues. Throughout the interviews conducted, participants shared that they cared a great deal about the student experience, learning, teaching, and engagement. Many of them also shared that they did not have support for this anywhere else. Jean, as an example, shared that her first Wakonse experience was the first time she ever encountered others who were passionate about undergraduate education in the ways that she was. Coming together with others who

value student engagement and sharing ideas is the primary opportunity Wakonse affords participants.

Finally, the setting and the shared passion create an environment where a community can develop. The conference is developed on common values related to higher education, but is cultivated away from any one particular campus so that attendees do not feel the pressures of politics and work that they may in their daily lives. This community is something missing in higher education—not simply missing, but actively discouraged according to some of the participants interviewed. Yet there is a desire among at least some people to know that others are sharing their struggles and willing to also share their strategies for success in the classroom.

The idea of isolation in academe has been explored by a number of scholars. This has been done for specific demographic groups of faculty members: Aguirre (1987) looked at the isolation of Chicano faculty members and Turner (2002) studied the marginalization of women of color. Both of these studies identified the need for a sense of connection and belonging in order for faculty members from diverse areas to be retained. This belonging can be cultivated through peer communities or mentoring programs.

The isolation of faculty in general has also been studied. Tierney and Bensimon (1996) explore ways in which both junior and tenured faculty become isolated as opposed to “interwoven” in the culture of the academy. Gray and Conway (2007) addressed faculty isolation in their article on developing a faculty development center. In each of these studies the authors found that community in academe must be intentionally planned and implemented or faculty are at risk of working in isolation at all stages of their careers. The

benefits of these types of communities are seen in the retention of faculty members as well as increased interdisciplinary and innovative research.

In their study on faculty development, Camblin and Steger (2000) found that not only do participants learn individual skills, but that faculty development leads to cooperation among faculty members across disciplines. This study found that at Wakonse not only was there cooperation between chemists and artists and psychologists and mathematicians, but there was an interdisciplinary community that developed as well. As a result, participants are able to share strategies for student engagement, teaching, and learning that work in the lab as well as the studio. While the focus of this conference is on teaching and learning, it is important to bear in mind that connecting faculty and staff through Wakonse also opens the door to new and interdisciplinary research.

Leadership

The first part of this chapter discussed leadership as it was relevant to the founding of Wakonse. Leadership also plays a critical role in the continuation of the conference. This study found that Wakonse is a learning organization. It meets Kofman and Senge's (1993) criteria as an organization based on human values, generative conversation and coordinated action, and a flow of life system. While there are areas for improvement—particularly as Wakonse engages in life beyond the conference and develops an approach that aligns more with the global and assessment cultures in higher education—it is a learning organization.

Leaders of learning organizations must understand these three aspects. The leader must espouse the human values of love, wonder, humility and compassion; must inspire conversations and action; and must engage in the flow of life (Kofman & Senge, 1993).

Specifically the transformational leadership approach is best suited for learning

organizations. Bass (2000) said that transformational leadership is essential to the future of learning organizations and said that this leadership approach can be used to increase “organizational satisfaction, commitment and effectiveness” (p. 18).

The founders of this conference and the participants in this study discussed how the Wakonse organization engaged around these issues. In terms of organizational satisfaction, the attendees complete feedback forms and also provide group feedback from each institution. This information is used to adapt the conference for future years. However, it is important to reiterate that the feedback has not resulted in any major changes or any substantial overhaul of the conference. Most of the changes have been made in terms of information-sharing before and during the conference rather than any philosophical or structural reorganization.

As a transformational learning organization Wakonse inspires commitment through the role modeling of the founders and other participants. There is a commitment on the part of the founders seen in one way simply by the fact that Joe, Bill, and Barb have attended every Wakonse for the past 23 years. They also role model commitment by being visible and present at all of the large group sessions and by facilitating plenary sessions each year. Another way that the commitment is shown is that one’s experience with Wakonse is not over when the Wakonse conference concludes. Receiving one’s goals in the mail six months after the conference is over shows an ongoing commitment to the attendees each year.

It is in the area of effectiveness that more information must be collected. This study contributes in terms of defining the effect the conference has had on a small group of longer-term attendees and staff members. It provides insight into what difference Wakonse has made for these individuals. Further study on the effectiveness of the organizations on

others—maybe most importantly one-time attendees (as they make up the bulk of the Wakonse Fellows)—will prove helpful in clarifying if Wakonse is effective and if so, in what ways it makes a difference.

While the members of Wakonse—staff and attendees—are not employees in a business sense; they are the people who make up the organization. They are the followers who are inspired by the leader and the organization. They are the individuals who determine if the organization continues and succeeds, or if it fails and is discontinued.

Sessa and London (2006) focused on how effective leaders act in order to support their organizations. One of the skills these authors identified as essential for effective organizational leadership is helping the organization learn and adapt. How the leaders and attendees have adapted is a significant reason why the conference has continued for the past 20 years. These adaptations include adding undergraduate and graduate students into Wakonse, providing more structured opportunities for free time during the conference, and providing more information in advance of Wakonse about the accommodations and setting for the conference so that attendees are best prepared for what to expect there. How the leaders will continue to adapt is the key to Wakonse’s future.

Porter and McLaughlin (2006) wrote, “Leadership in organizations does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in organizational contexts” (p. 559). I turned to other Wakonse Fellows to provide information about how the leadership contributed to the persistence of the conference. They discussed how the founders and Joe in particular contributed to Wakonse’s continuation over time.

The push and pull of leadership consistency as opposed to leadership change and adaptation is important to consider, as well. Not only are the leadership styles and strategies

adopted by the founders important to how Wakonse was founded and has lasted for more than 20 years, the leadership styles are important for the future, as well. This section explores the roles of the founders as leaders in the past through maintaining the conference to the present and into the future.

Joe the leader.

Several participants in this study said that Joe is best described as “in the moment.” This closely resembles the language Eggert (1990) used in discussing the contemplative manager. She said that this type of leader “is grounded in being fully present in the moment” (p. 31). She said that this style allows for transformation for organizational members. Being present in terms of observing not only conference activities, but also how individuals are connected (or not) has been an important part of helping Wakonse adapt each year as issues and concerns arise.

This ability to be present and—as Dara shared nearly omniscient—is part of Joe’s leadership style. As a transformative leader, Joe has role modeled Kofman and Senge’s (1993) transcendental human values by showing love and compassion to attendees. This takes place whether Joe is greeting conference attendees as they arrive, engaging with them during a meal, or connecting them with resources to address any concerns they might have.

Joe dedicates time at the conference for “generative conversation” (Kofman & Senge, 1993) through the dialogue groups and the community structure of meals and challenge by choice activities. Senge (1990) defined generative conversation as taking place when assumptions are suspended, participants are regarded as colleagues, and there is a facilitator in charge of managing the dialogue. This is exactly what takes place in dialogue groups.

Assumptions are suspended and trust is cultivated, people are not identified by title or in other hierarchical ways, and a dialogue group leader helps to facilitate the conversation.

Finally, Joe's "in the moment" persona allows him to easily and quickly adapt to the flow of life at Wakonse. As an example, Joe does not hesitate to add sessions to the schedule based on the needs or interests of participants. During Wakonse 2012 there were several times when people suggested additions to the schedule on topics related to classroom communication and team-based learning. Similarly, the Chautauqua develops over the course of the week as people volunteer to perform and the program is developed.

Joe meets the criteria for a transformational leader. Dara described Joe as charismatic and approachable. Joe has led the way for Wakonse to become a community of support beyond the conference itself—as described through Jean and Renee's experiences. In terms of the staff, Joe identifies people's strengths and puts them in positions to capitalize on those strengths. These are the three ways Bass (1990) said that transformational leaders achieve results—charisma, attending to the emotional needs of organizational members, and attending to the intellectual needs of members.

Again, throughout the interviews participants described Wakonse as transformative. While interviewees acknowledged they had a pre-existing passion for teaching and learning, what was transformative to most of them was the fact that they found a community of like-minded faculty and staff.

Staff.

The founders have been instrumental in building and developing the Wakonse staff. Beckhard (1969) emphasized the role of teams and collaboration in connection to organizational development. The conference is highly team-focused. There are dialogue

group teams, teams of people from specific institutions, and the leadership teams. The Wakonse staff specifically oversees the Wakonse experience from the highly visible parts such as sessions, meals, and activities to behind-the-scenes issues and concerns.

As staff members and dialogue group leaders have been identified by the founders and other staff, the organization has continued to evolve and grow and adapt. This bringing in of multiple perspectives and experiences has enhanced the Wakonse experience. Schwartz and Davis (1981) suggested that the culture of an organization can be understood and clarified by looking at both existing leaders and those identified to fill positions as they become available. Many of those interviewed said that this is one of Joe's greatest strengths. He has an ability to identify the talents and interests of individuals and to tap into those to the benefit of both the organization and the individual. Their concern is that he has not tapped into the talent or interest of a specific individual to continue to do what he does. In a sense, he has connected strengths with all positions except the one of leader. Every position except the one that Joe himself plays.

This approach is both understandable and risky. It is understandable because Joe was instrumental in founding Wakonse. He has taken leadership in terms of coordinating resources—human and financial. The conference was built in part because of his past relationship with Camp Miniwanca. Bill and Reg described Joe's relationship with Wakonse as being family-oriented. This level of passion and dedication is at least part of the reason the conference has continued.

It is risky since this passion may not lend itself to the future of Wakonse in the long-term or in the post-Joe era. As Schuh and Leviton (2006) wrote, "It is possible for individuals to possess both extensive experience and training in a field and, at the same time,

fail to achieve expert performance” (p. 174). They go on to describe the five stage model they adapted from Dreyfus, Dreyfus, and Athanasiou (1986). In that model they describe an expert leader as someone who “uses intuitive forward-thinking problem solving” and “recognizes underlying patterns” (p. 174). This seems to have been true of Joe and the other founders during the establishment of Wakonse, but it is unclear if they have continued to be forward-thinking when it comes to the future beyond the first 25 years of the conference. If not, the future of Wakonse does not look promising. How the founders choose to look ahead and empower others is crucial to the continuation of the conference.

This team model—team of founders, team of staff, team from universities, etc.—is what Lesniaski, et al. (2001) described as collegial leadership. It is a flat model built on respect and shared goals. The authors went on to say that this type of organizational model “provides both the strength and flexibility to make the most of change” (p. 238). This approach has likely contributed to Wakonse’s longevity.

While many of the participants shared that Wakonse as an experience has changed very little over time, many of them also said that Wakonse adapts to the needs at hand. As was discussed earlier, this internal flexibility and adaptation is a strength of Wakonse internally. The conference structure may not have changed the world or higher education or adapted to outside pressures, but if situations arise during a specific year—internal pressures—the leadership is structured to be flexible. Jean used the example of a conversation about sexual orientation. She said that one year this issue came up and there were a number of intense exchanges during a session on another topic. She said that the staff’s solution was, “Okay, let’s add a session about that.” Creating a forum to discuss that issue helped the participants learn and be heard. That is the kind of organizational flexibility Wakonse

exercises. That ability and willingness to change the agenda as needed has helped Wakonse meet the needs of attendees from one year to the next.

