8-2016

Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model

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Recommended Citation

Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of

Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model

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A dissertation

presented to

that faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

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August 2016

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Keywords: Community College, Performance Funding, Culture, Resource Dependence

ABSTRACT

Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of

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The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of

resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of

initiatives related to Tennessee's new performance funding program. Tennessee's funding

formula, considered one of the most aggressive and robust in the country, is among a second

generation of performance funding programs commonly referred to as performance funding 2.0.

Cultural influences of resource dependence were defined as values, beliefs, and customs that

influence administrator efforts to improve institutional outcomes and acquire additional

resources through performance funding.

A top performing community college in terms of the performance funding formula was selected

because resource dependence theory suggests that a college succeeding under performance

funding would be one that is adapting to improve outcomes and acquire state appropriations.

Data were gathered from interviews with 10 administrators responsible for the implementation of

initiatives related to Tennessee's new performance funding program. Data were also gathered

from 3 observations and 144 documents.

Findings indicated 4 themes: (1) Students Come First (values), (2) Pathway Mentality: Benefits

and Conflict (beliefs), (3) The College Way: Be First, Be the Best (customs), and (4) Building on

Foundation, Maintaining Momentum (changes). Overall, cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to performance funding appear to be limited. Data suggest administrators are influenced by multiple cultural influences such as personal values, sense of community, faith in leadership, belief in the purpose of community colleges, and personal and institutional pride.

Although data indicate resource dependence has some influence, data also indicate that the power of performance funding's influence appears connected to the vision and narrative it embodies. The study is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge related to performance funding 2.0 programs. The study also provides rich understanding of cultural influences of performance funding and addresses the relationship between culture, organizational behavior, and organizational change.

DEDICATION

For Mom, who taught me writing.

For Dad, who taught me science.

For Jenny, who taught me gumdrop blue is the best blue.

And for Addie, who taught me birthdays live in the sky.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1979 Tennessee became the first state to implement performance funding (PF), the practice of allocating state appropriations to public colleges and universities based on institutional performance (Hunter & Sanford, 2011). Other states followed Tennessee's lead. By the year 2000, 35 states had implemented a form of PF (McKeown-Moak, 2013).

Early PF programs became known as performance funding 1.0 (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). The programs were characterized by the following attributes: (1) emphasis on ultimate outcomes such as job placement rate, (2) input metrics such as enrollment of low-income students, (3) metrics related to program quality, and (4) appropriation of a small bonus for performance above base state funding (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Tennessee maintained a stable PF 1.0 program for over 30 years, with the percentage of additional funding colleges could earn for performance rising to a high of 5.45% (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). PF models as a whole experienced volatility (Bogue & Johnson, 2010; Burke, 1998b). From 1979-2007, 14 states abandoned their PF programs (Harnisch, 2011).

A second wave of PF programs began in 2007 (Dougherty et al., 2014c). The programs, which became known as performance funding 2.0, emphasized intermediate student success measures and embedded PF directly into base state appropriations for institutions instead of awarding PF as an incentive bonus (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Tennessee lawmakers through the Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA) in 2010 established one of the most aggressive PF 2.0 programs in the country (Complete College America, n.d.-b, para. 3). D'Amico, Friedel, Katsinas, and Thornton (2013) described Tennessee's PF program as a "distinct example of the 2.0 model" (p. 8), and Tennessee is one of only two states—Ohio is the other—with a PF

formula Snyder (2015) categorized as Type IV (advanced). As an advanced PF state, Tennessee has a robust PF program that, among other characteristics, includes all public higher education institutions, links performance measures with state goals, and ties a substantial level of state funding to performance (Snyder 2015).

Harnisch (2011) stated that PF is rooted in resource dependence theory, which suggests that organizations will adapt to compete for limited resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The Complete College Tennessee Act placed Tennessee public colleges and universities in a position of resource dependence where nearly all state appropriations for higher education depend on student success outcomes. The outcomes include final outcomes such as associate degrees awarded and intermediate outcomes such as credit hours earned (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.-c.). John Morgan, then chancellor of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) during adoption and implementation of the CCTA and former state comptroller, observed that Tennessee's new PF program had significantly influenced Tennessee colleges and universities to implement student success initiatives (Complete College America, 2015). Morgan stated:

> Anyone who doesn't believe [performance funding] is having the desired impact isn't paying attention. The incentives created by the formula to focus resources on activities that promote better outcomes have been significant. Our outcomes have improved, and these improvements have been impressive. Of course, some institutions have done better than others, but that has always been the case. In my opinion, even 5% [allocation] caused institutions to pay attention to the criteria. The outcome-based formula has amplified that attention to the point of obsession! And, being obsessed with student success is not a bad thing (Complete College America, 2015, para. 7).

Statement of the Problem

Chancellor Morgan's description of colleges as "obsessed with student success" embodies values and beliefs, which Bolman and Deal (2008) noted are components of an organization's culture. Research into Tennessee's new PF program is limited because the model is in its early stages; full implementation occurred during the 2013-14 fiscal year (Johnson & Yanagiura, 2016). Few, if any, studies have focused exclusively on cultural influences related to Tennessee's new PF program. A better understanding of cultural influences is needed because as Kotter (1995) observed in describing change management, reform efforts are sustained only when they become embedded in an organization's culture.

Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new PF program, which is classified by Snyder (2015) as an advanced PF model. For the purpose of this study, cultural influences of resource dependence were defined as values, beliefs, and customs that influence administrator efforts to improve institutional outcomes and acquire additional resources through PF (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Values were defined as expressions of what an organization stands for and qualities worthy of esteem; beliefs were defined as assumptions or judgments; and customs were defined as manifestations of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A criterion sampling strategy was used to select administrators responsible for leading initiatives related to PF at a top-performing community college in Tennessee.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following central question: In an advanced PF environment, what are the cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to PF? Specifically, the following research questions were used in the study:

1. What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

2. What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

3. What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

4. What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge related to PF 2.0 programs. Numerous studies have examined the characteristics and effectiveness of traditional PF 1.0 models. For example, Banta, Dyke, Fisher, and Rudolph (1996) surveyed PF coordinators at Tennessee's 23 public colleges to study value placed on PF measures. Serban (1998) surveyed policymakers and campus representatives in nine states with PF to analyze perceptions of PF among policymakers and implementers. To describe characteristics of stable and unstable PF programs, Burke and Modarresi (2000) surveyed state and higher education policymakers. Bogue and Johnson (2010) examined the effectiveness of Tennessee's PF 1.0 policy over a 25-year period. Hunter and Sanford (2011) examined the impact of PF on retention rates and 6-year graduation rates at four-year public universities in Tennessee.

PF 2.0 models provide a new area for study. Fryar, Hillman, and Tandberg (2015), for example, evaluated Washington's PF 2.0 program. Studies have also examined how universities

and community colleges altered academic and student services policies, practices, and programs to meet the demands of PF 2.0; PF 2.0 impacts that were not intended by policymakers; and structures used by public colleges and universities to respond to PF 2.0 (Dougherty et al., 2014b; Dougherty et al., 2014d; Dougherty et al., 2015). This study contributes to emerging research into PF 2.0 programs and is unique in that it examines the cultural influences of Tennessee's new PF model. Where other PF 2.0 studies have revolved around policy, this study revolves around people and their lived experiences as a result of policy implementation. Understanding these lived experiences related to PF 2.0 provides detailed insight into the relationship between policy levers, such as PF 2.0, and the actions of administrators working to improve the outcomes that PF 2.0 incentivizes.

The study is also significant because it focuses on community colleges, which have often been overlooked in literature related to PF. Tennessee community colleges account for nearly 39% of public higher education enrollment in Tennessee, and they constitute the branch of higher education that is most dependent on state appropriations allocated through PF 2.0 (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2015b; Tennessee Board of Regents, 2015). Tennessee community colleges have an open access mission and are responsible for all remedial and developmental education in the state (Mullin, 2012; Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). Findings from this study provide potentially rich insight into ways that academic administrators at community colleges balance an open access mission and the need to improve outcomes tied to PF.

A third reason the study is significant is because of the relationship between culture, organizational behavior, and organizational change. Policymakers and higher education leaders seeking to change the behavior of postsecondary administrators could benefit from a better

understanding of the cultural influences of Tennessee's new PF program. As Kouzes, Posner, and Schmidt (1985) wrote, cultural factors such as beliefs and values direct the actions of an organization. Culture is also a critical component for lasting change within an organization (Kotter, 1995). In a 2015 ethnographic study of Tennessee's new PF program, Deupree, Gandara, and Ness reported a thematic finding that campus-level and system-level actors considered completion reforms as "the right thing to do," (p. 52) and that culture played a role in campus response to PF. By focusing specifically on cultural influences at a community college operating under what Snyder (2015) classified as an advanced PF program, the present study fills a gap in the body of knowledge related to PF 2.0.

<div align="center">Delimitations and Limitations</div>

Delimitations are choices made by the researcher that define the boundaries of the study (Sampson, 2012). The study site and participants were delimited through purposeful sampling. Both the study site and the study participants were selected according to the connection to resource dependence and advanced PF. Specifically, a community college was selected rather than a university because community colleges in Tennessee are more dependent on state resources. In Tennessee 41% of unrestricted revenues in community colleges were from state appropriations during the 2014-15 fiscal year compared to 28% for universities (Tennessee Board of Regents, 2015). Among Tennessee's 13 community colleges, a top-performing college was selected because resource dependence theory suggests that a college succeeding under advanced PF would be one that is adapting to improve outcomes and acquire state appropriations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003).

The delimitation of selecting a successful community college excludes the perspectives of university administrators and administrators from community colleges that remained level or

lost state appropriations under advanced PF. The study, however, was intended to explore experiences at a site where changes were likely being implemented in response to advanced PF. Understanding cultural influences in response to advanced PF at a successful community college will aid researchers, policymakers, and higher education leaders in understanding connections between PF policies and organizational behavior.

A second delimitation was the use of a conceptual framework to develop selection criteria to identify the participant administrators for the study. The goal of the study was to describe the lived experiences of administrators responsible for leading and implementing initiatives related to Tennessee's advanced PF model. The conceptual framework was to select participants in administrative areas connected to PF reforms derived from Dougherty et al. (2014a) and points emphasized in the Complete College Tennessee Act audit by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury (2014). A different conceptual framework could provide different participant selection criteria. A different framework, however, would be unlikely to lead to the selection of participants directly involved with implementing college-wide initiatives related to advanced PF. To understand cultural influences of resource dependence, participants were selected using criteria related to their involvement and oversight of initiatives with clear connections to advanced PF.

The study was also delimited by its emphasis on cultural influences of resource dependence. Additional aspects of PF, such as whether Tennessee's advanced model has improved student outcomes or the effectiveness of a particular policy change, were not examined. Interview questions, the observation guide, and the document review guide were structured to gather evidence of cultural influences, specifically, values, beliefs, and customs related to PF initiatives. Delimiting the study's scope to cultural influences ensured that the

research provided in-depth detail that could offer rich information for researchers, policymakers, and higher education leaders.

Limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that restrict the methodology and findings (Sampson, 2012). There were four general limitations to the present study. The first limitation was the use of self-reported data through interviews, a common limitation in qualitative research (Patton, 2002). The researcher used a combination of data types to offset reliance on self-reported data (Patton, 2002).

Due to the qualitative design, a second limitation was reliance on the researcher's practices and interpretations (Patton, 2002). To offset the limitation of reliance on researcher interpretation, the researcher practiced reflexivity through memo-writing and documentation of major research decisions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Morse, 1994). Third, the study was limited to a 6-week period that included 10 interviews and three observation opportunities relevant to the study. Patton (2002) noted that qualitative research designs typically include limitations of time and of situations suitable for observation. Triangulation of data sources was used to overcome limitations of time and space (Patton, 2002).

Fourth, observations were limited by the scope of the activity observed and the potential for the observer to inadvertently affect the situation (Patton, 2002). To offset observation limitations, the researcher remained as unobtrusive as possible during observations and collected data through additional sources (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Patton 2002). Despite the study's limitations, the research was important to conduct as described because the methods were the most appropriate strategies to gather data from participants closely connected to the experience of initiative implementation in an advanced PF environment.

<u>Definitions of Terms</u>

This section includes terminology and names of organizations included in the study. Before proceeding to the list of terms, however, an explanation is needed for how Tennessee's PF program is described in this research. Tennessee's PF program is considered a PF 2.0 program by various sources including D'Amico et al. (2013), Dougherty et al. (2014d), Dougherty and Reddy (2011), and Jones and Stanley (2012). D'Amico et al. (2013) described Tennessee's PF program as a "distinct example of the 2.0 model" (p. 8). Rather than use the term PF 2.0, Snyder (2015) used the term outcomes-based funding (OBF) to describe an "evolved form of performance funding" (p. 6) and developed a classification system for OBF models. The typology ranges from Type I (rudimentary) to Type IV (advanced). Characteristics of rudimentary programs are no completion or attainment goals and related priorities, performance funding awarded as a bonus, low level of funding awarded for performance (less than 5%), includes some or all institutions in one sector, does not differentiate metrics and weights by sector, does not include degree or credential completion, and does not prioritize outcomes for underrepresented students.

Characteristics of advanced programs are defined statewide completion goals, performance tied to base funding, a substantial level of funding tied to performance (25% or greater), includes all public institutions, differentiates metrics and weights by institution type, includes degree or credential completion, and prioritizes outcomes for underrepresented students (Snyder, 2015). Only Tennessee and Ohio have implemented advanced PF programs, with Tennessee committing approximately 85% and Ohio 68% of total state higher education support to their respective PF programs as of fiscal year 2015. For clarity, this study uses the Snyder

typology and refers to Tennessee's new PF model as an advanced PF program. In addition, the following terms and organizations are also included throughout the study.

Beliefs: Beliefs were defined as assumptions or judgments (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The assumption that students now require substantial support is an example of a belief in this study.

Complete College America: The national nonprofit organization works with states to increase the number of Americans with a college credential and reduce attainment gaps for underrepresented populations (Complete College America, n.d.-a). Members of the organization's Alliance of States, including Tennessee, have pledged to take "bold actions" to meet the organization's goals (Complete College America. n.d.-a).

Complete College Tennessee Act (CCTA): The act was a landmark higher education reform bill passed by the Tennessee State Legislature in 2010. Among its reforms the act established allocation of almost all state appropriations to higher education based on outcomes (Complete College Tennessee Act, 2010).

Customs: Customs were defined as manifestations of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The ritual of the hiring process is an example of a custom in this study.

Drive to 55: The term refers to Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's statewide goal to bring the percentage of Tennesseans with college degrees or certificates up to 55% by the year 2025 (Drive to 55, n.d.).

Lumina grant: The term refers to grants awarded in 2009 by the Lumina Foundation to seven states, including Tennessee, to increase productivity and efficiency in higher education (Lederman, 2009).

Performance funding 1.0: The commonly used term describes PF programs characterized by providing a performance bonus above regular state funding and emphasizing ultimate outcomes

such as job placement and graduate rates, input metrics such as enrollment of students of certain socioeconomic backgrounds, and metrics related to program quality (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011).

Performance funding 2.0: The commonly used term describes PF programs that emphasize intermediate measures of student success and embed performance in base state funding for higher education (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). The PF 2.0 model may include final outcomes such as graduation rates but tends to prioritize intermediate measures of student success such as completing developmental classes and reaching credit hour milestones (Offenstein & Shulock, 2010).

Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR): As of June 2016 and during the course of this research, TBR included 46 institutions and was the governing body for six state universities and all 13 of Tennessee's community colleges (Tennessee Board of Regents, n.d.-b, para. 1). In April 2016 Tennessee lawmakers passed the FOCUS act. The act removed the six regional universities from TBR's authority and enabled the establishment of individual boards for each of the six universities (Tamburin, 2016).

Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC): As of June 2016 and during the course of this research, THEC coordinated two higher education systems: the University of Tennessee institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the state universities, community colleges, and technology centers governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.-b, para. 1). With the passage of the FOCUS Act in April 2016, the six state universities formerly governed by TBR will instead be governed by individual boards (Tamburin, 2016). The legislation included an enhanced role for THEC as the coordinating body between TBR, the University of Tennessee system, and the local boards for the other six state universities (Tamburin, 2015).

Tennessee Promise: Promoted as offering tuition-free postsecondary education, the statewide

scholarship program provides last-dollar scholarships for students who attend public community

colleges or technical schools (Tennessee Promise, n.d.).

Values: Values were defined as expressions of what an organization stands for and qualities

worthy of esteem (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Support for student success is an example of a value

in this study.

Overview of the Study

The study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction, statement of the

problem, research questions, significance of the study, definitions of terms, and delimitations and

limitations. Chapter 2 is the literature review. Chapter 3 describes the study's methodology.

Chapter 4 provides analysis of the data, and Chapter 5 includes discussion of the findings with

implications for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tennessee created the first PF program for higher education in 1979 (Dougherty &

Reddy, 2011). Early forms of the model, often called performance funding 1.0, emphasized final

outcomes and typically allocated a small percentage of state funding as a bonus above base state

appropriations. Examples of PF 1.0 include programs created in Florida in 1994, Ohio in 1995,

and Washington in 1997. A new PF model, often referred to as performance funding 2.0,

emphasized intermediate outcomes such as credit hours completed and typically embedded

performance into institutional base state funding.

Tennessee transitioned to PF 2.0 in 2010 and bases nearly all state appropriations for

higher education on student outcomes (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011; Snyder 2015). Snyder

classified Tennessee's PF 2.0 formula as "advanced" because the formula meets the following

criteria: (1) alignment with state completion goals, (2) embedded in base state funding, (3)

substantial level of funding tied to performance (25% or greater), (4) inclusion of all institutions,

(5) differentiation in metrics and weights by sector, (6) inclusion of degree/credential

completion, and (7) prioritization of outcomes for underrepresented students. From this

definition of advanced PF, only programs in Tennessee and Ohio met the criteria to be

considered as using advanced PF models. The literature review summarizes the history and

effectiveness of PF 1.0 and PF 2.0, and provides an overview of Tennessee as a state with an

advanced performance funding model for state appropriations to higher education.

Performance Funding 1.0

The term performance funding 1.0 generally refers to PF programs that provided a

performance bonus above regular state funding and emphasized ultimate outcomes such as job

placement rates, input metrics such as enrollment of low-income students, and metrics related to program quality (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Hunter and Sanford (2011) stated that PF provided states with a direct method to influence institutional outcomes and cited resource dependence theory as a potential explanation for why institutions would respond to PF. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) defined resource dependence theory as the premise that organizational effectiveness derives from the ways an organization manages the demands of interest groups that the organization needs for resources.

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) organizations are not isolated entities that control their resources. Instead, organizations are connected to and dependent upon other organizations in the environment. As Burke (1998a) stated regarding the influence of PF, "The secret to success for performance funding is that small discretionary sums can bring campus changes" (p. 86). Harnisch (2011) stated that PF is "predicated on resource dependence theory" (p. 2). "Because the leaders of public colleges and universities are significantly dependent on state appropriations, the theory postulates that they will take the measures necessary to retain or enhance their institutions' funding" (p. 2). In 1979 Tennessee became the first state to adopt a resource dependence framework using a performance funding model by influencing public higher education institutions to improve certain outcomes.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission established a grant-funded pilot program in 1974 to explore PF (Burke & Serban, 1998b). During the pilot period the commission asked participating institutions to develop their own set of performance standards, gather data related to those standards, and investigate how performance on the standards could be rewarded through the state appropriations process (Burke & Serban, 1998b). Dumont (1980) conducted a case study of PF at Tennessee Tech University that described the PF pilot program between 1976 and

1978. The pilot implementation met resistance and skepticism from administrators and faculty. Common concerns included the potential for: (1) increased control by THEC, (2) potential for performance pressure to override instructional goals, (3) uniformed interpretations and use of performance data, and (4) potential for PF to favor institutions with greater resources. Dumont observed that THEC's openness, commitment to encouraging feedback, and sensitivity to concerns expressed during the pilot process aided in mitigating resistance. Despite the initial resistance, the author concluded that Tennessee Tech University changed its practices to meet goals identified by the PF 1.0 formula.

PF was adopted statewide in 1979 (Dougherty et al., 2014c). The initial model offered two-year colleges and four-year universities a 2% budget supplement based on performance (Hunter & Sanford, 2011). Performance was tied to the following metrics: academic program professional accreditation; standardized tests that assessed general education and specific majors; stakeholder surveys for graduates, students, and employers; peer reviews of academic programs; and implementation of improvements based on assessments (Banta, et al., 1996). If these incentives were met, then institutions could receive additional money from the state.

Banta et al. (1996) described PF as an effort by its architects, Grady Bogue and Wayne Brown of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, to "combine accountability and improvement purposes in a single process of assessment" (p. 26). The policy emerged in the context of a fundamental higher education policy question in the 1960s and 1970s—how to allocate state appropriations equitably among growing public colleges and universities (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). To distribute funds equitably, many states adopted funding formulas based on enrollments and costs by program (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). These early funding formulas reasonably addressed equity but lacked an emphasis on achievement (Bogue & Johnson, 2010).

PF, in contrast, included the element of accountability. Alexander (2000) characterized the initial PF movement as a response to questions from political leaders regarding the alignment of public higher education and state goals. As Alexander stated, "Front and center at issue is the general allegation by governmental leaders that higher education is simply not responsive to societal and economic demands" (p. 414). Bogue and Johnson (2010) noted that the Tennessee higher education community "anticipated an emergent interest in accountability" (p. 5) and, under THEC's guidance, began in 1974 a 5-year process to design and implement PF in Tennessee.

Tennessee's PF formula was revised seven times until its overhaul in 2010 (Hunter & Sanford, 2011). Revisions of the model included adding measures such as retention rates, graduation rates, enrollment goals for underrepresented populations, and institution-specific goals (Banta et al., 1996). Across the country PF experienced rapid growth in the 1990s. Layzell (1999) noted that the number of states reporting the use of PF grew from 9 to 22 between 1994 and 1997. By the year 2000, 35 states had a form of PF (McKeown-Moak, 2013). PF models as whole, however, experienced volatility (Burke, 1998b). From 1979-2007, 14 states abandoned their PF programs (Harnisch, 2011). Reasons for abandonment of PF programs included state funding cuts, failure to align campus performance goals and state goals, failure to account for institutional missions in PF design, and lack of continued support from political and higher education leaders (Harnisch, 2011).

In early PF models a low percentage of state funding was tied to performance. Ashworth (1994) conducted a case study of the development of PF in Texas. The program led to considerable debate, primarily centered on the portion of state appropriations that should be tied to performance. Ashworth (1994) recommended that states developing PF keep the level of

appropriations tied to performance below 6% and recommended that performance funds should be an add-on above base state appropriations. Hunter and Sanford (2011) noted that under initial PF models, the percentage of state funding tied to performance was approximately 5%. Of nine PF states reviewed by Burke and Serban (1998a), Tennessee had the highest level of PF at approximately 5%. One exception was South Carolina, which experimented with budgeting 100% of state appropriations based on performance (Burke & Serban, 1998a). The South Carolina experiment was undone by a poor formula design that did not differentiate between institutional missions, included numerous and complex performance measures, and led to sudden, unmanageable shifts in state funding (Snyder, 2015). South Carolina enacted the PF program in 1996 and abandoned it in 2003 (Burke, 2002; Dougherty, Hare, Jones, Natow, & Vega, 2011.)

Burke and Serban (1998a) stated that reasons for appropriating a low percentage of state funds based on performance included the need for budget stability and political considerations. Hunter and Sanford (2011) observed that the low percentage of state appropriations tied to performance may not have provided enough incentive to change behavior, especially for institutions with substantial alternative revenue sources such as grants and gifts. The apparent limited effectiveness of PF 1.0 contributed to a rethinking of PF in terms of the metrics used, means of appropriation (provided as a bonus above base state funding or embedded within base state appropriations), and percentage of state support that should be tied to performance. Table 1 shows Tennessee's PF standards for the final cycle prior to the Complete College Tennessee Act (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2005). Consistent with PF 1.0, four of the 10 standards were related to program/institutional quality or planning (accreditation and program reviews, surveys, institutional strategic planning, and state strategic planning).

Table 1

Tennessee PF Standards for 2005-10 Cycle

PF standard	Points (Community Colleges)	Points (Universities)
Student learning: General education	15	15
Student learning: Major field assessment	10	10
Accreditation and program review	10	15
Student, alumni and employer surveys	10	10
Student persistence	15	15
Institutional strategic planning goals	5	5
State strategic planning goals	10	10
Transfer and articulation	NA	5
Job placement	10	NA
Assessment pilot[a]	5	5
Assessment implementation[b]	10	10
Total points	100	100

Note. Adapted from "Performance funding: 2005-10 cycle," by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2005, retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/thec/attachments/PF_2005-10_Guidebook.pdf

[a]Assessment pilot referred to the collection and usage of the National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity (Delaware Study) and the National Study of Community College Instructional Costs and Productivity (Kansas Study).

[b]Assessment implementation referred to an evaluation of institutions' processes for using assessment results, particularly those related to Performance Funding, to define and sustain their Quality Enhancement Plans (QEPs).

Effectiveness of Performance Funding 1.0

Studies of PF 1.0 generally examined three major areas: (1) characteristics of PF

formulas, (2) PF influence on higher education institutions, and (3) PF influence on student

outcomes. Regarding characteristics of PF 1.0, Mayes (1995) surveyed community college PF

coordinators in Tennessee to assess their perceptions of the PF model as a measure of higher

education quality and as a means for improving student learning. The study found that coordinators considered job placement rate, program accreditation, and peer review as the most meaningful measures of quality. The survey also found that most coordinators (77%) reported that the improvements institutions made to address weaknesses identified through PF had a positive effect on student learning.

Banta et al. (1996) surveyed PF coordinators at Tennessee's 23 public colleges. The study was focused on responses from faculty and staff whose role was to report PF data. Respondents were asked to rate the value of PF measures in assessing quality and promoting improvement. Peer reviews of academic programs and professional association programmatic accreditation were considered the most effective measures of quality and were perceived as effective in promoting improvement. Retention and graduation rates, the standards perhaps most closely related to student performance, rated poorly as measures of quality and as impetuses for improvement. Respondents noted in written comments that retention was partially influenced by students' personal or economic hardships, which were factors beyond institutional control. Several respondents pointed out that retention goals did not properly account for the abilities of entering students. Faculty expressed concern that a push for improved retention and graduation rates could increase pressure to lower grading standards, and respondents commented that improvement of retention and graduation rates would take a long time.

Burke and Modarresi (2000) surveyed state and higher education policy makers to describe, overall, characteristics of stable and unstable PF programs. The survey included six states. Four (Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky, and Minnesota) later dropped PF, and two (Missouri and Tennessee) retained PF. Findings suggested that stable programs demonstrated the following characteristics: (1) input by state coordinating boards; (2) a sense of achievement

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related to goals to improve higher education, demonstrate accountability, and increase state funding; (3) policy values that stressed quality over efficiency; (4) time for planning and implementation; (5) a limited set of performance metrics; (6) restricted but substantial funding; (7) prediction of a long-term future; (8) stable state priorities; (9) protection against budget uncertainty; and (10) curbed costs of implementation.

Respondents from states that kept PF and respondents from states that abandoned PF agreed that PF models should include the following attributes: (1) careful choice of performance indicators, (2) recognition of challenges inherent in measuring higher education outcomes, and (3) preservation of institutional diversity (Burke & Modarresi, 2000). Unstable programs showed more input from stakeholders outside higher education, such as political leaders and business leaders. Stable programs, on the other hand, exhibited more input from higher education professionals.

Burke and Minassians (2002) identified eight indicators most widely used in PF programs: (1) graduation or retention, (2) job placement, (3) student transfers, (4) faculty workload, (5) institutional choice, (6) licensure test scores, (7) time to degree, and (8) workforce and economic development. Common PF measures favored outputs of efficiency and productivity, and PF programs tended to account for differences in institutional missions. Burke and Minassians (2002) noted that in Arkansas, use of the same PF indicators for two-year colleges and four-year colleges had "dire effects" (p. 36) and contributed to abandonment of the first PF model in Arkansas.

Burke and Minassians (2002) also categorized PF indicators by four types: (1) inputs (e.g., funding, enrollment, or staffing); (2) process (e.g., assessment of student learning, teacher training, or use of technology); (3) outputs (e.g., degrees awarded, retention rates, or graduation

rates); and (4) outcomes (e.g., job placement rates, test scores, or results from satisfaction surveys). Burke and Minassians (2002) distinguished outputs (quantity) from outcomes (quality). Nearly half of PF indicators measured aspects of process. PF indicators were, by type, 48% process, 19% outputs, 15% inputs, 12% outcomes, and 6% mixed. Burke and Minassians (2002) also found that 64% of PF indicators reflected external concerns of states rather than internal concerns (21%) of the academic community. In terms of policy values, PF indicators were primarily related to efficiency (37%), quality (25%), or efficiency and quality combined (20%).

In addition to studies of PF formulas, PF 1.0 studies examined PF influence on institutions, including perceptions of PF effectiveness, PF decision-making influence, and PF connections to budgeting. Serban (1998) surveyed policymakers and campus representatives in nine states with PF. Respondents were chief state budget officers, legislators, and system administrative officers. Also included were campus-level officials such as presidents, academic officers, and deans. State policymakers were more likely than campus representatives to indicate that PF had achieved or could achieve goals of increased state funding for higher education, improvement of higher education, increased accountability, and improvement of public perceptions of higher education. In contrast to campus representatives, state policymakers responded that PF was more effective in increasing funding and accountability rather than improving higher education or public perceptions of higher education. Related to effectiveness, state policymakers tended to believe PF had a sound long-term future. Campus representatives tended to be somewhat skeptical of PF's long-term sustainability.

Colbeck (2002) examined the influence of Tennessee's PF policy on the improvement of undergraduate instruction. Findings indicated that faculty had limited engagement with PF and the program was perceived as bureaucratic rather than innovative. University of Tennessee

faculty identified privately funded curricular reform initiatives, accreditation review policies, department chair encouragement, and student feedback as reasons for efforts to improve instruction. No faculty mentioned PF as a catalyst for instructional improvements. When asked to discuss state policies that affected teaching and learning, few Tennessee Tech faculty mentioned PF (Colbeck, 2002). Burke (2003) observed that by 2003 PF programs had "retreated from the radical goals of reforming higher education found in the early programs" (p. 77) and instead targeted "less ambitious" (p.77) goals of improving institutional outcomes in specific areas such as student access and graduation rates. Campus resistance played a role in the diminished scope of PF programs (Burke, 2003).

Burke and Lessard (2002) conducted a survey of campus leaders and academic officers at two- and four-year colleges in Florida, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Community college respondents rated the use of performance results as extensive to moderate in decisions related to institutional planning, student outcomes assessment, internal budget allocations, and curriculum and planning. Use of performance results was rated as moderate to minimal at two-year colleges in decisions related to admissions, administrative services, student services, academic advising, and faculty workload. Among four-year colleges, use of performance results was rated as extensive to moderate only in the area of institutional planning.

Burke and Minassians (2003) surveyed state higher education finance officers regarding performance accountability programs. According to the survey, 40% of respondents rated the extent of PF's impact on improved performance as moderate. PF's impact on improved performance was rated as minimal or "no extent" by 33.5% of respondents. Notably, only Tennessee respondents rated PF as having a considerable impact on improved performance.

Gilbert, Higerd, Lancaster, and Watt (2004) examined the effect of PF on quality enhancement and funding at three research universities in South Carolina. The study found that the research universities had not made significant changes in response to PF. Gilbert et al. added, however, that the state research institutions were not heavily reliant on state funding.