Teaching and Learning

One of the primary themes from this study was that faculty and staff struggle to find support for teaching and learning. This theme came up in every interview. While the service component for faculty is important, those interviewed shared that the primary dichotomy they experience in their work is a pull between research and teaching. Research is what is rewarded through recognition and promotion and tenure. Teaching—institutions tell them—is simply the other thing they *have* to do.

The value of a community of higher education professionals who share passion around learning and teaching cannot be overestimated. This undoubtedly has been a significant reason Wakonse has continued. Attendees said nowhere else is learning and teaching valued and rewarded in the ways that it is at Wakonse. For many faculty and staff their ability to engage with students is how they intrinsically define their success. This is what Beckhard (1969) referred to when he discussed the role of self-worth as a motivation for members of organizations. He said that the individual has to believe that they matter and that much of that is internal rather than external. It is how a member of an organization feels about the work of the organization. In the case of Wakonse, it is how individual attendees feel about teaching and learning and whether or not they feel that undergraduate education is important that matters. Their passion for student engagement is part of who they are and how they define themselves. If student engagement is not valued (by their institutions, by their peers, by Wakonse), faculty and staff may be likely to disengage.

This inclination to engage or disengage is also relevant to peoples' sense of place. As early as 1939, Lewin (1939) observed that there was a connection between people and the places they inhabit. Most of the time, Wakonse attendees inhabit their campus environments. However, there is something missing at their institutions. Their universities and colleges are not attending to an important part of their identities as scholars and practitioners. Wakonse fills that gap. Just as participants feel a connection to their institutions, they feel a connection to Wakonse. The place matters. What happens at Wakonse celebrates the fact that participants value teaching and learning.

Who: How People Contributed to Wakonse's Continuity

The attendees themselves are an important part of why Wakonse has continued. Bellavita (1990) stated, "Organizations are people." So who are the "Wakonse People?" Through this study, a number of themes emerged in terms of shared ways of thinking and valuing that connected the people to one another and to the organization.

Openness and trust.

First of all, participants said in interviews that those who attend Wakonse are open to sharing. Once they realize that Wakonse is a safe place to share about their successes, challenges, and fears, they open up with one another. When the openness is role modeled by the leaders, a community of trust emerges from the dialogue groups. It is worth noting that the groups are driven by the personalities of group members. In many ways the dialogue group makes or breaks the Wakonse experience.

This is not to say that setbacks in dialogue groups are insurmountable. As Renee described, she was able to recover when her dialogue group co-leader walked away from the group. When challenges emerged because of her performance at the Chautauqua, the group

rallied around Renee in a show of support. Since the dialogue group is the only required activity at Wakonse, if it is not managed well, it can undermine the larger Wakonse experience.

Just as Darwin and Palmer (2009) discussed the effectiveness of mentoring circles, Wakonse espouses dialogue groups. Those who participants perceived as benefiting the most from the conference are the people who were most willing to share and be vulnerable in their dialogue groups. Finding a group and connecting with others helps Wakonse thrive. Many of the participants in this study said that relationships made at Wakonse and specifically through dialogue groups continued for months and years after the conference was over. This ongoing connection served not only to keep individuals connected to Wakonse, but also to remind those who had gone what a transformative experience it was. As a result some participants shared that they wanted to encourage others to go to Wakonse and have an experience similar to the one they had.

Interdisciplinary nature of Wakonse.

Darwin and Palmer (2009) went on to discuss interdisciplinary teaching relationships. Similarly, participants in this study expressed that the interdisciplinary nature of the conference is something that resonates with attendees. Barb shared that making this an interdisciplinary experience was something the founders were dedicated to from the very beginning. Attracting attendees who also valued that has been important. The fact that Wakonse does not draw from a single discipline, department, or institutional type also means that the pool of future participants is larger than if it were not an interdisciplinary endeavor.

Passion for teaching and learning.

In many ways, Wakonse has been sustained by drawing the right type of person. Participants shared that there have been some exceptions—one or two people who were sent to the conference for teaching remediation—but for the most part, those who come to Wakonse already buy in to the core beliefs of the conference. The transformative part of the experience for these attendees has not been in *convincing* them that student engagement matters, but in helping them realize they are not alone in believing that it matters.

What participants already think about teaching and learning and how they act to put those beliefs into action on their campuses not only connects them philosophically to Wakonse, but also to one another. Brief and Aldag (1981) found that employees' thinking, behaviors, and the work environment are reciprocal relationships. In the same way, this study found that Wakonse attendees' thinking and behaviors and the environment of the conference are reciprocal. Attendees share a common thinking about teaching and learning. They share common behaviors in making student engagement a priority and focusing on teaching well.

Community.

The environment of Wakonse is more than the camp setting. It also is about the openness and the time and space for reflection as well as connection. The connection they experience at Wakonse is a contrast for many participants to the sense of disconnection they feel on their campuses.

Instead it is a mutually-fulfilling experience where the individual is valued and finds a community she values, as well. The people feed the organization and the organization feeds the people. Carnevale (2003) said that humans and organizations must “collaborate for mutual gain... Organizations are social systems” (p. 123). At Wakonse this occurs in a way

that is exceptional and outside of attendees' experiences anywhere else. The participants in this study repeatedly shared that at Wakonse they get a chance to dialogue fully and deeply about their passions related to teaching and learning. They also shared that this is not a competitive experience, but a collaborative and community-based experience. They said that this is not something they experience (due to time, a lack of connections, campus politics and other reasons) at their home institutions.

What: Wakonse Activities

What happens at Wakonse has contributed to its continuation. This idea is grounded in organizational development. Deming's (1994) "appreciation for a system" was defined as a series of activities that work for an organization. Activities that work for an organization help that organization continue over time. The connection between activities and organizational development has been made in studies on religion (Sosis, 2004), corporate life (Deal & Kennedy, 2000), and culture (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Trice & Beyer, 1984; Wiener, 1988).

The activities planned at Wakonse have not changed significantly since the conference was founded. The participants in this study identified what the primary activities at the conference are—conference sessions, dialogue group meetings, challenge by choice activities, the Chautauqua, and Virtual Wakonse. They also discussed the contribution these events make to the overall Wakonse experience. Finally, they shared why these activities have had significance for them and why not only the activities have continued, but the participants acknowledged that the success of the activity structure at the conference has contributed to its persistence.

It is important to acknowledge that the activities at the conference have ties to the teaching and learning experience. The conference sessions clearly touch on topics related to teaching, learning and student engagement. The dialogue group meetings provide a space for small group discussion, but also exemplify team-based learning, trust-building, collaboration, and the importance of human connections in student engagement. The challenge by choice and Chautauqua opportunities stress the experiential components of the learning process.

The conference would continue and prove successful if the Polar Bear Plunge was eliminated. However, it provides an opportunity for people to be a part of the community even if they are not all participating in the same activities—they can still be present and supportive. The same is true of group presentations in class or the Chautauqua. Being a part of the audience is being a part of the event.

Finally, the Virtual Wakonse as the culminating event is a time of solidifying the participants as members of the experience. The slide show makes visible and literal the membership of the Wakonse Fellows. It takes their belonging beyond names on the conference registration list. This encourages attendees to think of ways to acknowledge the participation and presence of students in their classes beyond names on the class roster or grades posted. The activities at Wakonse, in education, and in any organization—if properly structured—create opportunities to create a sense of belonging for participants and contribute to the continuation of organizations.

The role of dialogue.

Central to the organization of the Wakonse conference was the dialogue group, which is an example of Deming's (1994) "appreciate of a system" or something that serves to work for an organization. Similarly, the dialogue group represents Schein's (1993b) thoughts about

organizational culture and the parts of an organization that become so integrated that members of the organization take their existence for granted. The dialogue group is an integral part of Wakonse. As has been discussed, those groups may be the most important part of what makes Wakonse a transformative experience. The founders valued this aspect of the experience so much that time was dedicated to these groups each day and eventually this aspect became the only required aspect of the conference. The openness of members served to enhance the organizational communication but also to help develop communities within the larger Wakonse community.

The primary value of the dialogue group is creating a sense of belonging. It is not feasible for every voice to be heard in a session with 125 people. It is not comfortable for everyone to feel a sense of belonging in a larger group. If, as Barb asserted, most of the participants are introverts, the dialogue groups allow Wakonse Fellows to develop smaller communities of trust and to have deeper dialogue over the course of the conference.

The dialogue groups are places where people are expected to be. Someone is there noticing if they are present or not. Someone knows the name of the participants. This personal attention is another way that Wakonse is different from other places. Feeling like one's presence matters to someone creates a different sense of investment and connection for attendees. Friedman, Rodriguez, and McComb (2001) found this same thing to be true for college student attendance in classes. Students said that they were less likely to attend if "the teacher doesn't notice or care whether I am there." Not only do dialogue groups provide a forum for deeper conversations and connections, they provide a platform for Wakonse to show that the presence of attendees matters. The sense of belonging and community participants in this study expressed they experienced from being a part of Wakonse is

reaffirmed by the dialogue groups. These groups are a part of Wakonse's uniqueness, success, and persistence.

Eisenberg and Whitten (1987) suggested that members of an organization make decisions on how open to be based on individual, relational, organizational, and environmental factors and referred to this as the "Contingency Perspective." This perspective suggests that Wakonse Fellows would—from their individual perspectives—decide if their relationships with others and with the organization and their sense of security in the environment would allow them to open up.

The dialogue groups do not exist in a vacuum, however. They are a part of the larger Wakonse experience and community. The idea of addressing Eisenberg and Whitten's (1987) individual contingencies fits with Deming's (1994) "Understanding Psychology" concept. In this final part of his System of Profound Knowledge, Deming believed it was imperative to understand the psychological motivations of members of an organization. Not only did this understanding allow individual members to develop, but it also fostered an environment where the organization itself could flourish. In the case of this study, collecting data on what the participants experienced and their motivations to stay connected with Wakonse was important to understanding the conference's continuation. The participants sharing the importance of things like community, trust, and the role of the environment in providing quiet time for reflection have all contributed to them maintaining connections with Wakonse and with their encouraging others to attend.

The founders developed the conference hoping to make individuals feel comfortable with others, with the Wakonse concept and organization and in the Camp Miniwanca environment. The founders were intentional in their thinking about how to meet the needs of

diverse personalities, to cultivate a sense of belonging and community, and to host the event in a location away from work and campus politics and other issues that might stifle dialogue.

Communal experiences.

The shared experiences at Wakonse are part of what helps to develop community at the conference. The lodging is very rustic. There is no television or telephone. The doors do not have locks. Attendees share a room with another person. There are two twin beds, a night stand and a shared dresser and closet. The bathrooms are community bathrooms, as well. Dara talked about how this setting lends itself to connecting with people in ways that you might not otherwise—encountering someone while brushing your teeth can lead to conversation. Jean talked about how not having easy access to phone service or internet means people are more likely to talk—and listen—attentively to one another.

Similarly, the meals are served in a common dining hall. Some meals are scheduled for dialogue groups to meet, but most are left open. People can sit with others from their home institutions or people they have just met. Renee talked about eating meals with someone you don't know well being an opportunity to step out of one's comfort zone and connect with someone else.

McMillan and George (1986) developed a definition and theory of “sense of community.” In their work, they found that a sense of community created cohesion and strengthened and preserved communities. McMillan and George (1986) also developed a “shared valent event hypothesis” that presupposes that “the more important the shared event is to those involved, the greater the community bond” (p.9). By using “valent,” which has to do with chemical reactions, McMillan and George (1986) are comparing the bonding of a

community to the bonds which take place in chemistry—each of which requires a catalytic event.

In the Wakonse context, the shared event could be as simple (but important) as food and shelter. It could also be something as significant as being in a new place and isolated from other people or communities. Accommodations and meals are a part of Wakonse's system. In keeping with Deming's (1994) appreciation of a system, these activities work for the organization. These activities connect individuals not only to one another, but to the organization as well.

Other Wakonse activities also served this purpose. Gathering to watch the sunsets, the challenge by choice opportunities offered when there are not scheduled sessions, the high and low ropes courses, the Chautauqua—all of these activities contribute to the individuals' connections with the organization of Wakonse. McMillan (1996) discussed the role of art and the "shared dramatic moment" and asked, "What shared experiences become art?" (p. 322). The Chautauqua at Wakonse and other events would meet his criteria as an event that has become a part of the conference's heritage. McMillan (1996) said the elements of a community:

Create a shared history that becomes the community's story symbolized in ART. A picture is truly "worth a thousand words" and stories represent people's tradition. Song and dance show a community's heart and passion. Art represents the transcendent values of the community. But the basic foundation of art is experience. To have experience, the community's members must have contact with one another. (p. 322)

All of these activities culminate in the virtual Wakonse at the end of the conference. Virtual Wakonse is where what participants have felt and experienced becomes formalized. Not only do participants feel connected to one another and to Wakonse and to Camp Miniwanca, but the virtual Wakonse documents that connection. During the slide show at virtual Wakonse, they see themselves as a part of the experience. In the photos they see themselves listening to discussion, eating, participating in the low ropes teambuilding. They see themselves as a part of Wakonse—the experience, the organization, and the people who make up that organization.

This shared experience connection has been researched in organizational development specifically in higher education. Similar connections were found for activities related to teaching collaboration (Guzdial, Rick, & Kehoe, 2001), higher education rituals (Manning, 2000), and the learning communities (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Wakonse is a unique place using a number of specific strategies to develop the organization and to cultivate the connection of the members to that organization. Additionally, the fact that participants said they get these things from Wakonse and do not get them elsewhere has made Wakonse an important resource to them. The conference has continued because it meets their needs in these areas—connection, community, shared passions, and shared experiences—in ways that no other conference, professional development experience, or opportunity on their campuses have.

Where: The Role of Camp Miniwanca

The role that the site—Camp Miniwanca—played for the founders has already been explored. What, however, is the role of place for non-founders? According to the participants in this study, the place matters. It matters in a practical sense—returning to the

same site year after year means there is less the staff has to learn or to which they need to adapt.

However, the role of the place is more significant than simply being convenient or familiar. Bill said that his initial desire to return to the youth leadership conference was the beauty of the place. Renee and Hope and Dara all discussed the role of nature and the dunes and the lake and the woods. They all found value in the place because it affords attendees time away from their routines and the stimuli of campus to enjoy nature. Camp Miniwanca is a place where people can reflect. Wakonse is a place where people can think.

Beckhard (1969) provides significant insight into why the location may be crucial to Wakonse's persistence. He suggested that for an organization to continually renew itself, the environment of that organization must be positive for the individual. If the environment is inhospitable, the individual cannot thrive and the organization supported by individuals also cannot thrive. It was unclear whether or not this specific camp setting is the only place where Wakonse could happen since it has not been transplanted anywhere else. What is clear is that not only the founders, but the other participants in this study feel a sense of connection and place tremendous importance on Camp Miniwanca as a part of the Wakonse experience.

While the role of Camp Miniwanca has been central to the formation and continuation of Wakonse to this point, it is unclear if this location is essential to the conference's persistence. While several participants said that they have a hard time imagining it anywhere else, others believe it would continue if it had to be relocated. Kai suggested that Joe is the primary link to Camp Miniwanca and that no one else has the connections Joe does to access that site. Kai also said that he personally does not feel the

same sense of place about Miniwanca that the founders may. While it is important to him, it is not unfathomable that Wakonse could be held elsewhere.

The fact that Dara, Barb, Jean, and Hope all re-created Wakonse-like experiences in different parts of the country (Pennsylvania, Iowa, Texas, and Arizona) indicates that Wakonse as a concept is not inextricably bound to Camp Miniwanca. All participants, however, stressed that the role of nature is essential and that a more traditional conference setting—in a hotel with more modern amenities—would significantly change the experience. It might not have to be at Camp Miniwanca, some said, but it would need to be in a natural setting.

The participants discussed how the lack of technology or outside entertainment opportunities increased their focus on the people at the conference. There are not distractions like cell phone reception or computer access, TVs in rooms, lots of restaurants, or social options beyond the camp. This lack of technology means that attendees create their own social opportunities. Participants said that the evening activities in which some participants engage have included game nights in the dining hall, bonfires, and long conversations on the beach or decks overlooking Lake Michigan. Quay, Dickinson, and Nettleton (2000) talked about how the outdoors serve as an excellent “teaching and learning area which can address issues of human community and caring” (p. 16). The authors went on to discuss how concepts such as the relational self, respect, care for others, community, and solidarity can all evolve from connections with nature and the outdoors.

Townsend (2006) explored how the human connection to nature has significant positive effects. Among the things she highlighted as positive outcomes of time in nature are “increased opportunities for relaxation,” “an understanding that they are not alone in their

problems, whatever those problems may be (that others share similar experiences and can offer support), “greater confidence in their own abilities,” “new social community connections” and “improved overall wellbeing” (p. 119). All of these things align with what Wakonse espouses and what participants claimed they experienced as being a part of Wakonse. The role of the natural setting is important and the benefits outlined above have made a significant contribution to the continuation of the conference in general and to the continuation of the conference in this setting.

The role of environment is complicated, however, by the memory individuals have about a given place. Marcus (1992) found that memory shapes connections to place as well as both continuing and generating new meaning about a specific location. As leadership transitions take place and especially as the founders are no longer involved in the conference, the meaning of Camp Miniwanca may change

Beyond the physical environment, however, Schein (1965) suggested that for an organization to cope with change and persist, the environment must be safe enough for people to feel free to communicate openly. There are some things at Camp Miniwanca which subtly indicate that this location is a safe and open one such as the fact that there are no locks on the doors in the cabins at Wakonse. The openness of the environment indicates a sense of safety and trust—even if it might be uncomfortable for participants.

The safety of Wakonse goes beyond some of the camp’s physical indicators. Once people realize they share a common interest in learning and teaching, they also come to realize that they can talk openly about their experiences. It is unlikely they have peers in their dialogue groups. The political fall-out of showing vulnerability or passion related to the

student experience is non-existent. The location being a safe place in which participants can be vulnerable, share, and get inspiration from others contributes to Wakonse's persistence.

Again, this study found that Wakonse is a unique experience for participants. It is a unique setting and conference structure. Beyond that, however, it is unique in that this environment allowed people to ask questions and provide insights. The participants simply did not believe they got this kind of experience anywhere else.

When: Time of Year and Developmental Milestones

As participants shared, Wakonse is held at a time of the year when it is most beneficial to them. The end of the term is a time of recovery for some and a time of reflection for others. Rather than being stressed about the upcoming term, many faculty and staff are being relieved of stress as the spring term comes to an end. Barb shared that Memorial Day weekend at Wakonse is when she makes her resolutions. Renee said that even if the spring term is a difficult one, she knows that Wakonse is coming and that helps her finish up the semester.

The other part of the timing of Wakonse, however, has to do with the conference itself and the development that happens as attendees go through their time together. Barb said that it is predictable. She summed it up as being caution at first, then buy-in, then celebration—when everyone wants to talk and no one wants to sleep or go to sessions. This last stage she and Bill have labeled “High Wakonse.”

While the timeline is condensed at the conference, her description of this evolution is consistent with other research. Barb's observations indicate that there is development taking place at Wakonse in a way that is consistent from one year to the next. This consistency aligns with what Tierney (1997) found—that transformation is not the result of major events,

but occurs through daily experiences. In the case of Wakonse, this transformation takes place as a cumulative effect of meals shared, dialogue groups, reflection on the beach and any of a variety of other activities in which the attendees engage. This community structure reinforces the purpose of intentional planning related to communal activities and other events at the conference.

There is not a moment when one is elevated to the role of Wakonse Fellow. Rather, this transition happens as a culmination of experiences—one day, one meal, one session, and one walk on the beach at a time. This process reinforces the community of Wakonse and the role of time in developing a sense of membership in this community. The time is provided for connections to people, ideas, and place to be built. So the length of time spent at Wakonse also contributes to its sustainability. The time spent also leads to High Wakonse and the other developmental milestones to which Barb referred.

Why: Isolation in Academe

Through this study, participants shared that many of them feel isolated in their academic lives. They shared that Wakonse fills a void not met for them at their institutions. Lawrence, Ott, and Bell (2012) found that faculty felt a connection to his or her campus when s/he believed that administrators were responsive to faculty. In the case of Wakonse, faculty and staff on campuses where administrators valued teaching and learning—through recognition and financial and other support—attendees may have felt a sense of community before coming to Wakonse. Dunham-Taylor, Lynn, Moore, McDaniel, and Walker (2008) identified mentoring as a way of building connections and community in organizations. They said that a culture that values mentoring, passionate and experienced mentors, and access to the mentors by the mentees, is the key to an effective mentoring program. With

these things in mind, Wakonse could be seen as a mentoring program and an effective one, as it has these elements in place. There are experienced faculty and staff who are available, accessible, and approachable at Wakonse. They are willing to engage in conversation about their experiences and ask questions to help junior faculty and staff explore their own goals and challenges. There is no specific mentoring pairing, but the dialogue groups include a variety of people with different levels of experience. Although, as has been discussed, these differences in status and position are not identified by the conference, as conversation around issues such as tenure and promotion or campus politics arise, peoples' experiences emerge. In addition, outside of the dialogue groups, the founders and other Wakonse leaders present plenary sessions and are available to attendees for conversations about career trajectory, work / life balance, and other issues and challenges. This structure is also a formula by which university and college communities could be assessed to determine the level of connection and community faculty and staff feel with their institutions.