Dandridge-Johnson, Noland, and Skolits (2004) surveyed campus leaders, administrators, and legislators in Tennessee to assess their perceptions of PF's strengths and weaknesses. The study found that 75% of stakeholders responded that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the program. Satisfaction rates were similar among subgroups (ranging from 70% to 100%), with the exception of campus planning officers (33%). The researchers speculated that the low level of satisfaction among planning officers was related to an increased workload due to revisions in PF that aligned PF with institutional planning cycles. Respondents reported that the primary benefit of PF was its promotion of external accountability. The survey also found that the program was considered to have a minor impact on promoting internal campus improvements, student accountability, and changes to curriculum. Findings indicated a disconnect between the perception that PF encourages accountability while also perceived as less likely to impact campus improvements and curriculum changes.

Dougherty and Hong (2005) interviewed community college representatives and state higher education officials in nine states regarding performance accountability systems such as PF. Among their findings, state and college officials reported that accountability made colleges more aware of state goals. Some study participants stated that the systems made community colleges more aware of their own performance, while others reported that accountability requirements had little impact on institutional self-awareness. Community college

representatives reported that accountability systems led them to take action to improve remediation, retention and graduation, transfer rates, and job placement.

In examining PF influence on institutions, some studies reviewed institutional budgets rather than survey data. Riggs and Thompson (2000) studied the relationship between scores on PF standards and spending patterns among Tennessee community colleges. Colleges that allocated more resources to instruction, academic support, student services, and maintenance tended to achieve higher scores on performance standards than colleges that allocated resources in a different manner. The study, however, did not provide context for the motivation behind the allocation patterns of higher performing institutions.

Honeyman and Mullin (2008) analyzed the equity of performance-based appropriations among community colleges in Florida. Community colleges operated under a performance budgeting system that allocated 1% of state appropriations to community colleges based on outcomes (Dougherty & Natow, 2009). The Florida formula primarily included ultimate outcomes metrics such as program completers in high-need professions and number of students who completed an Associate of Arts in fewer than 72 credit hours (Honeyman & Mullin, 2008). The formula also included the metrics of students passing the highest level college preparatory math courses and students completing the highest level of reading and writing courses. Allocations per completer point, a metric used in Florida's performance-based budgeting, were calculated. Findings revealed that community colleges were becoming more equitable as indicated by a decreased range in allocations per completer point between colleges over a three-year period. However, findings also indicated that Florida's model tended to incentivize community colleges offering academic programs focused on transfer rather than remedial and adult education.

In a study similar to the work of Riggs and Thompson (2000), Lampley (2015) analyzed spending among Tennessee's public colleges from 2006-2014 and related performance outcomes during the same period. The timeframe included years under the state's previous PF model and years under its advanced PF model. Among community colleges notable spending changes included increases in the areas of academic support operations (15.87%) and instructional operations (7.07%). Among universities notable spending changes included increases in the areas of instructional operations (23.59%), student services salaries (11.8%), and academic support operations (11.35%). Lampley's analysis of community colleges indicated the following significant, positive relationships between spending and performance outcomes: (1) salary allocations for student services and awards of technical certificates, and (2) allocations for instructional salaries and completion of credit hours and associate degrees awarded. Regarding university spending the analysis revealed significant negative relationships between (1) student services operations and credit hour completion, (2) student services salaries and credit hour completion and bachelor's degrees awarded, (3) academic support salaries and credit hour completion, (4) instructional operations and credit hour completion, (5) instructional salaries and credit hour completion, and (6) combined budget allocations and credit hour completion. A significant positive relationship was found between university spending on academic support operations and credit hour completion and bachelor's degrees awarded.

The third major theme identified in the PF 1.0 literature is the theme of student outcomes. Overall, there are conflicting results related to PF and outcomes. Tandberg and Volkwein (2007) examined the correlation between state characteristics and their performance on Measuring Up report cards prepared by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Characteristics included controllable traits, such as regulatory practices, and uncontrollable traits

such as demographics. Few accountability and governance practices were statistically associated with report card grades. Changes in practices did not produce significant changes in report card grades. Tandberg and Volkwein concluded that those characteristics where states have limited or no control were more likely to influence Measuring Up grades than characteristics states have relatively more control over, such as governance and policies. The study's results challenge whether resource dependence is an effective model to promote institutional change. However, it is important to note that the PF policies at the time of the study were PF 1.0; thus, a small percentage of funding was awarded on performance.

McLendon, Park, and Tuchmayer (2009) explored policy climate differences between four high-performing states and four low-performing states in the areas of student retention and completion. The review of more than 100 state policy documents included governors' state-of-the-state addresses, state master plans, state PF reports, and national PF surveys and studies. Findings indicated that policy climates in low-performing states espoused more support for student success goals compared to policy climates in high-performing states. Of the eight states in the study, Pennsylvania (high-performing) and Arkansas (lower-performing) had PF programs during the study's target period (2000-2007). Pennsylvania's PF program was in effect during the full 8-year period; Arkansas's PF program was in effect only in 2001. Overall, analyses indicated few clear differences between high- and low-performing states in relation to implementation of PF programs in support of student success. The authors acknowledged the limited number of PF states in the study's sample and noted that Pennsylvania, the highest-performing state in the sample, was also the only state to have a stable PF program. The absence of PF programs in any of the low-performing states was also noted.

Shin (2009) studied changes in institutional performance following the adoption of PF policies. Institutional performance was operationalized by graduation rates and levels of federal research funding. The study was limited to four-year public universities. Findings indicated that performance-based incentives did not affect graduation rates or federal research funding. Shin suggested that the financial incentives may not be large enough to drive institutional performance, and the author cited resource dependence theory as reason universities "selectively and strategically respond to demands impacting their survival and growth" (p. 63). Shin speculated that if financial incentives were more attractive, colleges would perhaps "incorporate the new accountability into their internal systems" (p. 64) and be motivated to change.

Bogue and Johnson (2010) examined the effectiveness of Tennessee's PF policy over a 25-year period. The study found that the state's public universities and community colleges raised the national accreditation of eligible academic programs from 65% to nearly 100%. Scores on general education assessments showed limited movement, although scores slightly exceeded national peer performance in most cases. Persistence to graduation rates improved slightly. The job placement rate for community colleges remained near 90% with little fluctuation.

Hunter and Sanford (2011) analyzed the impact of PF on retention rates and 6-year graduation rates at four-year public universities in Tennessee over a 15-year span. The purpose of the study was to examine whether the introduction in 1997 of 6-year graduation rates and retention rates as metrics in Tennessee's PF model resulted in statistically significant changes in either measure. The study also assessed whether a doubling of the financial incentive tied to 6-year graduation rates and retention rates was associated with a statistically significant change in either metric.

Findings indicated that PF had little influence on institutional outcomes (Hunter &

Sanford, 2011). The authors noted, however, that the small percentage of state appropriations

tied to performance may not have offered enough incentive to affect institutional outcomes. The

study sample did not include community colleges; however, the authors suggested that future

research should examine the influence of new outcomes-based funding on institutional

performance, "Performance-funding has changed the conversation and culture of expectations of

both the public and higher education in Tennessee by tying some state appropriations to

outcomes" (p. 19).

Gross, Hillman, and Tandberg (2014) studied PF in Pennsylvania. Performance indicators

included number of degrees awarded, retention rates, graduation rates, faculty with terminal

degrees, and instructional costs. Approximately 8% of state appropriations to the Pennsylvania

State System of Higher Education were awarded using the aforementioned metrics. The study

indicated PF did not significantly influence degree completion in Pennsylvania. The model tied a

small percentage of state funds to outcomes and was limited to four-year colleges. The authors

questioned the merit of using budgets as an instrument to motivate institutional change.

The overall body of scholarship related to PF 1.0 depicts a policy strategy with

conflicting results, both in whether PF influenced institutional behaviors and whether PF

ultimately improved student outcomes. In the early 2000s, PF appeared "on the way out as a

management fad" (Gilbert et al., 2004, p. 71). Tennessee, however, drastically changed and

expanded the scope of its long-standing PF program. In its budget narrative explaining

Tennessee's new outcomes-based funding formula, the Tennessee Higher Education

Commission stated that the state's original PF model produced "moderate results" (Tennessee

Higher Education Commission, n.d.-c, p. 1). According to the commission, "changes in

institutional behavior did not come as expected" (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.-c, p. 1). State officials wanted a funding model that emphasized outcomes and shifted away from enrollment-based input metrics to determine funding (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.-c). The new outcomes-based formula rewarded "institutions for the production of outcomes that further the educational attainment and productivity goals of the state Master Plan" (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, n.d.-c, p. 1). Emphasizing outcomes aligned with state goals and embedding performance in base state appropriations are foundational components of performance funding 2.0 (PF 2.0).

<div align="center">Performance Funding 2.0</div>

Dougherty et al. (2014c) described two waves of PF. The first began in 1979 with Tennessee's model and ended in 2000 as economic decline curbed implementation of new PF programs and led to the elimination of many existing PF programs. The second wave began in 2007. Approximately two thirds of the new PF programs were renewals of previous programs. Approximately two fifths of the new programs marked a transition and became known as PF 2.0

One difference between PF 2.0 and PF 1.0 is the emphasis on outcomes. PF 1.0 models, generally, emphasized ultimate outcomes (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). PF 2.0 models may include final outcomes such as graduation rates, but the metrics in the formulas generally prioritize intermediate student success measures such as completing developmental classes and reaching credit hour milestones (Offenstein & Shulock, 2010). Another difference between PF 1.0 and PF 2.0 is the means of performance-based appropriations. PF 1.0 programs typically provided a small bonus for performance; PF 2.0 programs tie performance directly to base state appropriations for each institution (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). South Carolina experimented with a PF 2.0 appropriations model in the 1990s, basing 100% of funds to universities on

performance (Alexander, 2000). The South Carolina model included 37 performance indicators and nine performance categories (Alexander, 2000). The model failed due to its complexity and legislator turnover (McKeown-Moak, 2013).

Dougherty and Reddy (2011) listed three factors for the renewed interest in PF and the emergence of PF 2.0 programs: (1) state leaders questioned whether PF 1.0 financial incentives were enough to force institutional improvements; (2) a growing sense that state budgets were losing the capacity to include bonuses for institutional performance, thus performance must be built into base appropriations; and (3) high-profile organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education, the Lumina Foundation, and the Gates Foundation advocated for PF 2.0 (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). McKeown-Moak (2013) described the growing advocacy for outcomes-based PF. The author stated, "From the White House to state houses to foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, the demand was made for increased graduation rates at lower costs for students and at a lower cost to taxpayers" (McKeown-Moak, 2013, p. 4). During this period of renewed interest in PF, Tennessee drastically altered its PF program.

Tennessee's original PF program underwent revisions in 1980, 1982, 1987, 1992, 1997, 2000, and 2005 (Hunter & Sanford, 2011). The program changed in 2010 with the passage of the Complete College Tennessee Act. The Complete College Tennessee Act (2010) allocated almost all state appropriations based on outcomes "across a range of variables that shall be weighted to reinforce each institution's mission and provide incentives for productivity improvements consistent with the state's higher education master plan" (p. 2.). Hunter and Sanford (2011) noted that for the first time, approximately 80% of Tennessee public colleges' unrestricted state appropriations would be based on outcomes. Remaining state appropriations would be provided

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according to a revised version of the previous PF program (now known as quality assurance) and

fixed costs such as maintenance and utilities (Hunter & Sanford, 2011; Tennessee Higher

Education Commission, n.d.-c) . Tennessee's outcomes-based funding model was phased in over

3 years, beginning with the 2011-12 fiscal year with full implementation during the 2013-14

fiscal year (Johnson & Yanagiura, 2016).

The previous PF program in Tennessee, while still in existence, was renamed the "quality

assurance program" (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2010). The quality assurance

program allows colleges and universities to earn additional funds (up to 5.45% of the

institution's state appropriations) and is composed of PF 1.0 quality measures: general education

assessment, major field assessment, academic program professional accreditation and evaluation,

satisfaction surveys, job placement, and assessment implementation (Tennessee Higher

Education Commission, 2010). The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (n.d.-a) website

contains a list of frequently asked questions related to its 2015-16 dynamic model of PF. The

website narrative summarizes the relationship between PF, fixed costs, and quality assurance:

> The Formula does not use a 'base.' Instead, all state appropriations must be earned
>
> anew each year. All funding for universities and community colleges (known as
>
> "Formula Units") goes through the formula and approximately 85 percent is tied to the
>
> Outcomes. The remainder is largely comprised of fixed costs, legislative initiatives, and
>
> the Performance Funding: Quality Assurance component, under which institutions may
>
> receive up to 5.45 percent of additional funding for meeting goals tied to high-quality
>
> education (para. 2).

McKeown-Moak (2013) observed that new PF models represented a drastic change in

formula funding of public higher education because the models shifted the focus from the needs

of the colleges to the performance of the students and to institutional success in meeting state goals. The author cited Ohio as an example, noting that the state changed its formula to reward the number of credit hours students completed rather than the number of credit hours of student enrollment. The example illustrates how PF 2.0 shifted responsibility from enrollment processes to academic processes that lead to desired outcomes such as completion of credits. McKeown-Moak described Tennessee's model as the "most radical change of all the states" (p. 9) and noted that an opportunity for further study would be to examine whether the formula incentivized behavior.

The concept of change in behavior is tied to resource dependence theory. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) stated that organizations must adapt to changing environments to acquire the resources needed to thrive. The authors observed, "When environments change, organizations face the prospect either of not surviving or of changing their activities in response to these environmental factors" (p. 3). Pfeffer and Salancik noted that survival depends on more than making internal efficiency improvements. Effectiveness, they stated, "is an external standard applied to the output or activities of an organization" (p. 34). Under PF 2.0, effectiveness is measured by the external standards of student success.

According to Jones and Stanley (2012) five states as of 2012 had fully developed PF 2.0 models, and three states had implemented the model in one sector of higher education. Twelve states had PF 2.0 models under development (Jones & Stanley, 2012). Tennessee's PF program is considered a PF 2.0 program by various sources including D'Amico et al. (2013), Dougherty et al. (2014d), Dougherty and Reddy (2011), and Jones and Stanley (2012). D'Amico et al. (2013) described Tennessee's PF program as a "distinct example of the 2.0 model" (p. 8).

Rather than use the term PF 2.0, Snyder (2015) used the term outcomes-based funding (OBF) to describe an "evolved form of performance funding" (p. 6) and developed a classification system for OBF models. The typology ranges from Type I (rudimentary) to Type IV (advanced). Table 2 shows the traits for each OBF model type as defined by Snyder.

Table 2

Typology of Outcomes-Based Funding Models by Snyder (2015)

Characteristic	Type I (Rudimentary)	Type II	Type III	Type IV (Advanced)
Goals	States does not have completion, attainment goals and related priorities	State has completion, attainment goals and related priorities	State has completion, attainment goals and related priorities	State has completion, attainment goals and related priorities
Funding type	Bonus funding	Base funding	Base funding	Base funding
Funding level	Low: Under 5% or funding to be determined	Low: Under 5% or funding to be determined	Moderate: 5-24.9%	Substantial: 25% or greater
Inclusion of institutions	Some or all institutions in one sector included	All institutions in one sector included, or some institutions in both	All institutions in all sectors included	All institutions in all sectors included
Differentiation in metrics and weight by sector	None	None, or may not be applicable (if operating in only one sector)	Likely	Yes
Degree/credential completion	Not included	Included	Included	Included
Outcomes for underrepresented students	Not prioritized	May be prioritized	Prioritized	Prioritized

Note. Adapted from "Driving Better Outcomes: Typology and Principles to Inform Outcomes-Based Funding Models," by M. Snyder, 2015, HCM Strategies, retrieved from http://hcmstrategists.com/drivingoutcomes/wp-content/themes/hcm/pdf/Driving%20Outcomes.pdf

According to Snyder (2015) 35 states in fiscal year 2015 were developing or implementing outcomes-based funding. Four states—Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Nevada—

were developing or implementing PF programs considered Type III. Only Tennessee and Ohio were developing or implementing PF programs considered Type IV (advanced). In Tennessee, outcomes-based funding as a percentage of overall state institutional support was approximately 85% in fiscal year 2015, compared to 68% in Ohio. Snyder noted that in Tennessee, the remaining 15% of state appropriations is reserved for operations and maintenance.