The factors influencing the development of a community do not rest solely in the hands of administrators, however. In his study on curriculum reform at Western Protestant University, Dubrow (2004) found that most faculty verbally support the ideas behind collegiality and interdisciplinary work, but when major decisions are made, politics can undermine what might otherwise be a collegial culture and community on campus.

Research suggests that teaching and learning communities and connections between faculty are important. Drummond-Young et al. (2010) suggested that faculty learning communities focused on teaching and learning can be helpful. The authors said that these communities must be "intentionally cultivated supportive environments" that include "learning through dialogue with others" and are "most effectively achieved by formalizing a

number of sustainable venues that systematically address the needs of participants and are perceived as being useful” (p. 154).

Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan (2011) suggested that connections between new and senior faculty can be useful in the retention of faculty at public research institutions. Cox (2004) also suggested that faculty learning communities (FLCs) can be instrumental in making connections not just between junior and senior faculty, but across the higher education experience including connecting departments, aligning curricula and general education, and connecting faculty, students, and staff. He also suggested that faculty community programs will “support a learning organization and overcome the isolation in higher education” (p. 19).

The connections forged at Wakonse are significant in why it has continued. Dara discussed how her connection with Hope was enhanced because they spent time together at Wakonse each year. This concept of mentoring relationships aligns with Woodd’s (1997) study about the role of mentoring relationships for new teaching staff. According to her work, the mentor does not need to be at an upper level. This study shows that the mentor need not even be at the same institution. The important things the mentor needs to be able to do, according to Woodd (1997), are to provide helpful information and to communicate well with the mentee. As a result, not only is the relationship between the mentor and the mentee enhanced, the relationship between the participants and the organization is strengthened. Wakonse is a place where people are not alone in their love of teaching and their desire for human connections.

How: How Wakonse Works

To this point, the study has explored the pieces of Wakonse—people, activities, location, timing, and rationale. The larger question may be “How is it that these pieces have

come together to create an experience so meaningful that it has been repeated for nearly 25 years?” There are numerous other conferences. There are a wide variety of faculty and staff development opportunities. How does Wakonse work?

In this section, I explore how Wakonse’s valuing of the whole person has created an environment where participants have been inspired to take the experience back to their own campuses. Here I will discuss two cases of how treating people holistically has carried over for specific individuals into their work and personal lives so that the Wakonse members have served as a primary support community for individuals. The purpose is to provide information about how Wakonse is different and why participants stressed its significance not just in their professional work, but in their personal lives, as well.

Whole self.

In 1969, Beckhard wrote about the importance of “self-worth” in organizations. He said that beyond an individual’s contribution to an organization—in the case of his work, a business organization—people must feel that they have value as well. This translates to higher education organizations as other research has shown (Braun, Nazlic, Weisweiler, Peus, & Frey, 2009; Dannels & Gaffney, 2009; Darwin & Palmer, 2009).

In this context then, Wakonse can be examined in two ways. First, as an organization in and of itself—how does it nurture individuals? Second, as Wakonse works with individuals who are part of other systems and organizations—their home institutions—the conference also serves to provide a space for this holistic focus. In some situations attendees may not get that care for the individual on their campuses.

This holistic attention to participants is an additional and crucial role Wakonse plays and something that distinguishes it from other conferences. Part of the reason Wakonse has persisted is because of the highly personal connections participants felt as a part of Wakonse. Again, these connections are something offered by Wakonse that participants did not get elsewhere. The community at Wakonse valued them as individuals not simply as faculty members. Drummond-Young et al., (2010) suggested that communities of learning are “cultivated through respect for the experience and perspective of each member and an attitude of open-mindedness; tolerance; a willingness to reciprocate, to give and receive support” (p. 154). In the case of Wakonse the members are respected and the reciprocal giving and receiving of support includes personal support in work and in life.

The importance of appreciating and supporting the whole person is important both to developing communities and sustaining organizations. Bellavita (1990) discussed the importance of valuing the human part of an organization’s human resources.

There are two kinds of people in public organizations, “human beings” and “human doings.” Public organizations seem to work better if you can remain a human being while you are doing. (p. 210)

The founders and staff at Wakonse understood the importance of the human beings in their organization. They provided time for attendees to focus on themselves outside of their roles either as Wakonse Fellows or as members of their institutional organizations. Examples from the conference include time away from sessions to do things for the self-reflection, enjoying nature, high ropes, or other optional activities.

As Renee said, Wakonse was the first place she went in years—maybe in her professional career—where she felt she could skip sessions and go for a walk or take a nap. The founders also understood that the higher education experience does not always make time for reflection and for attending to the human side of faculty and staff members. Too often there are papers to grade, grants to write, research to document, students to help, programs to put on. Privileging attention to the self simply does not happen on most campuses.

In addition, many conferences—even professional development conferences with sessions on work/life balance—are not structured in a way to provide time or space to attend to the self. Going from one session to the next and attending evening board meetings or awards dinners does not afford time for slowing down. The schedules are not structured in a way to encourage people to do what they need to do to recover, re-energize, and prepare for the work ahead. As a result, faculty members have few opportunities to engage in self-reflection regarding teaching.

Wakonse, on the other hand, does encourage taking time for oneself. As Joe and dialogue leaders tell participants, “Do what you need to do. Go to your dialogue group sessions, but beyond that make Wakonse what you need. If you need to skip a session to go sit on the beach or walk in the woods, do that.”

One of the ways that time for the self is structured into the conference—for those who cannot skip a session for whatever reason—is scheduled reflection time. There is time on the schedule at the end of the conference for participants to write goals for themselves. They write both personal and professional goals after reflecting on where they have been and where they would like to see themselves going.

Higher education is in constant change. This change is not unique to any particular campus or institution. In order to positively engage with change, it is necessary to know the self. Rusaw (1998) talked about the importance of “nurturing the self” (p. 81) and the importance of reflection.

To nurture the self as an instrument for change, change agents require continual personal and emotional renewal. Practicing skills of reflection promotes self-maturity and revitalizes the soul.... This process leads to developing sensitivity to gaps between ideas, beliefs, and values and actions.
(p. 81)

In their work on attending to the self in organizations, Brief and Aldag (1981) concluded that the thinking and behavior of individuals form reciprocal relationships with the work environment. The research supports Wakonse’s approach to providing space for individuals to attend to themselves and be reflective. This benefits not just the individuals, but their institutions as well.

Bringing it home.

This study found that there were three primary ways that people connected Wakonse with their lives beyond the conference. The first was the personal work–reflection and goal-setting–outlined above. The participants interviewed understood the value of reflection and shared that they tried to integrate the goal-setting in particular into their lives when they returned to work and other responsibilities.

The other two ways people brought Wakonse home are discussed in this section. The first was as a “single champion” for the conference. These champions brought the Wakonse experience back and tried to replicate it to a certain extent for the development and support of

faculty and staff at their institutions. The second way that Wakonse continued to play a role in the lives of some participants was as a community of support through both work and personal challenges. Part of the reason Wakonse has persisted is because there have been champions spreading the message and opportunity of the conference to others to keep attendees coming. In addition, part of the reason there have been single champions is because of the unique and individual support Wakonse offers to those who attend and develop relationships with others at the conference.

Single champions.

Wakonse is housed at the University of Missouri, thus there are ongoing events on that campus connecting Wakonse Fellows and providing opportunities for other faculty and staff to engage around the ideas Wakonse espouses. Similar programs have been established at Iowa State University, Texas A&M University, Duquesne University, Arizona State University, and others. Half of those interviewed, work at or are retired from Missouri. The other four all have established a Wakonse variation at their institutions. The experience was transformative enough that these other individuals felt it was worthwhile to share on their campuses.

Joe said that it takes one person to make that Wakonse connection. That person must have passion, but also political prowess, connections, and the ability to make things happen. The person must understand the financial requirements and implications and have access to key decision-makers and resource-providers in order to cultivate institutional buy-in.

While this study looked at Wakonse through an organizational development lens, this stage of Wakonse's impact is where the conference in turn affects the organizational development of institutions. This impact is an example of Gries' (2000) idea of a

“journeyman” practitioner. Grievés said that these practitioners “are constantly learning the application of their craftsmanship” (p. 434) and that they are responsible for “deconstructing the taken for granted assumptions of the workplace and focusing on the sense-making procedures” (p. 435).

By applying the experiences at Wakonse to their own campuses, Jean, Hope, Dara, and Barb engaged in deconstructing the assumptions of their institutions. These assumptions may have included the privileging of research and / or the devaluing of undergraduate education. These assumptions may have included the focus on the organization first and foremost and the individual second (if at all). These assumptions may have included prioritizing individual over collaborative research and discovery. Whatever the case, these participants pushed back against the status quo in establishing a variation of the Wakonse experience at their institutions.

So why has the larger Wakonse continued when the regional Wakonés have not? Is it because the main Wakonse conference does not have a single champion, but started with a team of founders and has now expanded to a committed staff team? Is it because the larger conference continues to meet goals for the organization and members of the organization? Wakonse may have continued simply because its single champion—Joe—continues to be involved. It is important to consider that without a single champion, the regional programs have not persisted.

There are clearly parallels between this and the potential future of the main Wakonse conference. If Jean, Hope, and Barb were single champions on their campuses, is Joe the single (or at least primary) champion at the University of Missouri? Being an effective champion means not only caring about Wakonse, but having the political and resource

connections and professional skill to navigate changes in administration. If Joe plays this role currently, is there someone with this same package of passion and political savvy positioned to move into the single champion role when Joe leaves? Is it possible to have multiple champions who are able to coordinate their efforts and be as effective as Joe has been? These are issues those who wish to see Wakonse continue must face and develop strategies to address.

Personal support.

Not only did individuals recreate Wakonse on their campuses, but they also maintained their connections with the community of Wakonse and relied on that community to support them through difficult times. Jean and Renee both said that the Wakonse community was important in their promotion and tenure processes.

As a community that valued teaching and learning—again, a community most participants had not found anywhere before they attended the conference—Jean had support for her promotion to full professor. She based her research on teaching and learning—something that had not been done before at her institution. Even though her peers on her campus voted against her getting promoted to full professor, with Wakonse’s support and through the efforts of her chair and dean, she was promoted.

Renee shared that she did not believe she would have tenure without the support of her Wakonse community. Additionally, they were there for her when she went through the adoption process for her daughters. They supported her through the setbacks as well as celebrating the ultimate success when she and her husband were allowed to adopt the girls. Beckhard (1969) said that a successful organization must have strong communication, mutual trust and confidence across all areas. Jean and Renee certainly had to trust and have

confidence in the Wakonse community in order to be willing to communicate their vulnerability with the group. This sense of authenticity also aligns with Eggert's (1990) "Contemplative Paradigm" (p. 36) which she said helps both leaders and organizations be more compassionate in regard to members of the organization.

The Future of Wakonse

Finally, concerns about the future of Wakonse emerged as a result of this study. It would make sense since the founders are all at or near retirement age and change is going to be happening. As has been mentioned before, this upcoming transition is of particular concern since patterns at other universities have shown—without exception—that when the founders of institutionally-based Wakonse type events leave, those events do not persist. The concerns emerged primarily in regard to a lack of planning for transition. It is natural for those invested in Wakonse to want to know where it is headed. Deming's (1994) theory of knowledge deals specifically with this planning for the future. Deming defined the theory of knowledge as the ability to predict the future of organizations. Just as Brennan and Teichler (2008) attempted to predict the future of higher education, so can the theory of knowledge be used to try to attempt the future of the Wakonse conference.

Individuals acknowledged that they have been engaging in conversations about the future of Wakonse. Most seemed confident that it will go on as it has at least through 2014, which will be the 25th anniversary of the conference. Beyond that, however, there is anxiety since all of the participants in this study—with the exception of Reg and Bill—seem determined that Wakonse should continue. Members of the Wakonse community would be well-served to consider organizational development strategies and philosophies in preparing for the transition.

So if Wakonse is so powerful, why is there concern that it may not be sustained? The answer to this question stems primarily from the founders' ongoing roles as leaders of the organization. In many ways, they continue to play the same roles they did at the beginning of the conference. Others have been brought in as staff or have taken the Wakonse idea and championed it on their own campuses, but the leadership of the annual Wakonse conference has remained somewhat static. Even the staff members beyond the leader/founders have been involved for an extended period of time. Their roles suit their strengths, but they do not seem to have been groomed—nor has anyone else—to partner with the founders or take over leadership of Wakonse. Looking at the conference from an organizational development lens, the role of leadership cannot be underestimated. Beckhard (1969) identified leadership as a key component in determining and charting organizational viability. Lesniaski (2001) stressed that the future is not promising if shared decision-making “among a self-regulating community of peers is an impractical ideal” (p. 239). If Wakonse is to persist, there must be a leadership plan in place. This transition process could be a traditional succession plan or some variant building a carefully structured and navigated partnership between Joe and others who wish to see Wakonse sustained beyond its 25th anniversary.

The single champion structure of Wakonse with Joe serving as the primary leader is not, according to the literature or to findings in this study, sustainable over time and through critical incidents of change. Joe established the conference with Barb and Bill and has been the primary champion of the conference. In order for Wakonse to be something more than Joe Johnston and instead become Joe Johnston's legacy to higher education, it is crucial to bring in new partners and leaders to sustain the inevitable changes to come. Team and collegial leadership with broadly shared responsibilities will make future transitions easier as

many people will have smaller parts of the conference. When they leave, the rest of the organization will remain intact.

While Joe has most of the qualities of a transformational leader outlined by Bass (1999) and Avolio and Bass (2004), he may not possess all of them. He has power and confidence (idealized influence attributes), an ability to convey values and beliefs of an organization (idealized influence behaviors), inspirational motivation or the ability to convey a vision for the organization, and consideration of the individual. That said, the fifth quality—intellectual stimulation (the ability to re-examine critical assumptions)—is something where the addition of new perspectives in positions of leadership could be of tremendous value. Wakonse was established because of the founders' re-examination of critical assumptions related to research and teaching in higher education. It is unclear if the founders and Joe in particular can examine Wakonse and plan for the future in a truly critical way.

According to the literature, change presents and represents hope and opportunity. Deming (1994) said that change is *always* present in organizations. Scholars have noted the role of change in higher education (Gumport, 2000; Henkel, 2000; Hirsch & Weber, 2001; Kogan & Hanney, 2000) and how this change can be positive if it is anticipated and planned for.

Witte (1977) suggested a tandem approach, which increases both organizational activity levels and innovation. This approach is similar to Gibb's (1954) distributed leadership model and what Hiller, Day, and Vance (2006) called collective leadership. Taylor, Cocklin, Brown, and Wilson-Evered (2011) found that "project champions were not unusually strong transformational leaders across *all aspects* of their work" (p. 428).

Participants interviewed provided support for this idea saying that Joe is not "about the

details,” but is the master of the larger picture. It is with these ideas in mind that I suggest a leadership sustainability plan—inclusive of Joe and the other founders—rather than a leadership transition plan that implies the transfer of power from one leader to another.

Joe as the primary leader is essential to the continuation of Wakonse. He has been at the center of why the conference has persisted. He is an invaluable resource as the conference looks forward. Perhaps Wakonse does not need to change or perhaps now is a time for the conference to evolve and become more innovative. It will take critical review—from multiple perspectives—of the experience to make the best decisions for the future. This process will require Joe’s cooperation and him leading in a different way if Wakonse is to continue. As Carnevale (2003) said, “Organizations cannot change unless individuals change” (p. 39).

One example is Boyce’s (2003) work in which she used organizational culture to understand organizational learning to prepare for organizational change. She found that “successful change is about learning enough collectively so that institutional consequences, outcomes, and inquiry change” (p. 133). Understanding the history of Wakonse and the culture of Wakonse will help members of that organization most successfully navigate change within the organization. An important alternative to consider, however, is that critical reflection may result in the realization that Wakonse has persisted solely because of the founders and the specific place. The possibility exists that if the founders are not participating or Camp Miniwanca is not the location (or both), Wakonse may have ceased to be able to continue or to serve a purpose.

Similarly, the members of Wakonse would be wise to consider Beckhard’s (1969) summary of Gardner’s rules for an effective organization. These include recruiting and

developing talented members, being capable of continuous renewal, utilizing built-in provisions for self-criticism, and fluidity in the internal structure. These pieces of Beckhard's work are particularly useful. Specifically, considering what provisions for self-criticism the Wakonse organization has in place and the ways in which decision-makers are open to that self-criticism are particularly important.

Both Kofman and Senge (1993) and Tierney (1997) stressed the importance of creativity. Kofman and Senge (1993) stressed that organizational change and learning should not be feared, but ought to be seen as opportunities for creativity. Tierney (1997) echoed that idea and said that organizations must "accept difference and discontinuity... that allows for creativity and difference to flourish rather than to become incorporated into a unitary mindset" (p. 15).

As Wakonse prepares for the future it is important that the founders, staff, and future leaders and staff keep in mind how Rusaw (1998) perceived organizational existence and how they evolve and adapt. He said that organizations are "living phenomena" (p. 72). Is Wakonse in its infancy, middle-age, or at the end of its life? Most of the participants in this study clearly have an investment in the conference and a strong desire to see it continue. Based on the information shared, if Wakonse is able to transition the way in which it has been led, it could continue indefinitely. However, if Wakonse does not manage the next two years with a sense of care and attention to the future, then it is likely to be discontinued.

There are two important exceptions to this perspective, however. Both Bill and Reg suggested that if Wakonse ends after its 25th year, that may be best. Both stressed that they would rather it was discontinued than that it became something less

than Wakonse as it exists today. Reg in particular also suggested that Wakonse might become something different and even better than what it is and has been. These are difficult conversations that the founders and staff will need to have in order to chart the course for the future. It will require truly critical review and evaluation of what the conference is in today's context as opposed to the purposes it has served in the past when the socio-political-cultural context around teaching and learning in higher education was different.

Organizations continue and learn in several important ways. They learn by listening (Bellavita, 1990), they learn through the individuals who make them up (Senge, 1990), and they learn to compensate for deficits (Sonnichsen, 1990). In the case of the Wakonse organization, the founders must be willing to listen to the individuals in Wakonse in order to plan for the future—since they will not be around to support Wakonse indefinitely. The founders must also be able to hear criticism. It is appropriate and natural for the future to bring about change. Two of the deficits identified by the participants in this study—besides the lack of a leadership sustainability plan—are a lack of transparency and the lack of a social justice focus or even the inclusion of dedicated time and energy to equity dialogues and recruiting of attendees.

If Wakonse was about the founders and Camp Miniwanca and when the founders are no longer participating, the experience ends, it seems appropriate to have that be an honest conversation. If there is no intent for Wakonse to continue when Joe and Bill and Barb are gone, it is only fair to the others who have attended that this anticipated end be made clear.

On the other hand, if the intention is for Wakonse to persist beyond its 25th year; honesty, intentionality and action are required. A plan for leadership and sustainability at the institutional level are necessary. Methods for tapping in to the leadership interests and talents of other participants must be identified. This plan could happen in partnership with the founders. This approach seems most appropriate in terms of fully understanding how the conference began and continued. However, it is possible to achieve a sense of continuity and to develop a plan without the participation of the founders. It seems in the best interest of those committed to the Wakonse philosophy, mission, and goals to use all resources and tools at their disposal, which would include past and future leaders and staff.

Implications for Future Practice

This study was conducted to examine one organization through one specific lens. Looking at the Wakonse Conference on College Teaching from an organizational development perspective is beneficial for that particular organization. As Wakonse reflects on its past and prepares for its future and assesses its areas of strength and opportunities for growth, this study may prove very helpful. Additionally, this study may be useful for other organizations or for others with an interest in applying organizational development models to higher education. This section discusses both of those areas of implication for future practice.

Wakonse Implications

As was discussed in the sections on the future of this conference, there are a number of themes from this study that—with more exploration and dialogue—may serve to benefit the Wakonse organization in terms of clarifying the future of the conference. These can be

divided into three areas: leadership, evaluation, and expansion. A discussion of leadership is essential to Wakonse. Whether changes happen now or in the future, change will happen in terms of leadership and oversight of the conference. Berry (2011) suggested that “hiring for values—and talent—and promoting from within” (p. 189) is something excellent organizations do to perform at high levels. Since Joe has been described as having a talent for identifying individuals’ strengths and matching those with positions, the first part of that process is complete. The next step is to promote them from within.

Evaluation of Wakonse from multiple perspectives will help inform decisions made to the benefit of the future of the conference—or decisions made to discontinue Wakonse. Goh (2002) referred to not just problem-solving, but “problem-seeking” as being an important part of successful organizations. Berry (2011) also suggested that “relationships are everything” (p. 188) for successful organizations. Included in these relationships are both internal (Wakonse fellows and staff) and external (university and grant support) relationships. Berry wrote, “An organization’s future is measured by the strength of its relationships” (p. 189).

If most of those relationships currently center on Joe as the leader both at Wakonse and at the University of Missouri, as well as the primary contact at Camp Miniwanca, it is time for him to help others cultivate those relationships. Again, this approach presupposes that there is a desire for Wakonse to continue.