<center>Effectiveness of Performance Funding 2.0</center>

PF 2.0 research has addressed perceptions of the legitimacy of PF 2.0, institutional adaptation to PF 2.0, and connections between PF 2.0 and student outcomes. Prince, Seppanen, Stephens, and Stewart (2010) addressed PF 2.0 legitimacy because it raised the question of whether community colleges will adapt practices to compete for external resources if those external resources are not provided. Prince et al. noted that the task force charged with developing Washington state's new PF policy for community colleges and technical colleges expressed that new funds would be needed to support the initiative rather than reallocating existing state appropriations. The 2008 recession, however, limited the availability of new state appropriations to fund the program.

Garrison Walters (2012), executive director of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, also questioned whether new PF models would produce lasting change. Walters described PF as "pressure-punitive funding, because it is designed to force institutions to change and punish them if they do not" (p. 34). Walters proposed a "coherent and aggressive agenda that is truly based in higher education" (p. 39) as a counter to PF 2.0 type programs.

A study examining why some public university presidents view PF programs as legitimate while others oppose PF policies found relationships between PF support and a variety of factors (Rabovsky, 2014). The study did not distinguish between PF 1.0 or PF 2.0 states, and

the sample was limited to universities. Nearly 55% of university presidents indicated some level of support for the expansion of PF funding. Findings also indicated significant positive correlations between president support for PF and president perceptions of levels of institutional funding that actually depend of performance; support for PF and percentage of Democratic state legislators; support for PF and graduation rates; and support for PF and whether presidents self-identify as politically conservative. Results indicated significant negative correlations between support for PF and percentage of funding from state appropriations and support for PF and president perceptions of whether performance information is used in a dysfunctional manner, such as being used for partisan political purposes. Rabovsky (2014) observed that the ties between political views and support for PF indicates that beliefs about the appropriate role of PF programs, which are often advocated as objective, have ideological components.

The findings also suggested that existence of PF policies were not associated with management support for PF funding (Rabovsky, 2014). PF policies were positively related to perceptions of how much performance matters for budgets but not to levels of acceptance of PF. The findings suggested that management often reacts negatively to PF not because of opposition to PF in theory but because of perceptions that PF policies, in practice, are ineffective and potentially detrimental.

Dougherty et al. (2014a) described how lawmakers and higher education leaders in Tennessee, Indiana, and Ohio perceived the ability of PF 2.0 to produce institutional change. The qualitative study was based on interviews with state higher education officials, college administrators, legislators and staff, governors and advisors, and consultants. The interviews indicated that financial incentives and institutional buy-in were considered the primary instruments to produce institutional change. Lawmakers and higher education leaders placed less

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importance on producing institutional change through mechanisms such as sharing performance information with colleges or creating a systematic process that would promote institutional learning.

Regardless of whether PF 2.0 is perceived as legitimate, research illustrates that institutions are adapting in the current PF 2.0 environment. For example, Dougherty et al. (2014d) examined impacts of PF 2.0 that were not intended by policymakers. The researchers interviewed more than 200 people at colleges and universities in Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana, and participants included senior administrators, mid-level administrators, deans and department chairs. Tennessee and Ohio were distinct from Indiana by basing substantial percentages of state appropriations for higher education on outcomes compared to 6% in Indiana. Study participants indicated the following unintended consequences: restriction of admissions to community colleges and universities, weakening of academic standards, compliance costs, lessening of institutional cooperation, decreased staff morale, less emphasis on missions not rewarded by PF, and decrease of faculty voice in governance.

Participants in Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana described how universities and community colleges altered academic and student services policies, practices and programs to meet the demands of PF (Dougherty et al., 2014b). The study found that most academic changes were related to developmental education, course articulation, and ease of transfer. Most student services changes involved advising, tutoring, orientations and first-year programs, tuition and financial aid policies, registration and graduation procedures, and departmental organization. Almost 20% of study participants rated the influence of PF as high with nearly 75% of participants rating the influence of PF as medium or low. Participants responded that the influence of PF was not high because (1) the institution was already performing well, (2) other

external initiatives were driving institutional change, (3) and the financial impact of performance was limited. Dougherty et al. (2014b) noted that it was challenging to disaggregate the influence of PF from the influence of other external initiatives designed to improve student outcomes.

Dougherty et al. (2015) described structures used by public colleges and universities to respond to PF 2.0. Among the study's findings, all 18 institutions examined had clear structures for responding to PF. The authors categorized structures as general administrative (established bureaucratic processes), special purpose (such as task forces) and informal structures (such as grouping of like-minded faculty). The study found that community colleges relied more often on special purpose structures. University and community college respondents also identified factors that aided deliberations related to the improvement of student outcomes to meet PF demands. The most important aids were: organizational commitment and leadership, communication and collaboration, time and feasibility, and timely and relevant data.

Friedel and Thornton (2016) studied the organizational changes within four small, rural community colleges (two in Texas and two in North Carolina) responding to PF policies. Leadership teams at each college had a thorough awareness of their state's PF model, but only two colleges made significant changes to internal practices in response to PF. Three college presidents stated that PF, to varying degrees, influenced planning and decision-making. College leadership teams expressed difficulty in managing various statewide initiatives. The researchers observed that it was challenging to pinpoint the influence of PF on organizational behavior. Many participants indicated that several college initiatives to improve outcomes would have been implemented regardless of PF. Three of the college leadership teams, however, noted that PF had "energized" improvement efforts (p. 199).

Deupree et al. (2015) conducted an ethnographic study of Tennessee's advanced PF program that included two universities and two community colleges. The overarching theme that emerged from the study was that campuses were engaged in robust activity related to student success initiatives. Although campuses clearly appeared committed to improving completion, the influence of PF was less clear. One of the research's thematic findings was that actors indicated completion reforms were "the right thing to do," (p. 52) and that culture played a role in campus response to PF.

Whether institutional adaptations in response to PF 2.0 have improved student outcomes is not definitive. Jaquette (2006) studied PF at further education colleges in England as a possible model for U.S. community colleges. Further education colleges, the author stated, are similar to community colleges because they are the leading education provider for low-income adults. Jaquette noted, "U.S. performance accountability policies generally involve too small a proportion in overall funding to induce behavioral changes in colleges" (p. 3).

English further education colleges were given PF contracts and could only receive funding if they were able to attract students and would lose funding if students withdrew or were not successful (Jaquette, 2006). The study found that over a 5-year period, student success rates rose by 10%. The PF model described in the study included elements similar to PF 2.0, although Jaquette noted that differences between the English system and U.S. community colleges limited a direct comparison. Jaquette also observed that beyond policy mandates "before any dramatic gains in student success, colleges must internalize the value of student success" (p. 25).

A report by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (2011) noted that PF "has been tried before with limited, if any success" (p. 6). The report outlined recommendations for new PF models and cited Texas and Washington as examples. Texas

experienced a 9.3% increase in degree production over baseline levels, while Washington increased the number of momentum points (intermediate student outcomes) achieved by 12% (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2011). According to the typology developed by Snyder (2015), the Texas PF 2.0 program was Type II, and the Washington program was Type I (rudimentary). Unlike Tennessee's Type IV advanced PF model, PF programs in Texas and Washington tied a low level of funding to performance and excluded four-year schools. Washington's PF model appropriated performance funds as a bonus, where Tennessee and Texas embedded PF in base budgets.

Hillman and Tandberg (2014) collected state-level data from 1990-2010 to determine whether the intervention of PF programs affected total public baccalaureate degree completions. The sample included 29 states without PF and 20 states with PF, some with PF 1.0 models and others with PF 2.0 models. The study excluded Tennessee because the state PF program began before 1990. The study found that PF programs, on average, did not produce statistically significant increases in completion of baccalaureate degrees. PF, however, had a positive and significant effect on degrees produced in the seventh year of the program. Hillman and Tandberg noted that the data suggested that the longer a state operates PF, the more likely the program may increase degree completion. The study did not incorporate outcomes for community colleges or examine intermediate outcomes such as students reaching certain credit hour thresholds. Hillman and Tandberg (2014) urged further study of new funding models.

Rabovsky and Rutherford (2014) studied the effectiveness of PF policies on student outcomes (6-year graduation rates, retention rates, and bachelor degree production) at more than 500 postsecondary institutions. The study included all 50 states and covered a span of 18 years. The sample only included public universities. The study included PF 1.0 models and PF 2.0

models. The findings suggested that student outcomes were not enhanced by PF policies. Rabovsky and Rutherford noted, however, that the study found a positive, but not significant, correlation between PF 2.0 and graduation rates, and the authors stated that PF 2.0 incentive structures may gradually increase student performance if the incentive structures are maintained over time.

Fryar et al. (2015) evaluated the state of Washington's PF program. The model has characteristics of PF 2.0 because it includes intermediate milestones such as earning 15 credit hours and completing developmental math. State appropriations awarded for performance, however, were given as a bonus in addition to general state appropriations. Performance-based appropriations accounted for approximately 1% of the higher education system's operating budget. Using community colleges as the sample for the study, results indicated that retention and associate degree production were not significantly higher than peer colleges. However, the PF program had a positive effect on increases in short-term certificates awarded by the colleges.

According to data compiled by Johnson and Yanagiura (2016) bachelor's degrees awarded in Tennessee have increased by 3.4% annually since the new PF formula was implemented, compared to 2.5% before formula implementation. Associate degree production has increased by 6.3% annually since formula implementation, compared to 2.8% prior to the new formula. For degree-award data, Johnson and Yanagiura noted that the upward movement does not seem to correlate perfectly to formula implementation and that Tennessee's data are not much different from trends in states without outcomes funding. The authors cautioned against drawing strong conclusions from the degree-award data. Data showed declines in students reaching credit-hour milestones, and the authors noted that flattening or declining enrollments may have been a factor.

Certificate growth in Tennessee, however, appeared clearly linked to the state's new PF policy (Johnson & Yanagiura, 2016). Tennessee has experienced 174% total growth in short-term certificates and 27% average growth in long-term certificates since implementation of the new formula. One college went from awarding no certificates to over 500 short-term certificates in one year after Tennessee's new funding formula went into effect. Johnson and Yanagiura explained that THEC worked with institutions to better define the certificates that could be counted as part of a college's outcomes. Johnson and Yanagiura noted that it may take up to 10 years or more to fully evaluate the student success impacts of Tennessee's new PF formula.

<div align="center">Profile of Tennessee as an Advanced PF State</div>

Tennessee provides a model of policies and practices implemented by colleges operating under advanced PF 2.0. For universities, Tennessee's advanced PF model outcome metrics for 2015-2020 include: students acquiring 30, 60, and 90 hours; research and service expenditures; bachelor's and associate degrees; master's and education specialist degrees; doctoral and law degrees; degrees per 100 FTE; and 6-year graduation rate (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2015c). For community colleges, outcomes metrics include: students accumulating 12, 24, and 36 hours; workforce training; dual enrollment students; associate degrees awarded; long-term certificates awarded; short-term certificates awarded; awards per 100 FTE; job placement; and transfers out with at least 12 credit hours. Outcomes are weighted to reflect institutional mission differentiation—institutions provide input on weights—and 3-year rolling averages are used in outcomes calculations (Dougherty et al., 2014d).

In response to the Complete College Tennessee Act, the Tennessee Higher Education Commission organized "Completion Academies" (Dougherty et al., 2014a). The purpose of the academies was to develop college-level strategies that improve student outcomes.

Representatives from all public colleges attended the academies and worked with content experts in areas such as advising and learning support.

An audit report by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury (2014) described key reforms Tennessee colleges have prioritized in response to the Complete College Tennessee Act. The report focused on six areas: (1) advisor caseload, (2) advising full-time status for students, (3) early warning systems to flag students at risk of failure or withdrawal, (4) restructured developmental education, (5) structured learning communities such as cohort and block scheduling, and (6) reverse articulation agreements (transferring university credits back to a community college to qualify a student for an associate degree). The report included recommendations specifically for community colleges.

Regarding advising the report noted that community colleges reported inadequate resources devoted to advising (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). Universities reported adequate advising resources. Community colleges and universities reported that staff emphasized to students the need to take a full-time course load (12 hours or more), but the audit noted that no institution "appeared to have programs that are dedicated to emphasizing the importance of full-time status in improving college completion" (p. 32). All Tennessee Board of Regents universities and some community colleges had implemented early alert systems to identify students at-risk of dropping out of school. The audit report recommended that all TBR institutions have early alert systems.

The report by the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury (2014) also noted a shift in the delivery of developmental courses. The Complete College Tennessee Act (2010) mandated that all remedial and developmental education be provided by community colleges and not universities. Community colleges changed developmental education—titled Learning Support—

to progress students on the basis of competencies rather than course completion. (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). According to the audit report, competency-based developmental education allowed students to potentially complete Learning Support courses in one semester. The audit noted that a major nationwide issue was whether developmental education should be embedded in college-level classes rather than exist as stand-alone courses. The audit recommended that community colleges continue to monitor Learning Support effectiveness, "including efforts to embed supplemental instructional support in college credit classes, so more students can achieve graduation in a more timely manner" (p. 34).

The audit further noted that Tennessee community colleges implemented structured learning programs, specifically block scheduling and cohort scheduling (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). Block scheduling is the practice of students selecting classes as a group rather than picking individual courses. Cohort scheduling involves having groups of students take the same courses. The report recommended that community colleges "review and take steps to overcome any obstacles to implementing structured learning programs" (p. 35).

Continued implementation of a statewide system for reverse articulation was also recommended in the audit (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). Reverse articulation allows community college students who transfer to a university before earning an associate degree to transfer university credits back to the community college to meet associate degree requirements (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). The report stated that reverse articulation provides opportunities for students to have a college credential even if they fail to fully complete a bachelor's degree, improves the probability of bachelor degree completion, and expands options for students desiring to enter the workforce while completing the bachelor's degree.

Tennessee, as an advanced PF 2.0 state, has established a framework for reforms designed to improve outcomes. Key areas of reform include: provide resources to improve advisement of students, emphasize to students that they should take a full-time course load, implement an early alert system to flag at-risk students and intervene, restructure developmental education to use competency assessment or embed corequisite remedial class in college-level classes, provide block scheduling and cohort scheduling, and offer reverse articulation agreements (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). In addition, as noted by Dougherty et al. (2014a), university and community college faculty and staff have participated in annual, statewide Completion Academies to plan and share strategies to improve student outcomes.

In general, scholarship related to PF 1.0 and PF 2.0 revolves around policy characteristics, stakeholder perceptions, institutional response, and outcomes improvement. Overall, PF studies indicated mixed results on whether PF ultimately changes institutional behavior and produces desired student success outcomes. PF 2.0 programs provide new areas for study, and among those programs, Tennessee's advanced PF model is unique.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new PF program, classified by Snyder (2015) as an advanced PF model. For the purpose of this study, cultural influences of resource dependence were defined as values, beliefs, and customs that influence administrator efforts to improve institutional outcomes and acquire additional resources through PF (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Values were defined as expressions of what an organization stands for and qualities worthy of esteem (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Beliefs were defined as assumptions or judgments, and customs were defined as manifestations of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

A criterion sampling strategy was used to select administrators responsible for leading initiatives related to PF. The study addressed the following central question: In an advanced PF environment, what are the cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to PF? Specifically, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

2. What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

3. What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

4. What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?

Research Design

Qualitative methods enable researchers to describe a phenomenon in its full context, study issues in-depth, and explore the perspectives of those experiencing the phenomenon, (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Patton 2002). A qualitative approach was chosen because perceptions of values, beliefs, and customs are best described through the perspectives of actors operating within an organization. The goal of the study was not to generalize but to describe the lived experiences of community college administrators who are responsible for leading and implementing initiatives related to Tennessee's advanced PF model. The qualitative tradition of phenomenology was selected for the research approach because it emphasizes the meaning of the experience (Seidman, 2013). The study explored cultural influences of resource dependence through the exploration of values, beliefs, and customs that administrators assigned to the experience of implementing PF-related initiatives.