Finally, expansion of the Wakonse experience is worth further exploration and may or may not mean expansion in terms of numbers at the conference. This idea of expansion could also have to do with making, enhancing, or expanding relationships with institutions to create a culture around sending participants to Wakonse to ensure that the conference

continues to have attendees. It could have to do with figuring out additional strategies for “taking Wakonse home.” These themes are further discussed here in terms of implications specifically for Wakonse.

In looking for research about why some organizations succeed and other fail, much of the data come from businesses and corporate organizations. Tushman and O’Reilly (1996) used the term “ambidextrous managers” to describe leaders at “ambidextrous organizations” such as Hewlett-Packard and Johnson & Johnson. They shared that leaders in successful organizations serve as conductors rather than generals encouraging autonomy, accountability, and experimentation. The authors went on to explain that these types of leaders reflect the culture of their organizations.

Organizational reflection.

In preparation for promoting Wakonse, I would also encourage the organization to do some reflection on itself—just as it encourages conference attendees to reflect. Lewin and Minton’s (1986) questions about organizational effectiveness might serve as a good place to start. They encouraged organizations to consider the following: What is effectiveness? Does it change with time and organizational maturity? Can it be sought, gained, enhanced, or lost? Why is one organization effective at one time and not at another, or why is one organization effective and another not?” (p. 515). Wakonse would be well-served to use these questions to determine if what it believes constitutes effectiveness and how that affects next steps for the organization.

Leadership.

Is Wakonse worth continuing? Is it possible for those closely connected with the conference to envision Wakonse without Joe and Bill and Barb? In what ways might a

succession plan be structured to empower new leadership to make changes? Is it possible that change would be put on hold so long as the founders continue to be involved with and attend Wakonse? If there is a belief that Wakonse should be continued, a leadership plan is necessary. Those in leadership positions—not just the founders, but staff and other long-term participants—should develop a leadership sustainability plan. This approach will accomplish one of two things: it will either prepare the organization for change and continue to honor and integrate the contributions of the founders or it will help to determine that it is time for Wakonse to end.

Change is constant in any organization. As has been mentioned, change can be seen as an ongoing challenge to overcome or as a series of recurring opportunities for improvement. The foundation of Wakonse is solid. The core program has not changed much since the inception of the conference. From an organizational perspective, Wakonse understands and is able to effectively communicate its values.

Sessa and London (2006) said that organizational leaders have the opportunity and responsibility to help their organizations engage in learning and adaptation. Now is the time to bridge wisdom and experience of the current leaders with individuals positioned to step into new areas of responsibility. Again, I would suggest a sustainability plan rather than a succession plan for Wakonse.

This conference is designed in a way that there could be shared leadership through the transition from founders to the next generation. This approach would allow for the founders to continue to provide guidance and for the new leaders to benefit from the experience of the founders. This transition can be a partnership rather than an either / or proposal. The founders may not need to fully turn over the leadership of the conference or the positions

they play. The fact that the conference was founded by a team of people puts in place the precedent for a team to lead Wakonse forward from the 25th anniversary.

The best approach based on the findings of this study would be to adopt mentees to partner and apprentice with Joe to make the conference leadership sustainable over time. This partnering would require defining roles and accountability to make sure that those involved do not fall into old patterns of Joe as the primary leader. This approach will also require Joe to step back and let some things possibly fail or change. Doing things differently than he would have done them should not be seen as either disrespectful or not valuing Joe's contribution. Change is imperative for any organization to stay current and viable (Beckhard, 1969). Again, it is possible Wakonse may not continue. If the desire is for it to last beyond the involvement of the founders, intentional planning must happen now, but that planning does not necessarily require Joe completely stepping down.

The success of a leadership partnership or tandem leadership is dependent upon Joe's ability to share opportunities and responsibilities. It is equally dependent on the ability of those moving into leadership roles to advocate for themselves and suggest change based on critical assessment and reflection while simultaneously respecting Joe's experience and ongoing contributions. Wakonse is a conference that plays upon the strengths from within. The philosophy is that everyone has a contribution they can make. This same philosophy can be used now to begin to *share* the leadership load rather than going through a formal and complete change of leaders.

That said there must be intentionality behind that effort. Bryman (2007) said that an organizational leader must have a vision and the ability to carry out that vision. If the primary leader in the past has been Joe and the vision has been that of Joe and the other

founders, now is the time to partner with the next phase of Wakonse leadership. Based on the results of this study, Joe could partner with Kai and Renee to sustain the conference and begin a more visible shared leadership model.

This approach does not mean the three of them working in isolation, however. Being transparent in this transition and involving others—staff and non-staff—to participate will make this a complex process, but one with the highest likelihood to be successful. As Lesniaski et al., (2001) said, “A collegial organization, built on trust, respect, and shared goals, provides both the strength and the flexibility to make the most of change” (p. 238). Now is the time to create a new joint vision to bridge the first 25 years with the next 25 years.

Evaluation.

This study found that Wakonse is unique. There is no other conference like it in terms of setting, holistic focus on self, and community. Conducting an assessment of the impact and effectiveness of the conference for faculty, staff, and students, and sharing those results can situate Wakonse as not simply an opportunity, but a unique privilege for scholars and staff. It is not often that faculty or staff are given the gift of time. According to the participants in this study, Wakonse provides time—time to reflect, time to think, time to rest, time to set goals, time to enjoy nature. Additional assessment may provide insight to the importance and usefulness of this time for all participants.

Carnevale (2003) described this approach as the organization and the individuals making up that organization collaborating for mutual gain. In this case it is not just the Wakonse organization and Wakonse members collaborating. In essence it is the collaboration of multiple organizations—Wakonse and institutions across the country—collaborating for mutual gain.

In order to best cultivate ongoing relationships and support at institutions for Wakonse, it is important to document the impact Wakonse has on participants. This data could be collected by Wakonse or by institutions themselves. Positive impact would only serve to further encourage institutions to support faculty, staff, and student attendance at Wakonse. Feedback from fellows about marginal or even negative impact would provide significant insight into how Wakonse might need to adapt in order to be more successful and thereby sustained in the future.

Single champions.

I am suggesting that the “single champion” network be expanded and that more non-Missouri faculty and staff be integrated into the planning for the conference. Jean has retired. Dara is no longer in the role she held formerly which allowed her to effectively organize Wakonse South. Barb is no longer in Arizona so the future of Wakonse West is unclear. If the larger Wakonse wants to continue to have some strong core constituencies, new people must be identified to play these roles on campuses across the country. This strategy is repeated over and over again in the research in regard to the importance of relationships (Brief & Aldag, 1981; Woodd, 1997; Yukl, 2008; Berry, 2010; Cicognani, Palestini, Albanesi, & Zani, 2012).

King, Felin and Whetten (2010) suggested, “Organizations are actors that allow individuals to interface with their broader society, and organizations shape markets and communities in important ways” (p. 301). This idea puts the power and responsibility on current Wakonse Fellows to sustain Wakonse. This concept means Wakonse Fellows serve two organizations in this role—the Wakonse organization and the institutions where they work. This idea is also supported by Deming’s (1994) appreciation of a system. The

recruitment of new conference attendees clearly is an activity that works to the benefit of the organization. Ultimately, the cultivating of new Wakonse Fellows is essential to Wakonse's continuation as an effective organization. Beckhard (1969) explained this saying, "The first rule is that the organizations must have an effective program for the recruitment and development of talent" p. 11.

This approach does not come without challenges. There may very well be individuals who would like to assume these roles. However, being an effective champion for Wakonse is not something that can be done successfully based on passion alone. The right champion on a given campus must have administrative connections, political savvy, and credibility with the institution. A simple "cheerleader" for Wakonse without these other pieces could actually undermine the value of Wakonse at other institutions rather than enhancing it. As Spendlove (2007) suggested about leaders in higher education organizations, these Wakonse champions must have academic credibility, experience in university life, continued research and teaching responsibilities, and people skills specifically in regard to communication and negotiation. The ability to provide information through documentation and assessment of the Wakonse experience will also be important in convincing institution administrators to continue funding the conference.

Implications for Other Organizations

Viewing higher education through an organizational development lens.

This study expands on previous scholarship using organizational development as a lens through which to view higher education. Some insist that there are differences between the corporate world—from which organization development originates—and higher education. However, the differences are not so significant that the two cannot benefit from some of the

same tools and resources. Organizational development provides a framework by which we can examine institutions, units, departments, colleges, and other areas affiliated with education.

One of the key themes from organizational development that can prove useful to higher education is the collaborative nature of effective organizations. Higher education organizations would be well served to adopt more collaborative practices around resource allocation, research, and measuring success against institutional goals. More intentional assessment of what Wakonse has achieved in terms of its organizational goals is needed. If this assessment information has been collected, then more transparency about the results could provide additional recruitment opportunities for attendees and more guidance about ways in which to improve the experience.

In terms of resource allocation, an organizational development approach would allow for better use of money and potentially could help address the student debt crisis in higher education. Rather than thinking of this approach as reactive—doing more with less—it could be adopted at any point. Ultimately, it could be seen as doing the most with what an organization has—whether that is more, less, or the same resources as in the past.

This thinking applies not only to financial resources, but human resources, as well. In developing effective retention plans for faculty and staff in higher education, utilizing organizational development approaches that value the whole person has the potential to create communities and senses of belonging on campus. Treating faculty and staff not just as human doings, but as human beings elevates their status with the institution while simultaneously cultivating individuals' senses of affinity and connection to their institutions.

Sharing responsibilities and opportunities could maximize internal and external service at universities and potentially decrease individuals' work- and stress-loads. This approach is supported by research about organizations (McMillan & George, 1986; McMillan, 1996; Lesniaski, et al., 2001) and specifically about higher education organizations (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Manning, 2000; Guzdial, Rick & Kehoe, 2001). In the case of Wakonse, Joe as the leader empowered and engaged staff by connecting their talents with the needs of the organization. This strategy has created a shared investment in Wakonse and a sense that the individual participants are valued as a part of the larger organization. The same could be done in more intentional and effective ways in institutions of higher education.

Furthermore, using data collected from this study to prepare for the pending retirement of millions of baby boomer faculty members may prove helpful. The first members of this group reached traditional retirement age in 2011. Sugar, Pruitt, Anstee, and Harris (2005) said,

Given the uniquely flexible professional context of universities and college, academic administrators have an opportunity to develop innovative policies and programs in institutions of higher education to fit both the professional and personal needs and desires of faculty as they age, as well as the institutions' best interests" (p. 416). In other words, preparing for the departure of established leadership by capitalizing on the experience and strengths of predecessors is one effective way of managing organizational change in higher education.

Not only is the retention of tenure-track faculty important, but the growing numbers of adjunct faculty can also benefit from the development of community. Forbes, Hickey, and

White (2010) said, “It is very likely that there will be a continued need for adjunct faculty across the country in the next several years.” That said, Levin (2012) acknowledged that there are no communities for adjunct faculty because rather than being connected to the university mission or institutional type, “those who work part time: their labor has much more in common across institutional types with teaching as their principle activity” (p. 40). Forbes, Hickey, and White (2010) went on to suggest that creating an infrastructure for adjunct needs, formal orientation and support of adjuncts, and integrating adjunct faculty into the larger institutional faculty, are strategies for creating a sense of belonging and retaining adjunct faculty as well as providing development opportunities for them.

Though the focus of this study has been on teaching, there are research implications related to the use of organizational development in higher education as well. Camblin and Steger (2000) found that when there is more cooperation between faculty members across disciplines, there were “multiplier effects on the scope and nature of the projects” (p. 1) undertaken by faculty. At a time when innovation and creativity are key commodities in research, new partnerships and approaches to problem-solving are very valuable.

In terms of success at the institutional, college, departmental, or other levels, the use of organizational development approaches related to vision sharing and measures of success could prove to be very useful. Establishing mutual trust and clear and open communication as Beckhard (1969) suggested would allow organizations and units to be creative and innovative and clearly understand both their successes and the challenges they have yet to overcome.

Using this approach would also allow institutions of higher education to be more transparent to government, the public, and other constituencies. Carey (2006) wrote, “The

desire for real higher education accountability will not diminish” (p. 29). If there continues to be suspicion around higher education and what people at universities and colleges “do,” this business-based approach could be a useful tool. Continued use of this approach would also provide new markers by which institutions could measure their progress for the public and for internal use.

Finally, there are additional implications for the changing environments in which faculty members find themselves. An important theme of this study was the sense of isolation or lack of community that faculty participants described. The absence of connections and community was expressed as a deficit by nearly all participants. The members of those faculty communities are in flux as well. With more faculty retiring (AACU, 2001) and the increased use of adjuncts (Forbes, et al., 2010) there are implications not only for membership in faculty communities, but in terms of leadership in those areas as well. This idea of a changing of the guard will be seen not only in departments and colleges and on campuses, but also in professional organizations and other communities in which faculty members may participate.

Organizations and organizational change.

This study provides insight into higher education organizations and organizational change. Based on the findings, organizations persist when there are people who care about the organization and when organizations show a sense of care about the people who make them up. The key results of this study focus on community and belonging, time, change, the role of the organizational environment, and the role of the single champion in organizations.

Community and belonging.

A sense of belonging is important to members of organizations. Through this study the importance of community to at least some faculty is highlighted. Not only is community important, but many participants described it as lacking or even discouraged through the promotion and tenure process. Meeting the needs of organizational members is essential to organizational success. Those who do not feel connected in a specific unit or at a particular institution may choose to leave in order to find that sense of belonging at another institution or even outside of higher education.

The importance of belonging is illustrated in this study through intentional efforts on the part of Wakonse staff. The idea that Joe greets everyone and talks with attendees formally and informally is part of this sense of belonging. Organizational leaders who connect with members throughout the hierarchy of organizations are likely to play a role in cultivating both a sense of belonging and a sense of value to members.

In this study, not only does Wakonse engage with people individually, it makes visually explicit one's membership. First of all, identifying attendees as Wakonse Fellows helps to establish a sense of belonging and group identity. The role of dialogue groups makes the big feel smaller and more intimate. In the case of Wakonse, participants said dialogue groups often also lent themselves to creating a sense of safety. Additionally, seeing oneself in photos during the slide show at the end—the Virtual Wakonse, shows not just the individual, but everyone that they are members of this group and a part of this shared experience.

Organizations in higher education and elsewhere need to be able to generate a sense of team, belonging, safety, and community in order to do the best work in any area. Feeling safe and a part of something larger opens the door to taking risks and being creative.

Therefore, not only will the creation of communities help retain faculty and staff (or other employees in other settings), it will retain staff who are given the liberty to think freely and be truly innovative in their work.

The importance of organizations valuing individuals.

Participants talked about how Wakonse provided them time away from other responsibilities. Some shared that this time at this conference was important to them in terms of rejuvenation; another used the word recuperation. In other words, faculty were away from the demands of work and family, which allowed them to focus on themselves. The time away was important. The value of time for the self is supported by Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan (2011) who found that “lack of personal time” (p. 431) is among the workplace stress factors that play a role in faculty members’ decisions to leave their institutions. In the same study the authors found that better fit and support increased the likelihood a faculty member would stay at an institution. Fit and support were defined as follows:

The “fit” factor captures the extent to which a faculty member feels good about the direction of her or his life, finds work meaningful, and senses congruence between personal values and work. “Support” captures the extent to which a faculty member feels valued, supported, respected. (p. 432)

These considerations have implications for Wakonse as an organization, given the number of faculty involved. However, there are additional implications for this study when linked to the work of Ryan, Healy, and Sullivan (2011). How organizations cultivate fit and support and convey those things to their members is important. As has been discussed here, participants focus on a common interest (passion around teaching and learning), develop a sense of belonging (trust building through dialogue groups and other activities) which is

made visible to them (through Virtual Wakonse), and are valued holistically (given time to act autonomously and meet their own needs—walking, resting, reading). Higher education—and other organizations in general—would be well-served to identify and further develop strategies they have in place or create new ones to provide more clarity of fit and more structure for support of their members.

Anticipating and navigating change in organizations.

Even in the best of organizations, however, change happens. Grusky (1970) found that leadership transition or succession is not disruptive in organizations where the members expect change. It is therefore both important and helpful for organizations to prepare as changes emerge. In the case of human resources, these are sometimes easier to anticipate in connection with the amount of time a person has been with an organization or his or her preparations for retirement. Scott and Jaffe (1988) identified four skills organizational members can learn to cope with change—commitment, control, challenge, and connection.

Commitment by their definition is having a sense of purpose and meaning in the work. In the case of Wakonse this would be a commitment to teaching, learning, and student engagement. In other higher education organizations this commitment—ideally—would be linked to institutional mission or college and department goals. Control is defined as having a sense of personal power. In both Wakonse and other organizations this involvement could be exemplified by having a voice in organizational decisions and autonomy in action. Challenge is defined as an individual’s ability to see change as an opportunity. Finally, organizational members who have higher levels of connection, “value their friendships with people, feel respected and have a common bond and purpose with the people around them” (p. 26). These last two components in particular are highlighted through this study.

Members of Wakonse who have higher levels of challenge and connection abilities are in the best position to help Wakonse navigate the change. They will be able to identify the positive aspects of change. The connection component came through repeatedly in the interviews for this study. Participants felt they had a common bond and purpose with others at Wakonse. These bonds evolved into friendships based on respect and shared experience.

Leadership and change in organizations.

The single champion model at Wakonse (Joe) and other institutions (Jean, Hope, Barb, Dara) shows that one person with passion and political savvy can make a difference. These individuals saw a need for community around teaching, championed the cause, secured resources and identified, encouraged, and empowered attendees.

That said, the single champion model has not been seen to be sustainable without a defined and intentional succession or sustainability plan. In the cases where an individual has taken the lead, when that individual was no longer involved, the organizations or initiatives dissolved. Wakonse and other organizations would be well-served to acknowledge and anticipate change in order to sustain organizations *before* the founding or current single champions are no longer participating.

In fact, it is possible that the single champion, if not prepared to develop a succession plan (or not empowered to do so) can be an obstacle to continuity and sustainability of an organization. In addition, he or she can also restrain an organization from making progress. Levay (2010), in her study of charismatic leaders, provided information relevant to Wakonse, but also to other organizations dealing with change under charismatic leadership:

Organizational change can cause anxieties and / or challenge in the interests of influential groups and hence produce a crisis, which is fertile ground for charisma. In

such situations, a leader who proposes a credible and inspiring vision of how to resist change and preserve the status quo can become the object of charismatic attributions. The leader's influence is thus exerted not despite but through charismatic processes. So, charismatic leadership in resistance to change and in defense of the status quo can arise when a relatively influential group perceives and ongoing or upcoming change as a threat to their common interests and identity. (p. 141)

The charismatic leadership sparking change or movement or—in the case of this study—the development of an organization can become an obstacle to change within that organization.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study opens the door to a number of additional areas for further research. These include additional areas of research specifically related to Wakonse such as finding out what difference the conference makes to people once they are back on their campuses. However, there are other areas for further study as well. These include topics of interest to those working with faculty and professional development, faculty recruitment and retention issues, creativity and effectiveness in teaching and learning, and the psychology of motivation, inspiration, and loneliness as related to an academic life.

Limitation of the Case: Wakonse

While this study explored why Wakonse has continued, it did not ask about what difference Wakonse has made in the life of attendees when they return to campus. While Jean and Renee shared some of their experiences, these might be exceptional cases. What is the experience of the non-staff, one-time attendee at Wakonse? How does that person make meaning of Wakonse or continue to use what she learned at the conference in her work as a faculty or staff member?

Also, the participants in this study were those with longer-term connections to the conference. They all served as staff and dialogue group leaders at Wakonse. Their perspective on why Wakonse has continued was the focus of this study. What about the non-staff person? Why do most people only attend Wakonse once? Asking that question could provide other significant insight into why the conference has not changed dramatically over the past 20 years. Collecting that information could also prove useful to Wakonse staff as they prepare for the future.

Research in this area would prove useful to the Wakonse conference in terms of assessment. In a very practical sense, it could also help the founders and others determine if the conference is worth continuing. If there is enough value to participants to continue the conference, what parts are most helpful and are there any elements in need of change or elimination?

Limitation of a Particular Faculty and Staff Development Experience

This study provides some insight into one specific faculty and staff development opportunity. Relatively few people experience Wakonse. With that in mind, are there things that other conferences or development programs could adapt from the Wakonse experience? Are there gaps in faculty and staff development that Wakonse fills?

Given the rustic nature of Wakonse, it may not appeal to everyone. Some people would not be willing to share a bathroom, stay in a place with no locks on the doors, be in isolation in terms of technology, or have a “camp” experience. Also worth recognizing is the fact that this particular location is not accessible to anyone with a physical disability or mobility issue. Is there some way to provide the Wakonse experience in a different setting?

Are there things which could be done to make Wakonse more comfortable for others?

Would that compromise the experience as it now exists or enhance it?

Centers for teaching excellence must get the most out of the money they are budgeted in service to their institutions. Beyond that, however, they must prove to their institutions the important roles they play on campus. In some cases this strategy is not to secure more funding, but simply to in order to avoid being eliminated or having funding cut significantly.

Exploration of Limited Aspects of Wakonse

This study provides some information about what certain faculty and staff value. There are additional questions to ask related to Wakonse as a retention mechanism. If it were to serve as a reward for excellence, would that help to show more of an appreciation to higher education faculty and staff who focus on undergraduate students? How could this value on teaching and learning be institutionalized at places outside of Missouri where the culture is more established?