Sampling Strategy

Cresswell (2007) noted that qualitative research uses purposeful sampling—the practice of selecting participants who can provide detailed understanding of a phenomenon. Both the study site and the study participants were selected purposefully according to the connection to resource dependence and advanced PF. A community college in Tennessee was selected as the site for the study because Tennessee was one of only two states with an advanced PF model that allocates nearly all state appropriations on outcomes (Snyder, 2015). Specifically, a community college was selected rather than a university because community colleges in Tennessee are more dependent on state resources. In Tennessee, 41% of community colleges' unrestricted revenues were from state appropriations during the 2014-15 fiscal year compared to 28% for universities (Tennessee Board of Regents, 2015).

In addition, Tennessee community colleges do not have the option to raise admission standards that would likely improve student success outcomes. Community colleges accept students regardless of their college readiness as part of their open access mission (Mullin, 2012). Tennessee community colleges, for example, do not use ACT or SAT scores for admission purposes (Tennessee Board of Regents, n.d.-a). Tennessee state law also places all responsibility for remedial and developmental education on the state's community colleges (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014). Nearly 60% of community college first-time freshmen were enrolled in remedial and development courses in fall 2014 (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2015b). To acquire resources through PF, community colleges must improve student outcomes regardless of college readiness.

Among the state's community colleges, a top performing college in terms of the PF formula was selected because resource dependence theory suggests that a college succeeding under advanced PF would be one that is adapting to improve outcomes and acquire state appropriations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). A Tennessee Higher Education Commission (2015a) analysis reported the estimated effects of each component of the outcomes-based funding formula on THEC's recommended state appropriation to each community college. The 13 community colleges were ranked by order of recommended appropriations gained. The site selected for this study was one of the top three institutions ranked by state appropriations gained and had documents available for review.

Participants from the community college were selected using the criteria of engagement in experiences most connected to the phenomenon (Seidman, 2013). The administrative areas most connected to key areas of reform due to PF were derived from Dougherty et al. (2014a) and the points emphasized in the Complete College Tennessee Act audit by the Tennessee

Comptroller of the Treasury (2014). The following key areas of reforms related to PF were identified as: (1) academic policies (block scheduling, cohort scheduling, and reverse articulation); (2) advising (resources to improve advisement of students, emphasis on full-time enrollment, and implementation of an early alert system to flag at-risk students and intervene); and (3) learning support reform (developmental education as a competency-based model or embedded developmental education in college-level classes). Further, each key area of reform has a connection to outcomes used in Tennessee's 2010-15 PF formula: degrees and certificates awarded, credit hour milestones, and success in developmental courses.

It should be noted that the PF formula was revised in 2015, and the 2015-2020 PF formula eliminated remedial and developmental success as a component (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2015c). Under the 2010-15 model a student enrolled in a developmental course who completed at least one college-level course during any of the following three academic years was counted as a successful outcome. According to THEC the developmental course success component was removed because community colleges were engaged in improving outcomes for underprepared students using innovative initiatives that occurred outside of remedial courses. The 2015-2020 PF formula replaced the remedial and developmental success outcome with an academically underprepared focus population. THEC defined an academically underprepared student as one who meets one of three criteria: (1) the community college identifies the student as requiring remediation, (2) the student scores 18 or below on the ACT Composite, or (3) the student scores 18 or below on the ACT Reading or Mathematics component, or a 17 or below on the ACT Writing component. Under the 2015-2020 model community colleges are rewarded with a premium when academically underprepared students

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reach progression milestones or earn credentials. For the purposes of participant selection the criteria were based on the 2010-15 PF model.

Ten participants were selected who met one or more of the key areas of reform criterion, as follows: (a) academic policies (academic affairs officer, curriculum director, and cohort specialist); (b) advising (advising director, academic support director, student affairs vice president); and (c) learning support (English dean, math dean). The college's financial officer was selected to provide a broad view of resources. The college's institutional planning officer was selected to provide a broad view of all reform areas. The student affairs vice president was added after witnessing comments by the individual in an observation session. The student affairs vice president was knowledgeable of various student success initiatives and was therefore added to the sample using a snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). The cohort specialist was recommended by a participant and also added using a snowball sampling strategy (Patton, 2002).

Ethics

Study participants were assured of confidentiality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Audio files of interviews, notes, and copies of documents were stored in a password-protected account. All research materials (transcriptions, field notes, analytic memos) used pseudonyms to protect the identities of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The study proposal was approved by the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board (Appendix A). An informed consent document was distributed to each participant (Appendix B).

Role of the Researcher

Janesick (1994) stated that qualitative researchers should identify their biases. The researcher's perspective for this study includes his experience working for a community college. As such, the researcher is a strong advocate for the mission and purpose of community colleges.

The researcher intentionally chose not to use his institution as a site for the study to avoid power dynamics, gatekeeper access issues, or bias to cloud his working relationship with colleagues. As Morse (1994) stated, serving as both a researcher and employee can place the researcher "in an untenable position" (p. 222). By seeking an outside institution that met the criteria for the sample, the researcher avoided any influence that a personal connection could have on participants.

In addition, the researcher has witnessed the transition to advanced PF in Tennessee and has developed his own opinions on the policy. To control for his biases the researcher used a specific theoretical framework, resource dependence, to guide the line of inquiry. Furthermore, the researcher maintained a field notebook that included personal bias and bracketing; researcher assumptions were checked against emerging analytic memos and a panel of expert reviewers.

Because the researcher has worked at a community college, the researcher is familiar with the community college environment, including terminology and policies. Having served on the completion committee at his own institution, the researcher has contributed to the planning and implementation of reforms related to PF. The researcher's experience with PF and completion reforms allowed the researcher to interview study participants without requiring them to define, explain, or elaborate key terms and phrases.

Data Collection

There were two phases of data collection in this study. The first phase used a form (Appendix C) to establish context for the inquiry (Seidman, 2013). The form was sent to interview participants and solicited data for eight areas: (1) student advisement, (2) full-time enrollment, (3) at-risk student tracking and intervention, (4) remedial education, (5) block

scheduling and cohort scheduling, (6) reverse articulation, (7) faculty and staff knowledge of student success/completion strategies, and (8) use of data to improve student success.

The first six administrative areas were selected because they represent key areas of emphasis for PF in Tennessee. The state audit of the Complete College Tennessee Act (Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury, 2014) provided a blueprint for actions colleges should take to improve performance. The audit included specific recommendations related to the first six areas. The topic area of faculty and staff knowledge of student success and completion strategies was selected due to the establishment of "Completion Academies" for colleges as a direct response to the Complete College Tennessee Act (Dougherty et al., 2014a). The administrative selection area of using data to improve student success was selected because Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) noted that portraits of organizations are enhanced by understanding factors that lead organizations to measure certain outcomes and not other outcomes.

For each of the eight key areas, participants were instructed to describe institutional changes that they were responsible for leading or involved in implementing. Participants were also asked to provide their perceptions of what influenced the changes. Participants provided contact information on the forms and returned the forms to the researcher. One participant sent two versions of the form. The researcher used the second version, which was more detailed. One participant (financial officer) noted that although he was aware of institutional initiatives, he was not directly involved in them and, therefore, the form was not applicable to his role. Two participants did not return the preinterview form.

Data from the forms were used as a basis for the in-depth, semistructured interviews, a second phase of inquiry to allow participants to reconstruct details of their lived experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Seidman, 2013). Using the forms, the researcher selected initiatives

identified by the participants as those the participants indicated they were personally involved in implementing. The interviews required participants to reconstruct experiences related to the reforms and to discuss the values, beliefs, and customs that influenced those reforms.

Interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes. Seidman (2013) noted that an hour can tend to hasten participant response and 2 hours can seem overwhelming for participants. As Anfara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) suggested in a review of best practices in qualitative research, interview questions were specifically aligned with the nature of the inquiry. Table 3 shows the interview questions that were aligned with each research question. Each interview question in the interview guide (Appendix D) was charted to show its connection to the research questions.

Table 3

*Research Questions in Relation to Interview Questio*ns

Research questions	Interview questions
What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	A1, A2, A3, A4, A7, A10, A12, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B7, B9
What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	A1, A2, A3, A4, A7, A10, B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B7,
What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	A1, A5, A6, A11, B8
What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?	A8, A9, A12, A13, B2, B4, B6, B9, B10, B11

Documents and Observational Data

Patton (2002) wrote that documents provide a rich data source about organizations and programs. In addition to the preinterview forms, documents reviewed included data extracts from

the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Faculty senate minutes, curriculum committee minutes, strategic planning minutes, and strategic

planning documents were examined. A college self-study identified by a participant was also

reviewed. All reviewed documents were publicly available and were from a time period of 2010

or later to coincide with passage of the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010. As outlined in

the document analysis guide (Appendix E), documents were reviewed for language that reflected

values, beliefs, and customs in the context of PF. Table 4 shows the 144 documents reviewed by

the researcher.

Table 4

Documents Reviewed by Type

Type	Date Range	Quantity
Curriculum committee minutes	Feb. 2010-April 2016	92
Faculty senate minutes[a]	July 2012-March 2016	32
Preinterview forms	Feb.-March 2016	7
Self-study	2006	1
Strategic planning committee minutes[b]	Nov. 2013-March 2016	10
Strategic plan	ND	1
Strategic planning document	February 2013	1

Note. $N = 144$.
[a]July 2012 was the earliest date minutes were publicly available.
[b]November 2013 was earliest date minutes were publicly available.

Patton (2002) also noted the value of directly observing a phenomenon. The researcher

attended and observed committee meetings related to reform initiatives. An onlooker-outsider

approach was selected (Patton, 2002), and consent to observe was obtained from the facilitator of

the meetings. During observations the researcher disclosed the study purpose in the general terms

of exploring administrator perceptions of implementing student success initiatives related to PF. The researcher remained as unobtrusive as possible (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As outlined in the observational data guide (Appendix F), the purpose of the observations was to seek confirming and disconfirming evidence of statements or actions reflecting values, beliefs, and customs.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Janesick (1994) noted that qualitative researchers use inductive analysis to allow categories, themes, and patterns to emerge from data. To begin the analysis process, interviews were transcribed verbatim and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Statements were broken into manageable segments (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Each segment was analyzed via open coding to identify concepts to stand for blocks of the data. Following the constant comparative method, segments from each subsequent interview were analyzed, and when the segments were similar to previous segments of data obtained from interviews, they were assigned the same code. The codes were analyzed, compared, and contrasted to produce categories, and the categories formed themes. Data from the documents and observations were compared to the interview data as a means of triangulation and to add additional context to interview data.

Glaser and Strauss (1999) noted the need to craft memos during the analytical process to assist in the development of categories. Memos were written after completing each interview, reviewing documents, observations, transcribing interviews, reviewing segmented data, identifying codes, and reviewing all identified codes (Appendix G). The memos were analytical and served as a means of axial coding, which aids the process of relating concepts to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The memos also explained the logic behind coding decisions. As Boeije (2002) noted, memos increase the traceability and credibility of qualitative research.

Measures of Rigor

Anfara et al. (2002) discussed various strategies to enhance the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative research. Strategies included triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, thick description, creating an audit trail, and peer examination (Anfara et al., 2002). Patton (2002) defined triangulation as multiple data collection techniques to study the same phenomenon. Triangulation was practiced by conducting interviews with participants who each had a different perspective and by conducting document review and observations in addition to interviews. Member checking, allowing participants to review and respond to emerging key themes in the research, was also used (Janesick, 1994).

Creswell (2007) described thick description as a process of providing extensive details related to the participants or settings. Thick description was recorded from the observations through memo writing. Corbin and Strauss (2008) noted that qualitative researchers should practice reflexivity during the research process. Beginning in April 2015, the researcher kept an audit trail (Appendix H) of major research decisions and the thought process behind those decisions (Morse, 1994). In addition, after interviewing participants, transcribing interviews, and during the coding process, the researcher wrote memos to examine his observations and to analyze the data.

Janesick (1994) stated, "Validity in qualitative research has to do with description and explanation, and whether or not a given explanation fits a given description. In other words, is the explanation credible?" (p. 216). The researcher attempted to describe all major processes and decisions. Following the model of Anfara et al. (2002), who urged for transparency in the data analysis process, the researcher explained the rationale behind the emergence of categories. All procedures, decisions, and data analysis underwent peer review.

<center>Chapter Summary</center>

The purpose of the study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to Tennessee's high-percentage PF model. The site and sample were selected through criterion sampling procedures using the college's performance in the outcomes-based formula and the participants' connection to key areas of reform associated with PF. Data were collected through interviews, document review, and observation and analyzed through inductive analysis using constant comparative methodology.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new PF program, classified by Snyder (2015) as an advanced PF model. For the purpose of this study, cultural influences of resource dependence were defined as values, beliefs, and customs that influence administrator efforts to improve institutional outcomes and acquire additional resources through PF (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Values were defined as expressions of what an organization stands for and qualities worthy of esteem (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Beliefs were defined as assumptions or judgments, and customs were defined as manifestations of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols.

A criterion sampling strategy was used to select administrators responsible for leading initiatives related to PF. The study addressed the following central question: In an advanced PF environment, what are the cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to PF? Specifically, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

2. What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

3. What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

4. What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?

Data were collected from interviews with 10 administrators, review of 144 documents, and observation of three meetings related to student success initiatives. Findings indicated four themes: (1) Students Come First (values), (2) Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflict (beliefs), (3) The College Way: Be First, Be the Best (customs), and (4) Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum (changes). This chapter provides a summary of participant characteristics and presents evidence for each theme. Following the recommendation of Anfara et al. (2002), Table 5 is a code-map that traces development of the four major themes.

Table 5

Code-Mapping of Themes

Third Iteration: Themes			
RQ1: What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ2: What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ3: What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ4: What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?
Theme: Students come first	Theme: Pathway mentality: Benefits and conflict	Theme: The College Way: Be first. Be the best.	Theme: Building on foundation, maintaining momentum
Second Iteration: Categories			
1A. Completion as top priority 1B. Support for student success 1C. Personal values feeling for college 1D. Leadership shares student success values	2A. Students require substantial support 2B. Multiple pressures drive initiatives 2C. Completion has financial benefits 2D. Concerns for lower standards, loss of college experience	3A. Sense of collaboration, community 3B. Pride 3C. Success celebrations 3D. Hiring process	4A. Core beliefs, values well-established 4B. PF as Symbol 4C. Initiative fatigue
First Iteration: Codes			
1A. Completion focus 1A. Mission changes 1B. Student success as goal 1B. Best for students 1B. Giving students every opportunity 1B. Helping students	2A. College is a pathway or track 2A. Recognizing student barriers 2A. Recognizing student individuality 2A. Shepherding students	3A. College as community 3A. Faculty involvement 3A. Getting buy-in 3B. Institutional pride 3B. Pride in work 3C Celebrating student success	4A. Culture not changed 4A. Dedication to students unchanged 4A. History student success initiatives 4A. Originating college self-study 4B. Formula as afterthought 4B. Keeping initiative without PF

Table 5 (continued)

RQ1: What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ2: What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ3: What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?	RQ4: What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?
1B. Right thing to do 1B. Student-need-driven policy 1C. Personal affection for college 1C. Personal experiences 1C. Personal values 1D. Leadership student-focused 1D. Leadership support	2A. Student factors beyond college control 2A. Teaching students to succeed 2B. Accreditation mandate 2B. CCTA mandate 2B. Competitive pressure 2B. Leadership mandate 2B. State pressure 2B. TBR leadership 2B. TBR mandate 2C. Driven by tuition 2C. Formula as funding tool 2C. Formula financial return limited 2C. Student success financial benefits 2D. Academic concerns 2D. College experience concerns 2D. Holistic view of student success 2D. Maintaining academic standards 2D. Mission concerns 2D. Student expectations concerns 2D. Student responsibility concern	3C. One story at a time 3D. New people, fresh ideas	4B. Formula as change agent 4B. Formula as focus tool 4B. Old way of students in seats 4B. Pride in formula 4C. Initiative acceptance 4C. Initiative fatigue 4C. Initiative resistance

Participant Profile

To avoid identifying participants, identifiable information such as name and job function were withheld from the findings. Overall, the 10 participants' management levels were specialist (1), dean (2), director (3), executive director (1), and vice president (3). The mean years of experience at the college was 16.2. The mean years of experience in the current position was 6.1.