What other types of recognition are in place for faculty and staff? How could some of what happens at Wakonse be used in other contexts? What other strategies might be incorporated into Wakonse to make it seen as more of an honor to participants? Is that a goal for the conference?

How might some of the sharing that happens at Wakonse be helpful to future faculty? It would be helpful to know how graduate students intending to work as faculty members experience and benefit from the conference. Additionally, how might what they experience impact their decisions about their professional paths?

The financial future of higher education is unclear. Budgets have undergone significant cuts in the past and accountability in higher education is being demanded by

political leaders and the public. As the competition to attract the best and brightest intensifies, a well-developed professional development program can be instrumental in both recruiting and retaining employees in higher education.

Preaching to the Choir: Teaching and Learning

Wakonse provides a unique community around teaching and learning. All the participants in this study agreed that it was important to them in their work. Some said it was the only place where they got support around these issues. Wakonse emerged at a time when the role of undergraduate education was being scrutinized nationally by higher education organizations, researchers, and the public. What value does the public and other constituents put on undergraduate teaching and learning now? How might that affect the future of Wakonse?

What other types of communities exist on specific campuses or across institutions? How have those emerged and evolved over time? How do people find out about those groups? For that matter, how do people find out and get connected with Wakonse? Is there a way for these opportunities to be more public or visible so as to further connect people with passion for this work?

What are Centers for Teaching Excellence (CTEs) and similar areas doing to promote teaching? How are they connected (or not) with Wakonse and other conferences? Is there a need or desire for a stronger connection between Wakonse and CTEs? Is there a way to centralize information such as pragmatic techniques and teaching tips? Could this information be made available to others who are unable to attend Wakonse? What resources do CTEs currently have? Is any of their information centralized? How often is it used? Is there feedback on the success of specific strategies or resources?

The importance of teaching and learning has been discussed in other sections, but to summarize, it is essential that institutions of higher education be able to show to the public ways in which they are making a difference in the lives of students. The “College Scorecard” unveiled on February 13, 2013 by the College Affordability and Transparency Center is a highly visible example of the expectations the public and political leaders have of higher education. More research in the areas of teaching and learning can serve to identify best practices and help provide the transparency being demanded by those outside of higher education.

Focus on Aloneness of Life in Academe.

The solitary nature of an academic life was repeated throughout the interviews for this study. Some participants used the word “lonely” others used “isolated” and others used “alone.” Regardless, this is an area that could prove to be very interesting in understanding the faculty experience. Are people who prefer isolation drawn to the faculty experience or do they find it to be isolating once they are doing the work? For those who prefer lots of interaction, how do they manage the experience? What might additional implications be in terms of recruiting and retaining faculty?

These questions are consistent with the recommendations posed by Cicognani, Palestini, Albanesi, and Zani (2012). The authors suggested:

Among the issues that deserve more attention in future research is the construct of organizational sense of community (and, more generally, the metaphor of “community” in understanding the work context). Sense of community has been investigated mostly with reference to territorial communities (cf. Fisher, Sonn, & Bishop, 2002), and only a few studies have used it in the work context. More studies

are needed on sense of community within work organizations, in order to examine its specificities as well as its relationships with other constructs (e.g., organizational climate). Moreover, future research should explore the impact of organizational sense of community on other work-related outcomes, such as turnover intention and workers' job commitment, satisfaction, and personal well-being. (p. 1111)

This need for understanding community reinforces the need for this study and its application of organizational development as a tool to explore organizational community. Beyond that, however, this study moves beyond territorial communities and work organizations. The result is a need for additional applications of organizational development, and sense of community as it relates to a wider variety of organizations.

Similarly, what roles do motivation, innovation, and creativity play in the academic work of higher education faculty and staff? Where do they find these things? How do they use them in their work? What can institutions do to inspire innovation and creativity and to provide motivation for faculty and staff? If Wakonse provides motivation and support, *how* does it do these things? What does Wakonse do that might be able to be put to use in other contexts?

The psychological component of working in higher education relates to many of the key issues identified above. It is an important factor in faculty and staff recruitment, retention, and development. There could be a variety of things learned from studying professional communities in higher education that could provide transferable knowledge to business, non-profit, and other sectors. Things such as job satisfaction, factors in creating a positive work environment, and employee mental health are relevant to future studies in this area.

A Broad Examination of Organizational Development and Leadership

This study used the concepts of organizational development in very broad ways. There are a number of other lenses which could be used to examine the issues raised here. Exploring the role of women in leadership may add insight into the roles and characteristics of leadership within the organizational development context. The same could be said of other identities based on race, sexual orientation, ethnic identity, age, etc. Exploring the role of intersectionality of identities is an area for additional research providing more specific insight into different experiences.

Human beings are complex and leadership style and leadership effectiveness do not look the same for everyone. What women or people of color may look for in leaders could be different from what men or white people seek. In addition, what women of color look for is more complex than what women or people of color identify as needs or positive leadership traits or skills. Given that every individual is made up of different identities and how those identities intersect further complicates how they see and function in the world, a study done through a single broad lens does not capture the full, rich story of organizations, leadership, membership, or persistence of conferences over time.

Focus on Large, Public, Research Institutions

Similarly, the focus was primarily on a single institutional type. Expanding research into different types of higher education institutions could prove helpful. There may be transferrable information that would benefit institutions across the diverse cultures in higher education. There are also likely to be specific ways to modify activities such as professional development, communities of teaching and learning, and faculty and staff retention initiatives more specific to institutional type.

Final Thoughts and Points of Reflection

This study provides insights into why Wakonse was developed and why it has continued. The themes identified about Wakonse's creation and persistence are diverse and go well beyond this specific conference.

Wakonse was created based on the passion of the founders. This passion was one for a place—Camp Miniwanca. Based on the bond the founders had for this location, they built the Wakonse conference. They drew from a concern identified by higher education and the public about the value of undergraduate learning and classroom teaching. The concerns raised by educators and the public provided the foundation upon which they built the conference in that place that meant so much to them.

Wakonse has persisted in no small part due to the passion, dedication, and perhaps strong-willed adamancy of the founders that the conference needed to continue. Joe was described by multiple participants as dedicating much of his professional career and life to Wakonse. The desire of the founders to return to Camp Miniwanca and sit by Lake Michigan and talk about teaching and learning and art and music and students and life and successes and challenges was central to the conference's persistence.

That said it was not simply the founders with whom Wakonse resonated. The other participants in this study shared that their connections with Wakonse were transformative. They found a community around teaching and learning that was powerful. For some it was the first time they found a place and people with whom they felt safe sharing about their passion for student engagement.

The setting, the lack of titles, the casual dress, and the time for reflection or quiet or nature all added to this unique experience. For those in this study, this was not a one-time

teaching and learning faculty and staff development conference. For them it was a place of rejuvenation, ongoing learning, connections, and networks and relationships that helped them not only through their work, but through their lives beyond the job.

Wakonse was created out of a passion for place. Wakonse continued because it has been many different things to many different people. This study is important not only to those interested in Wakonse, but to those across diverse roles in higher education and institutional cultures. Further, it can be of use to other organizations outside of higher education all together.

This work highlights the importance of the individual within an organization. The participants in this study said repeatedly that they had time for themselves and the autonomy to make decisions about that time. They were able to slow down and reflect or rest or recuperate as they felt they needed.

Beyond attention to the individual, however, this study stressed the importance of community to organizational members. This community comes from finding common passions and goals. It develops as trust is established and open and honest dialogue takes place. The community may be something long-term—as in the case of the participants of this study. However, it may serve needs in a given time and place—the results of which need further exploration.

When the individual finds that he or she is a part of community which respects his or her autonomy, that person is best equipped to deal with change. This change may take the form of anticipated shifts in leadership or may be unexpected change. It could be human change or budgetary change or even changes in vision and mission. However, when

individuals feel a sense of connection and support, they are best able to navigate those changes.

All of these findings have implications to the Wakonse conference. They also have applications across higher education organizations and beyond. Understanding and intentionally cultivating a sense of belonging while respecting a person's individuality provides the support necessary to navigate changes in the organization.

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS-FOUNDERS

Founders' Histories

1. Can you discuss your professional and personal history and the way that you think affected your desire to create this conference and the way the conference was developed?
2. Can you describe the culture of your institutions or the academic environments where you worked? How did those environments inspire or motivate you to create this conference?

Conference Origin / History

3. How did the idea for the Wakonse conference surface?
4. Why did you feel there was a need for this conference?
5. How did you go about developing the conference?
6. What were your goals for the conference?
7. How were participants chosen?
8. How did you choose the location for the conference? What role do you think that has played in the conference continuing for more than twenty years?
9. Why do you think the conference has continued for as long as it has?

Conference (Organizational) Culture

10. Can you describe some of the traditions and rituals at Wakonse? What role do these rituals play in the conference?
11. What is the role of teams at Wakonse?
12. How do you define dialogue? What is the role of dialogue at Wakonse?
13. How would you define Wakonse's values? Who is responsible for that definition?
14. How would you define Wakonse's culture? Who is responsible for that definition?
15. How would you define collaboration? In what ways does Wakonse cultivate or not cultivate a collaborative community?
16. What are the goals of the Wakonse conference? How are those goals achieved?
17. Is Wakonse faculty / staff development, instructional development, personal development, a combination of the above or something different all together? Why?
18. How would you define Wakonse's leadership? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that model?
19. How do participants become a part of the Wakonse culture?
20. How has Wakonse captured and assessed the learning of Wakonse fellows? Does that learning contribute to organizational learning for the conference? How / Why or why not?

21. How has Wakonse learned?
22. What role does the “outside world” have on Wakonse? Political, cultural, social implications for the conference? The role of individual campus cultures on how Wakonse has evolved?

APPENDIX B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS-FELLOWS

Fellows' Histories

1. How did you learn about Wakonse?
2. Why did you choose to attend the first time?
3. How many times have you attended? Why?

Conference Culture

4. Why do you think the conference has continued for over twenty years?
5. What do you see as rituals and traditions at Wakonse? What roles do these activities play for you?
6. How do participants become a part of the Wakonse culture?
7. What role do the concepts of motivation and inspiration have for Wakonse from your perspective?
8. What is the role of teams at Wakonse?
9. How do you define dialogue? What is the role of dialogue at Wakonse?
10. How would you define Wakonse's values? Who is responsible for that definition?
11. How would you define Wakonse's culture? Who is responsible for that definition?
12. How would you define collaboration? In what ways does Wakonse cultivate or not cultivate a collaborative community?
13. What are the goals of the Wakonse conference? How are those goals achieved?
14. Is Wakonse faculty / staff development, instructional development, personal development, a combination of the above or something different all together? Why?
15. How would you define Wakonse's leadership? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that model?
16. What role does the "outside world" have on Wakonse? Political, cultural, social implications for the conference? The role of individual campus cultures on how Wakonse has evolved?

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