<u>Theme 1: Students Come First</u>

The theme relates to the research question of administrator perceptions of values that influence student success initiatives. Initial coding of interview data identified statements that reflected expressions of values. The statements were grouped into four categories: (1) completion as top priority, (2) support for student success, (3) personal values, feeling for the college, and (4) leadership shares student success values. Table 6 shows each category related to the theme and an illustrative statement that reflected the category.

Table 6

Theme 1 Categories and Statements

Category	Participant	Statement
Completion as top priority	Participant I	I think we just, I think the focus is much better now in that we're saying not only, not only are we going to do things, you know, the . . . initiatives to get you in the door, but we're going to get you through the process and get you graduated.
Support for student success	Participant G	You know, students don't enroll in college to fail. You know, you don't invest in something to, you don't invest to lose the investment. I, I just, I personally think it's the right thing to do. It's the mindset that I've had all along in my career.
Personal values, feeling for college	Participant B	I've seen students be successful. I've seen them get jobs. I've seen them move up and, and move their families up with them. Who wouldn't want that? I, I don't know, it's part of who I am.
Leadership shares student success values	Participant G:	But he's, he's always talking about student success. And, and so I think that helps kind of like, yes, this is really important.

<u>Completion as Top Priority</u>

Data suggested that completion was a priority and viewed as a value. Participant statements suggested that completion as a value influenced initiatives and the college's mission.

The initial code "completion focus" was used 131 times by the researcher, the most-used code.

Table 7 shows statements that related initiatives to the completion-as-priority value.

Table 7

Statements of Focus on Completion Related to Initiatives

Participant	Topic	Statement
Participant G	How to promote summer scholarship to students	I mean I would imagine the letter would say something like "stay on track." You know, we want you to graduate. We want to help you get enrolled, take advantage of a scholarship, take advantage of summer classes. We've got classes that you need to graduate offered in the summer. They're shortened timeframe. They're only four weeks at a time. So that sort of thing.
Participant J	Developing online block schedules	So what we did and this is a very recent thing as in the last probably four weeks, develop block schedules for online. So if a student comes in and says, "I'm an online student, how can I get out?" Here's your pathway—semester one, two, three, and four. Here are the courses you'll be taking. Again, a block schedule as you know is different from a cohort, that you don't have to enroll in all four of those courses or all five of those courses. But if you want to here's a guaranteed pathway that we can get you out in two years.
Participant I	Advising	If we can get that student in, and we get them on the right program to begin with, so they're not into, you know, they're not into engineering when they should have been into nursing, and all of that. So, you know, it's important we get them started right.

Participant J described an effort to bring full, two-year programs to satellite campuses. Traditionally students could start programs at satellite campuses but had to travel to the main campus to finish their degrees. Participant J noted, "Historically we've always used the site campuses as an access point." Having to travel to the main campus to finish programs was "challenging for some of our students," Participant J said. College administrators studied

completion at satellite campuses and found completion rates were much lower than the main campus. Participant J said, "We looked at some reasons why and one of the main reasons why is students can't complete at the site campus." The initiative to offer full degree programs marked a shift in philosophy. Participant J stated, "As I said our philosophy had always been, site campuses are access points but not necessarily completion points. Well of course for us as, as you're aware, you know a performance funding state, we need to have completions." Expansion of program offerings at site campuses was included in the college's most recent strategic plan.

Participant H told a story about the college's elimination of what was called final registration. The story was told as an example of how the college has shifted from focus on access to focus on completion. "Final registration" was a four-day push to register students a week before classes started. Participant H stated, "You'd see 300 students in 4 days that wanted to get registered for fall semester. We don't do that anymore." Participant H said the college now urges early registration.

So, we've, we've changed that part of the culture to where they come in earlier, so we have for fall registration, we'll start that in April. We'll start telling the community that, you know, it's time to come in, get registered. We'll start telling our returning students, "'You need to do it now, do it now, do it now.'" And then you also have to, sort of, move up some of those deadlines that you had before that were way down here, so now you got to bring them up here. So, a lot of that just the nuts and bolts kind of thing in registering. You've got to rethink how you do that if you want to encourage thinking about your goal the day before you need to have a goal, you know?

Focus on completion was also expressed in statements related to the college's mission and strategy. The description of a focus area in the college's most recent strategic plan states that

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the college "will focus on the student experience by supporting all students to program completion, redesigning academic engagement and other processes, and marketing success strategies to specific student populations." Participant A summarized completion focus as a value, stating "We're here to get students through their degree program." Table 8 shows illustrative mission and strategy statements from participants that reflect a focus on completion.

Table 8

Statements of Focus on Completion Related to Mission and Strategy

Participant	Statement
Participant I	I think we just, I think the focus is much better now in that we're saying not only, not only are we going to do things, you know, the initiatives to get you in the door, but we're going to get you through the process and get you graduated.
Participant I	Well, you know, like I said … I think back when I went to school. I don't know your situation, but I think back when I went to school. It was a situation of, "We're the university, this is the way we do it, you know, here's, you know, like I said, here's your catalog, you do it our way or whatever." I think now, we say the important thing is to get you through the system, to get you through. I mean we've got boundaries obviously we have to live with. But the important thing is for you to progress, is for you to come in here, obtain the knowledge that we can give you, you know, learn something, hopefully, and then get out and make, you know, make productive member of society. I think we're looking at that now rather than saying, "These are our rules and you'll, you'll abide by them or just, or just get out." That's what I mean. I think I like this way better than the other way.
Participant H	I think that the purpose of the community college is to provide access for students who, for whatever reason, be it economic or financial or whatever, don't have those opportunities to go to the larger universities, the four-year universities, but still want to get an education in order to be, you know, informed citizens, work, contribute to society and that kind of thing. But I think that if we're not helping to promote those students to reach the goal of a degree, then what are we really doing, you know? I mean, I don't, what is the point of what we do? You know? And yeah, a couple of semesters of college helps in terms of educating the students and society or whatever, but isn't it better to help them reach a goal, a completion goal than it is to just say, "Here, we're interested in you for a little while?"

Table 8

(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant J	But at the same time, you know, kind of keeping the eye on the prize that are we graduating our students and what initiatives are helping graduate those students?

Support Student Success

Related to the value of completion, participants provided statements that indicated support for student success was a shared value across the institution. On the preinterview form, one participant wrote "STUDENT SUCCESS" in capital letters as the driving force behind initiatives related to use of data to improve student outcomes. Student success statements reinforced the theme of Students Come First. Table 9 is a summary of illustrative student success statements.

Table 9

Statements of Student Success

Participant	Topic	Statement
Participant D	Values that drive institution	I mean, I think we value student learning. I think that's what our values are.
Participant J	Institutional culture	But again there's the culture of student success, what, whatever improves student success, I think that we're seeing at the college.
Participant F	Institutional culture	Well, I mean, yeah, we talked about that, about this desire to see students succeed. Um, I mean, for the most part, why would be in this business if we were not humanitarians?
Participant H	Collaborating with other colleges	Now, I have counterparts at [nearby college], [nearby college], and [nearby college], and we talk from time to time about what we're doing, what's working, what's not working as far as our students go. So, in that sense, there is real collaboration in terms of creating an atmosphere of success for students.

Table 9
(continued)

Participant	Topic	Statement
Participant G	Presenting initiative to faculty senate	Well, and again, I think the fact that many of, many of the people in that room, probably all the people in that room, want our students to be successful and are willing to try things to make that happen.

Data related to support for student success also illustrated a sense of right and wrong, typically manifested in statements with phrases such as "right thing to do" or "best for students." Of particular note were statements that demonstrated a shift in values from viewing student failure as a sign of academic rigor and quality to viewing student failure as inconsistent with college values. Statements by Participant J, Participant G, and Participant F reflected this shift in values and are included in Table 10.

Table 10

Statements of Student Success as Right

Participant	Topic	Statement
Participant J	Qualities sought in new hires	I've always looked for somebody that's engaging. You know can you engage the students? Do you have the students' success at the heart of what you do? Uh, I think we've all had faculty members you know at some time in our career that you know, they give you the information if you don't succeed, that's your fault. But they're not willing to help you. And unfortunately I've encountered those. I'm sure you have as well. So the whole notion of a student has a right to fail, I don't buy into that. Yeah the student has a right to fail if that student, the student doesn't do anything, and you've worked with that student, you've tried to help that student.
Participant G	Implementing early alert system	You know, students don't enroll in college to fail. You know, you don't invest in something to, you don't invest to lose the investment. I, I just, I personally think it's the right thing to do. It's the mindset that I've had all along in my career.

Table 10

(continued)

Participant	Topic	Statement
Participant I	Personal experience going to college	I think we were the exception at the time when I went to school, maybe when you went to school. You were the exception that you went to a major university and got through. That only happens for 25% of the people, at most. Now did that make it right? You know, that we left the other 75% and didn't, didn't do it? I don't, you know, you know, we're sitting now and saying it should be 55% or whatever. That's what I meant from saying it's, I think it's more the right way to do it. We got through because, you know, you like to think we got through because we were special or we did that other, and now I think we're helping more than, than in the past, definitely.
Participant H	Institutional values	Hmm, well, I mean for me, at least, and, and this is probably true for a lot of people, I think, but I think it's what we should do, you know. It's the right thing to do for the student is to encourage them to complete that goal, to be, to reach that milestone in their life, you know, create a better life or whatever.
Participant F	Implementing assessment	You know … the thing comes, and, you know, the ship has sailed when you can do this, but you know, you still have a few that says, "I teach it, and it's the student's job to learn it." Those days are over. It is "how do we build in the kind of support so these students can learn it?" and you give them every opportunity to learn.

Participants provided 77 statements related to helping students succeed, the third most frequent statement type coded by the researcher. IPEDS financial data also supported that assisting students academically and socially was an institutional priority. According to IPEDS through 5 fiscal years ending in fiscal year 2014 college expenses increased in every category except public service: (1) academic support up 19%, (2) institutional support up 31%, (3) instruction up 26%, (4) student services up 27%, and (5) public service down 24% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Participant F noted that the college president's prioritization of resources has reinforced the emphasis on student success. Participant F stated, "And, so he's put

his money behind what he's talking about. You know, I mean, he really has tried to drive the college. Financially, he's supporting initiatives that make students, that give students opportunity."

Participant stories provided rich data supporting the theme of Students Come First. Participant D told of story of veteran student who was in a car accident. Left without a functioning vehicle, the student could no longer attend class at the college's main campus. Faculty and administrators moved the student's entire class schedule to a campus close to the student and available by public transportation. Participant D stated:

> Now, was that a lot of work? Well, hmm, it was, it was enough, but that student is in, still in school. And when that student graduates, will that have been worth it? It'll be worth it to that student. And that's, that's, kind of our philosophy. Do what we need to do to try and help that student succeed.

The story about the veteran was told in a meeting of the college's retention and completion committee. One committee member stated that the only reason the college was able to assist the student was because a team was ready to help. In the same meeting the researcher also observed a moment that indicated that helping students tends to take precedent over considerations such as efficiency or workload.

Committee members discussed a plan to provide mentors for students. The atmosphere in the meeting was lively. The meeting was toward the end of the day, but committee members were energetic. As they excitedly discussed the mentoring plan, committee members continually had to stop the discussion to try to calculate how many faculty and staff would be needed to implement the program. No one had brought those numbers to the meeting. Rather than start the discussion with data on whether the idea was feasible, committee members launched into

discussion of how to implement the initiative. Feasibility appeared to be a secondary concern. As the meeting ended those who had raised the question of whether staffing levels could support the initiative were almost apologetic for raising the feasibility issue. In regards to helping students no one wanted to be perceived as a naysayer.

Participant A told the story of a group of welding students who were required to take developmental math and English. College faculty and staff worked with the students to allow them to start their welding classes. Participant A stated:

Now, if we would have said to those students, '"You have to take a full semester of embedded remediation before you can start your welding course."' What would happen? The students would quit. So at that point we looked at the group of students. We had money to tutor them. A lot of them we couldn't get them college ready but we let them start their welding courses. And the faculty member worked with them. And even though they had a reading deficiency, we worked with them to get them through.

Participant D shared a story of a student who lived in his car. The student was allowed to bathe and wash his clothes on campus. Participant D stated, "Could we have said, 'Well, this student's living in his car and you can't allow that?' Yeah. We could have said that. But he, he made it throughout the year. And he wouldn't of, otherwise." Participant J summarized the degree to which helping student succeed is part of the college's value system. Participant J said:

It's my goal that, and I, and I think we do this. I do think we do this. That every faculty member, every staff member, comes here, with that one mindset that how do we help the students? How do we help the students succeed? Whether, whether it's me as the [job title] or, or whether it's the person that, that's working out in our gardens out there. You know because again, every student is going to have somebody they can relate to on the

80

campus. And it may not be an academic. It may be that person that serves them in the

cafeteria that they talk every day. And I just love going down to the cafeteria, listening to

you know, the people that work down there. And, and they engage the students.

<u>Personal Values, Feeling for the College</u>

The theme of Students Come First was also supported by participants' personal views.

These views are differentiated from statements related to institutional values. Data indicated that

participants bring their personal experiences, values, and affection for the college into their work

of implementing initiatives related to advanced PF. Table 11 summarized personal sentiments

expressed by participants.

Table 11

Personal Statements Related to Values

Participant	Statement
Participant D	My roots are deep. This place is the place that allowed me to get out of a really abusive marriage, and I want to help other students.
Participant F	So I guess what drives us is that humanitarian idea that what we're doing here is important for society. So I don't know what the right word for that is.
Participant H	I think that you, you don't go into community college work if you want to climb the ladder in higher education or make a name for yourself, or write a book or whatever. I think it's more altruistic than that because of the nature of the student you serve.
Participant B	I've seen students be successful. I've seen them get jobs. I've seen them move up and, and move their families up with them. Who wouldn't want that? I, I don't know, it's part of who I am.
Participant G	I think it's unethical to enroll students in college without the intention of graduating them, of helping them get to the end. It's unethical to take their money and spend their time to set them up to fail. And that is, has nothing to do with [college name]. I brought that with me.

Leadership Shares Student Success Values

Administrators responsible for implementing student success initiatives also shared that leadership played an important role in promoting a students-first value system. Six participants, without being specifically asked about the role of leadership, expressed appreciation for the college president's focus on student success. Participant F shared a story about the president's commitment to spend 1 day a week at a satellite campus. Even during a busy week when the president returned from a conference and then immediately had to manage a college closure due to weather, he kept his commitment to spend time at a site campus. Participant F stated, "You know, I mean, so he's committed to those campuses, to the student experience while he's on those campuses. He's located somewhere there where students and faculty and staff can come talk to him about whatever is going on."

The minutes of a 2014 strategic planning committee meeting reflected leadership focus on students. The statement related to the committee's definition of its purpose. "We must ask ourselves each day, 'What can I do today to help a student?' And, 'What can I do to advance the strategic goal?'" Table 12 presents additional participant data regarding college leadership.

Table 12

Participant Statements on College Leadership

Participant	Statement
Participant F	He's young as a president. He truly, honestly does care about the experience for the students. You know, a lot of people voice that. Okay. And we'll say, '"We're here for the students, you know."' But now, he really believes it, and so I think he drives a lot of that, that desire.
Participant D	One of my students, last year, came in and said, '"Do you know [college president] remembered my name?"' And I said, '"Why does that surprise you?"' And he said, '"Well, I only met him one time."' And I said, '"He cares about students."'

Table 12
(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant G	But he's [college president], he's always talking about student success. And, so I think that helps kind of like, "'yes, this is really important.'"
Participant B	I think of our president, [proper name], and how he, he believes in the individual student, how much he cares for a culture of taking care of individuals, whether it's students or our human, staff employees, that he truly, truly cares about us.
Participant C	He [college president] always brings it back to the importance to students, you know, of what we do, what we do in the classroom and how important that is. So, you might be talking about, you know, the Drive to 55 or this, that or the other. He's always going to bring it back to that. And I appreciate that he, that he does that … that he doesn't forget what's important.

Theme 1 Summary

The theme Students Come First addressed RQ1: What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF? Participant data indicated that the administrators perceived values of the importance of completion and emphasis on student success. Data also indicated that participants bring personal values and experiences into their work of implementing student success initiatives in an advanced PF environment. Participants expressed that the college's value system is reinforced by the college's president.

Theme 2: Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflict

The theme relates to the research question of administrator perceptions of beliefs that influence student success initiatives. Initial coding of interview data identified statements that reflected expressions of beliefs. The statements were grouped into four categories: (1) students require substantial support, (2) multiple pressures drive initiatives, (3) completion has financial benefits, and (4) concerns for lower standards, loss of college experience.

<u>Pathways and Tracks as Metaphor</u>

The theme Pathway Mentality was derived from data that described the college experience as a "pathway" or "track." The metaphors were found in interview data, observation data, and document data. In analyzing categories for a common theme, the pathway metaphor— both its benefits and conflicts—was identified by the researcher as a unifying theme for each category. Table 13 shows uses of the "pathway" or "track" as a metaphor.

Table 13

Use of Pathway or Track Metaphor

Source	Statement
Participant A	Trying to make sure they're graduating, they're on track, their financial aid. You know, they're going to class. I just think that commitment was with the school.
Participant D	I mean, they do that in some other countries. They do it in Japan. They do it in Germany. They do it in, you know, where you're on a track. So maybe it's our American mindset where you're allowed to discover yourself. I don't know. Ah, what will it do to that? I mean, I, I think it will change it some. I don't think we have as many people coming now, just to take some classes.
Participant H	You know, try to get them in here and get them registered for the next semester, talk about what they want to do, look at their academic plan and make sure they're on the right track.
Participant J	Making sure that the student stays on the pathway. Not only do we put them on the pathway, but they stay on the pathway.
Participant I	I think if we're to advising them now, getting them into the right career path, then advising them, getting them in the right courses, the right order of the courses and everything to, to follow that career path, I think it makes it a lot easier for them.
Participant H	So, what you're doing on the outside of the classroom, is you're creating support to keep them on the path and get them to the end. Now, if I can to remember to say all of that in my retention meeting today.
Participant C	I think the idea is that the easier we make it for students to get a clear pathway to graduation the better off they'll be. Or the, or the more likely they are to make it through. I can appreciate that argument. But by the same token, like I say, I just, I just think they're, for one thing, community college students have such varied work schedules.

Table 13

(continued)

Source	Statement
Participant A	Well with the accelerated programs, those are different. You know what I'm saying? Because we're giving that adult student an accelerated pathway.
Preinterview form	Offering these clear pathways is aimed at helping students stay on track. Cohorts build a sense of camaraderie and community.
Curriculum committee minutes (April 2015)	The minutes documented reservations of approving an elective because "the push is for student completion of a degree" One committee member said there was a TBR initiative "calling on programs to cut back on the courses being offered." Committee members expressed concern that the effort into designing the course "would be for naught if TBR mandates an overhaul of the program's offerings and the course would be cut because it does not transfer to other TBR institutions."
Strategic planning committee minutes (March 2015)	The minutes included a report on a recent TBR Completion Academy attended by college faculty and administrators. The report used the pathway metaphor to describe three focus areas: (1) "Developing/clarifying curricular paths for each program," (2) "Helping students identify and get onto a path," and (3) "Keeping students on the chosen path."
Observation of retention and completion committee	A committee member explained the purpose of student mentoring program included putting students on a structured pathway and keeping them on the pathway.

The pathway metaphor relates to the theme categories as follows. Data suggested a belief that college is a pathway or track to be followed. To follow the pathway students must receive substantial support. External concerns such as mandates, state initiatives, and state funding or enrollment funding (resource dependence) pressure the college to move students along the pathway, and doing so has financial benefits. Figure 1 illustrates the perception of college as a pathway.
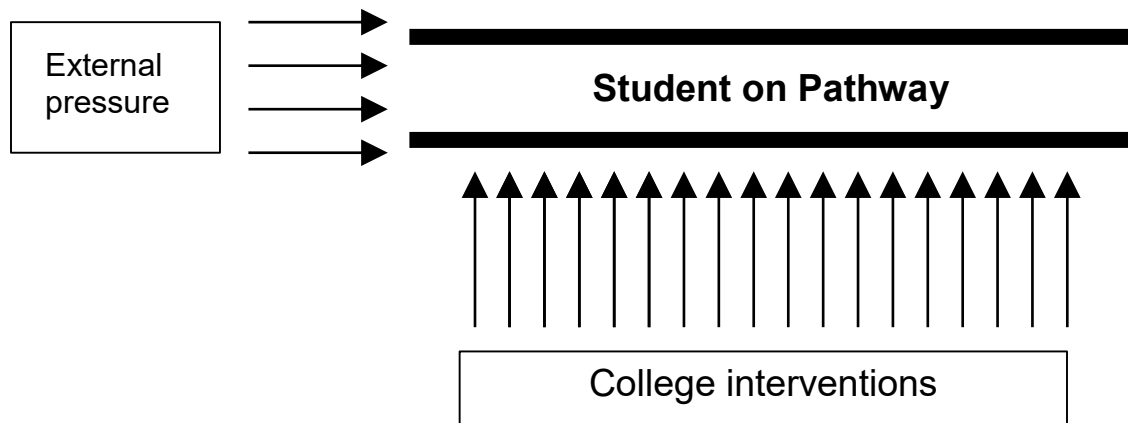
Figure 1. College as a Pathway. External pressures tend to demand students follow a track. To ensure completion the college must intervene at multiple points along the pathway.

Data indicated the pathway metaphor was a potential dividing line in beliefs related to college purpose, support for students, and student success. Figure 2 summarizes, in general, the differing viewpoints on college purpose, student support, and student success as indicated in the data. Participants did not necessarily express one belief at the exclusion of others.
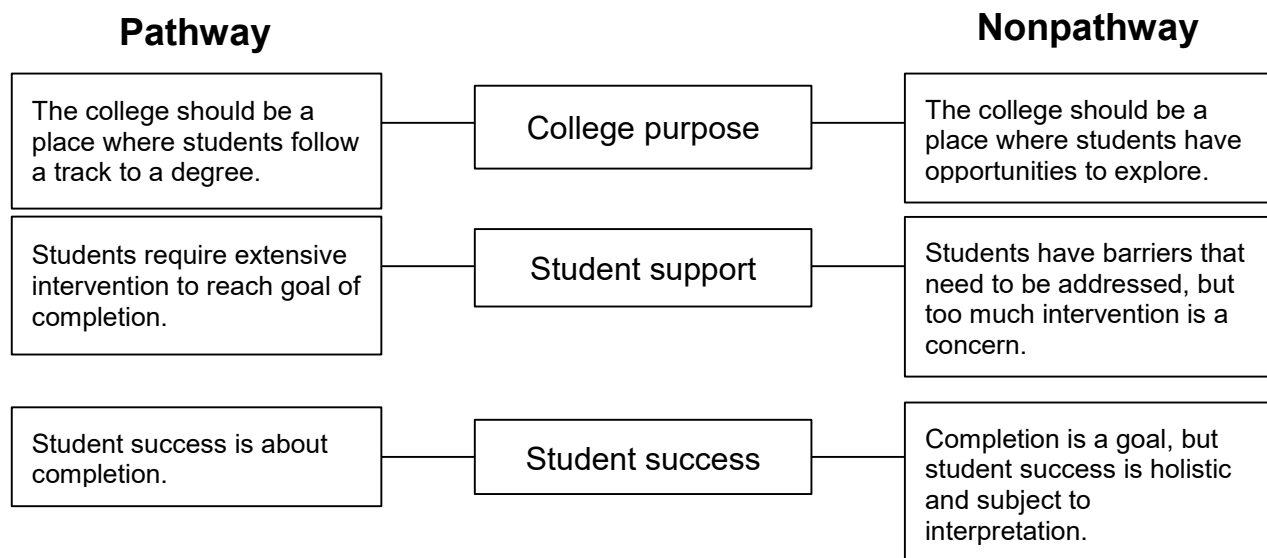
Figure 2. Pathway Versus Nonpathway Viewpoints. Participants did not necessarily express one viewpoint at the exclusion of others.

Data in a 2013 strategic planning document represented different beliefs related to student support. The document included practices the college needed to start, stop, or continue.

The start category included "success advising: streamline advising." The continue category included "emphasis on advising." Yet, the stop category included "enabling students." Figure 3 depicts examples of the pathway metaphor as a dividing line between beliefs expressed in the data.

Pathway | **Nonpathway**

College purpose

Our job is to, with Complete College, is to help students take, spend the least amount of time and the least amount of money taking the least amount of credits that it's going, they're going to need to complete a credential.
-**Participant B**

Because I was here 3 1/2 years, and the first year-and-a-half, I was taking things that I wanted to take, and just to, kinda, see what I wanted to do. So I think there's part of that, that stops some of that. Do we wanna get them through in a hurry? I almost feel like we've got the plunger, like the plumber's friend, you know. And it's like, "Okay. You gotta get this information. You gotta get outta here in a hurry." -**Participant D**

Student support

We're putting them now, we're, like it or not, you know, whether you agree with that or not, we're putting them now where we're holding their hands and getting them through school."
-**Participant I**

I do wonder how, if we go too far in hand-holding sometimes, you know being intrusive, calling students and saying why didn't you come to class. Well, is it, you know, there's a part of me that says "isn't that the student's responsibility?" You know why do we have to call them. Like shouldn't they know they should be in class?" But there are, there are also a lot of first generation students who maybe don't understand how to go to college. So I, I struggle personally with how much we should do that and help, you know.
-**Participant C**

Student learning

You have to look at what you do in order to encourage that completion, otherwise, you're not going to change the culture, or you're not going to change what happens with the student. You know, they're going to continue to do the same thing. They'll come for a semester and then go somewhere else. -**Participant H**

Well, for me, I'm, I'm driven by the graduation, but I've got enough sense to know that it's, not every student's coming here with the intent to graduate. So, for some students, success this semester may be just finishing math, you know. But I guess, if I was to give it a holistic thing, that student success would be that students come here, and they leave better educated than when they arrived.-**Participant F**

Figure 3. Pathway Mentality Divide. Interview data related to three major areas is shown in context of the pathway perspective as a dividing line.

<u>Students Require Substantial Support</u>

Data suggested that beliefs related to student needs for support were perceived as influencing initiatives. Participants, overall, described assumptions and judgments that students face a myriad of barriers, and college faculty and staff must intervene. The initial code "shepherding students" was used 94 times by the researcher, the second-most used code. Table 14 provides a sample of interview data related to student support requirements.

Table 14

Belief Statements that Student Require Substantial Support

Participant	Statement
Participant A	Those students that I have signed up for that cohort, I stay with them from the first time that they come in, for the admissions process to graduation. I am like their financial aid person, their admissions person, their, I wanna say their mother. Sometimes I am their mother.
Participant I	You can't throw the student the catalog anymore and say, "Pick you a career, and look it up in there, and take the courses, and you'll be an engineer." They just, they're overwhelmed. They just turn around and walk out the door.
	We're putting them now, we're, like it or not, you know, whether you agree with that or not, we're putting them now where we're holding their hands and getting them through school.
Participant C	But there's a lot of, there's a movement in higher ed to see every single way we can support students.
Participant F	We began to see this push for intrusive advising. Mm-kay? So that's at the national conferences. It's what's being talked about in the literature. If you're going to increase graduation and retention rates, then we have to know where we're losing them and in a time that would allow us to intervene.
Participant H	And then, what are the support structures that we put in place to make that [reaching goal] happen with those students? And that's where the proactive advising comes in and sort of that mentoring piece.
Participant E	And I tell my students this, I mean [college name] really bends over backwards to give you every opportunity to be successful. You know we have free tutoring, we have supplemental instruction, we have the student success coordinators, you know there's, faculty have, you know, down to a person almost, go beyond their office hours, you know.

Table 14
(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant B	Students success at [college name] is all about helping one student at a time grow from exactly where they're at when they get here to wherever they hope to be when they want to achieve their goals and it takes a lot of people, not computer programs, not a blanket approach so that we standardize our approach to the students, but working one-on-one with the students as much as possible.

During the interview one participant referred to folders on her desk and stated that she could quickly find an individual student's status or data on reasons a student withdrew from the institution. College task force members reacted enthusiastically during discussion of an initiative to connect students to resources beyond financial aid. During another meeting a committee member noted that by the time a student asks for advising, it is too late to assist the student.

Participants also recognized the barriers community college students face. Statements about student barriers, however, tended to be in context of overcoming barriers. Participant C noted an initiative designed to teach students how to overcome barriers. Participant D said the college plans to make a student success course mandatory. In the interview data only two statements expressed perceptions that student barriers were outside the college's control. Table 15 presents statements on participant recognition of student barriers.

Table 15

Participant Recognition of Student Barriers

Participant	Statement
Participant C	That's also another thing I want the teachers to, to realize. All the outside struggles students have. You know, it may be sick parents, it may be a job they work 40 or 50 hours a week. It may be, they may be a single parent, or they may just be a parent period. You know so they are dealing with all kinds of outside issues.

Table 15
(continued

Participant	Statement
Participant C	I think there are more students who come without knowing, having any background or knowledge about college and what it takes. I actually was at a, an academic audit, at [nearby college], a couple of years ago, and we interviewed some students. And one of the things they talked about was not knowing, you know, not knowing how to navigate things, not knowing where to go for help, not knowing, not understanding what all it took. And one of the students said, and I, this really stuck with me, he said we need a course in how to college, and I just thought, "Yeah, that's exactly what you need."
Participant B	And even our traditional-aged students, they're all working now. I guess that's one part of the culture that's different from when I was a student here. We have students who are working full-time and going to school full-time. I did not do that.
Participant J	And we know there's some socio-economic conditions that impact that area, that is part of it, that includes, you know the life experiences outside the classroom. But what can we do in the classroom to be able to make it more effective for them, to be able to pass?
Participant F	But some of these groups have so many risk-factors that we cannot address, you know. They're personal, lack of family support, whatever. . . . But now, as far as, you know, in general, a large number of our students coming here and being successful, that ought to be the business we're in.

Multiple Pressures Drive Initiatives

Data suggested that beliefs related to multiple pressures driving initiatives were perceived

as influencing student success efforts. In general participants referred to pressures from external

forces (state expectations, TBR, and accreditation), internal forces (college leadership), and

resources (PF, and tuition). A note in June 2012 faculty senate minutes summarized pressures

faced by the college. The minutes recounted a presentation by a college VP that addressed

external, internal, and financial pressures. The minutes stated:

He [the VP] is concerned about, and wants to strengthen, efforts to improve student

success. He emphasized that we need to embrace a culture of evidence because

assessment is not going away, that we need to justify our existence to many governmental bodies as budget cuts will probably continue.

Interview data showed that TBR was the most frequently referenced source of external pressure. Participant data mentioned TBR mandates 34 times, compared to state pressure (17 mentions), direct references to the CCTA (7 mentions), and accreditation (7 mentions). Few participant remarks indicated competition with other colleges as a pressure, except in terms of desire to rank highly compared to others. The general sentiment among participants was one of collaboration. As participant I stated, "We're all in the thing." An exchange between the researcher and Participant G illustrated the belief that external pressure influences initiatives. The exchange also illustrated the overall theme of Pathway Mentality with the external pressures pushing colleges to get students on track to credentials. Table 16 presents the exchange.

Table 16

Summary of Exchange with Participant G Related to External Pressures

Speaker	Statement
Researcher	You know, what is, in your own words, what is Drive to 55? What does that mean to the work that you're doing?
Participant G	That of course is the governor's initiative to get 55% of Tennesseans with some kind of postsecondary credential by 2020. 2025 I think. 2020 is coming up very quickly, isn't it? (laughs). So that's what it is. So it, it's this desire, this drive, this huge statewide push to get people in and get them to complete a degree. That's what Drive to 55 is.
Researcher	So how does it trickle down to you in front of faculty senate talking about early alert? How does it trickle down to putting up your, maybe your graduation images on the vinyl? How does it influence? How does it do that?
Participant G	Because it drives every conversation we have. I mean every conversation we have somehow goes back to Drive, all the things coming from TBR go back to Drive to 55. All the things, the initiatives we talk about on campus come back to Drive to 55. I mean it, it's just all comes down to that because it's, the focus is so completely on getting people to complete credentials.

April 2014 faculty senate minutes included a description of a visit by a TBR vice president. The vice president was asked how corequisite remediation was implemented "without faculty input." The TBR vice president stated that corequisite remediation was not a mandate but more a request to have faculty examine the issue, discuss changes, and report their findings. The minutes stated that college administrators had perceived corequisite remediation as a TBR mandate and "presented it to their faculty as such." Although views of TBR mandates were frequent, two also expressed appreciation for TBR leadership in areas such as data-sharing and collaboration. Table 17 presents additional interview data related to external pressures as influencing initiatives.

Table 17

Statements on External Pressures as Influence

External pressure	Participant	Statement
TBR mandate	Participant J:	Corequisite remediation was a very different creature . . . that one though again since it was something that TBR had said, I said you know, "'I'm the messenger on this.'" And then then, yeah a couple of times I was called before faculty senate and they tried to pin me down on my position and I said, "'My position's irrelevant. You know, I can tell you I love it. I can tell you I hate it. Bottom line it's something we are mandated to do. And we're going to do it to the best of our abilities.'"
CCTA	Participant B	Well, we, our job is to, with Complete College, is to help students take, spend the least amount of time and the least amount of money taking the least amount of credits that it's going, they're going to need to complete a credential.
Accreditation	Participant F	So if I were gonna choose between whether funding formula was driving us or accreditation, accreditation's driving us more even than the funding formula.

Data indicated beliefs that college leadership at times does, and should, influence initiatives. During a committee meeting a committee member said that if needed a student

success initiative could be driven with policy. Another participant noted that college leadership

supported an initiative, which meant when it came to getting buy-in from others, "I hate to say it.

They really didn't have a choice."

<u>Completion Has Financial Benefits</u>

Participants cited resource pressures (PF, tuition) as influencing initiatives. Data

indicated a belief that completion efforts have a return on investment. Related to the overall

theme of Pathway Mentality, participants acknowledged resource benefits of a completion focus

that puts student on track to degree attainment. Minutes from a 2014 strategic planning

committee meeting stated, "The outcomes of our work are important because competition for

funds is high. Fiscal responsibility and use of best practices are crucial as we work to stay in line

with institutional goals."

Data indicated acknowledgement of PF funding as a means of resource acquisition and

that PF considerations were connected to initiative implementation. October 2010 curriculum

committee minutes suggested that one of the first initiatives the college undertook in response to

advanced PF was to embed career certificates in two-year degree programs. The college

president presented the proposal to the committee. The minutes stated:

> Our technology program coordinators want graduates—they need embedded certificates
>
> to count toward completion. We are offering the same quality program; nothing has
>
> changed. But now we want to count the students who complete certain competencies—
>
> and we need to count them, based on the new funding formula. However, we must have
>
> certificates that are of value to students and business/industry; therefore, we will focus on
>
> certificates within the AAS programs, programs we know they [*sic*] are of value to
>
> students and business/industry. A technical certificate that will be earned as a defined

step towards earning an associate degree and may serve as an incentive for completion of that degree.

Interview data also indicated a belief that completion has financial benefits that are acquired through PF and influence initiatives. All 10 participants, from specialist level to vice president, expressed awareness of PF details. Table 18 presents participant statements related to PF as source of funding.

Table 18

Statements on PF as Source of Funding

Participant	Statement
Participant I	So the initial part of this, so the initial tie-in with any of that, whether it's, whether it's the, the current initiatives or whatever is back to the funding and the state appropriation.
Participant G	So the connection is that we're hoping that initiatives like early alert will help increase our retention, will help students get to 12 credit. Well, I think they've changed it to 15 to 30 credit hours rather. It used to be 12 and 24 and 36. Help students continue on and meet benchmarks, help them continue on and gain associate's degrees, which will then increase our funding from the state.
Participant A	For, for our engineering technology program, industrial maintenance, they finish their industrial maintenance certificate before they finish their degree. So that's gonna be another, another performance, with the performance funding. Then you add in PLA which starting in fall of 2017. We're gonna be performance funding for PLA.

Data from one participant questioned dependence on PF compared to dependence on tuition. Participant F recalled that when the funding formula was first implemented, "They framed it in a way, they said, 'We're gonna go away from enrollment focus.'" Participant F noted that the college has a dual focus: keep enrollment up to continue to increase graduation and retention numbers. Participant F said, "So, you can't just say, you know, 'We're not worried

about enrollment anymore.' Yes, we are. That's what keeps doors open." Participant F also stated:

> I mean, if you think about funding formula, okay, if you think about the funding of a
> school, and I can't do all the math on this, but let's say we've got a 67 million dollar
> budget. Okay. Most of that's still tuition. You know, even on funding formula, I can look
> it up here, but we're gonna get what, 12, 13 million from the state, total? So tuition's still
> our driver. So, I mean, you know, how, how far off could we get on funding formula? I
> mean, honestly, do you think that if [college name] does some outstanding job or [nearby
> college] does some outstanding job, and you up your graduation rate by 37%, mm-kay,
> do you think they're gonna take money away from [other college] or [other college] and
> give it to [nearby college]? Now they do in small increments, you know, I mean, like, we
> go up and down, we'll fluctuate a million here or a million there, but you know, and, and
> to date, they've not fully funded the formula. I mean, this year, it's still at sixty-
> something percent funding. So, in a way, our state funding's flat.

The interview responses by Participant F illustrated that belief in the financial benefits of completion initiatives was not limited to PF. During a committee meeting a committee member shared that college VPs had discussed enrollment targets for individual programs, an indication that enrollment remained a high priority. Participant I observed that the community college now had more in common with private schools than in the past. According to Participant I college leaders have studied retention practices at private schools. Participant I stated, "And we're now into the things that a lot of the private schools have been into for years, that are, that are, you know, that we're more dependent on people passing, people staying around." Participant F

summarized the multipronged approach to resource acquisition, whether through PF or tuition. Participant F stated:

> It's dual. I mean, it's not that we wouldn't be concerned about students graduating if we didn't have funding formula. I mean, of course, you know, you want them to get here and be successful and graduate. That's in our best interest as humanitarians but also financially. If you're ever gonna stabilize enrollment, you're gonna have to stabilize retention. You can't just keep, like we did in the old model, replacing the ones you lose with new ones. You cannot have any sustained growth that way, and, so, I do think, you know, that those were pretty hand-in-hand right there. But when, at the end, we're in business, and if you're in business, you've got to keep customers, and the customers have to be successful so. Although, please don't say that in front of faculty, because they don't like that customer model but. You know, it is, but it's our truth. I mean, we've got to have money to operate, and you do that by keeping your students and graduating 'em and getting your full funding formula, getting your quality assurance points and getting that funding, and then their continued tuition. So, I mean, it's a, you know, it does come down that far, to money.

Concerns for Lower Standards, Loss of College Experience

Referring again to the overall theme related to beliefs, Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflicts, participant perceived the following beliefs as influential in initiative implementation: (1) students require substantial support, (2) multiple pressure drive initiatives, and (3) completion has financial benefits. The belief related to pressures driving initiatives indicated that the pathway metaphor derived from external pressures such as Drive to 55 and an acceptance of that construct. Student success initiatives have benefits for both students and the institution.

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Data related to beliefs that indicate concern, however, reflected tensions related to the pathway metaphor. Overall, participants implementing student success initiatives expressed concerns related to three primary areas: (1) academic concerns, (2) student concerns, and (3) college experience concerns. Nine of 10 participants made statements related to concerns in one or more of the three areas. The initial code "academic concerns" was used 76 times by the researcher, the fourth-most used code. Expressions of academic concerns included concerns about effectiveness of the Tennessee Transfer Pathways (TTPs), an initiative to create uniform transfer agreements across TBR, and concerns about lowering standards. Table 19 presents illustrative statements related to academic concerns.

Table 19

Participant Statements on Academic Concerns

Participant	Statement
Participant B	I've had to talk to students and parents where the student and the parents thought they were following a TTP. But the student had a course that wasn't on the TTP. They were transferring and they really wanted to have the TTP completed. They didn't want a general A.A. or an A.S. and so I tried to be a buffer and absorb some of that anger because there's nothing we can do about it
Participant F	And we've just got a lot of people interested, all of a sudden. Uh, the governor. I mean, really? I mean, Drive To 55 is a beautiful, lofty goal. Nobody knows how to get there without lowering standards, and we just can't do that. I mean, we just can't do that. All we would have is a bunch of people with degrees and no education.
Participant C	Now it's important that the faculty doing it [corequisite remediation], don't just let students slide through. That's really important. I mean I think there's probably a temptation to do that. And we have to be very vigilant about it.
Participant I	When they, when it [new funding formula] first came out and they said, you know, '"We're going to look at your graduation."' Before there was a whole lot of detail, and all that. '"You're going to get funded on how you graduate them."' You had a, you had an uproar in the faculty. They said, '"We're getting just like K-12, our, our only purpose of being here is to get them out the door."' And I think it's taken several years to see, '"No, we're not changing the framework. You still got to, you still got to, you still got to obtain knowledge. You still got to learn something."' You know, we're not changing the, the course outline for chemistry. You still got to pass it. We're just going to help you, you know, we may help you pass it, but you still got to have this knowledge when you graduate from [nearby college] or from [college name].

Table 19
(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant H	We don't sacrifice in terms of . . . you know, we're not going to water down our curriculum just so we can have more, um, graduates or anything like that.

September 2010 curriculum committee minutes included evidence of academic concern related to the embedded certificate initiative. Committee member concerns included that certificate students were not required to take placement tests and could enter courses they were not prepared for academically. A year later, the curriculum committee postponed a vote on a new certificate pending revision of educational objectives and outcomes, an indicator that although embedded certificates were tied to PF, they were subjected to quality standards. The committee later approved the revised proposal.

A February 2013 strategic planning document also cited academic concerns. The document included a summary of sentiments expressed during listening sessions with faculty, staff, and students. The section "Where we could go" included student success initiatives. The section "What might prevent us from getting there …" included: (1) "CCTA and other initiatives," (2) "pressure to increase completions," (3) danger of lowering of standards," and (4) "formula funding."

Student concerns included both concerns about the mindset of students and expressions that student success is a holistic endeavor that transcends merely completion. Participant C described, in terms of responsibility for success, "tilting" from student responsibility to faculty responsibility. Participant C expressed concern about that trend. Participant C, while acknowledging the college has an obligation to avoid course conflicts that impede student progress, also questioned the practice of prescribing schedules for students. Participant C stated, "I think that's way too high school. I think in college they need to make decisions and that's part

of becoming a college student." On the other hand, Participant A, in discussing block schedules at satellite campuses that allowed for full degree completion, said in regards to faculty concerns about loss of choice, "But it's, in some ways it's giving them a lot more choices than they ever had because they were getting in their car and having to drive out here [main campus] to finish a degree."

Participant D described a sense of entitlement among students. Participant F noted that students tend to come from a high school environment where they receive second chances. The college environment is different. Participant F stated:

> And so now, what we hear is, well, these students are coming in here, you know, we've not seen a huge jump in ACTs, but they're coming in with an attitude of they don't have to do it on that professor's timetable because there's some kind of, a secondary, there's a second chance, and I mean, these students are hitting the wall. Some of them have never been opposed. And now, their mommas and daddies come up here, you know, with them. I mean, really? I mean I would have died if my parents had shown up at college or high school, even.

Participants also expressed views that student success is holistic, a perspective in contrast to the concept of college as a rigid pathway. The initial code "holistic view of student success" was used 66 times by the researcher, the fifth-most used code. Table 20 presents participant statements related to holistic view of student success.

Table 20

Participant Statements on Holistic View of Student Success

Source	Statement
Preinterview form	On using data to improve student success: "Again, we are devoted to our primary focus: Doing whatever we can to help students improve as thinkers, readers, and writers. To some extent data can help with that, but we are also keenly aware that it is only one aspect of offering students the best education we can."
Participant D	It's not necessarily what you put down on a piece of paper, on a test. Have you learned how to think? Have you learned how to synthesize information? Have you learned how to even get along better in the world. That's the reason I, I hate to see that the students can't just take some classes now. Maybe taking that music class would have lit a fire that you won't find any other way.
Participant A	For me student success at [college name] would be that that student is able to get to whatever their goal is, why are they here and they're able to get to it.
Participant I	But you have to remember we're all in the, in the thing to try and, you know, we're, we're in the thing to teach students, to turn out productive members of society.

Statements also expressed a holistic view of the college experience and concern that the pathway model may lead to a diminished college experience. The code "college experience concerns" was used 39 times. Table 21 presents participant concerns related to loss of the college experience.

Table 21

Participant Concerns on Loss of College Experience

Participant	Statement
Participant D	You want students to succeed. And one of the things I, my fear is we're losing, a community college, you may just want to come take a class or two. But according, when the state looks at those numbers, "'Well, this person dropped out.'" And they (laughing), they were only going to come and take a music class. They haven't failed.

Table 21

(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant C	You know, one of the things we didn't talk about is things like prior learning assessment, dual enrollment, all those things that kind of speed up the process. I'm not really a big fan of all that. Because I think what happens in the classroom is important. And I've, I've often told students, '"Why are you trying to do credit by exam. Why don't you just take the class? You might learn something.'" You know. It's not just about having the skills. It's, it's about enhancing the skills you have, learning things you might not even expect you would have ever learned. I mean, for me, that's what was the great thing about college. I learned all kinds of stuff I never even dreamed I would learn.
Participant G	And, you know, there's a big push as, as you mentioned too, of trying to get people to take 15 credit hours. And, and that's great for some students. But for some students, it really, and, and for some students, particularly community college students, might not be the right thing for them. No matter how many times you say, '"You really need to take 15 hours.'"

Participant F told a story about a visitor from China who was in the U.S. to study community colleges. According to Participant F the visiting scholar contrasted Tennessee's push to reduce flexibility with China's push to expand flexibility. Participant F stated:

He said, '"In China, we're trying to get away from the outcomes, where, you know, and do, where everything's prescriptive in the schools. You teach this, you've got this book. Everybody's learning the same curriculum at the same time in the same way, and you all are trying to move toward it.'" He said, '"We've always held America up as a bastion of education because of the flexibility in it.'" Sure, you're gonna get a bad instructor once in a while. It doesn't derail an entire career. Okay. So, uh, but he's like, '"We're trying to get looser, and you all are trying to get tighter.'" And I think funding formula has done that. It has driven us to the point, along with student learning outcomes and accreditation, where we're not leaving a whole lot of flexibility for instructors on how they teach or

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what they teach. And I think that's bad. I mean, I think it's bad. I think it's bad for the profession and for the democracy.

<u>Theme 2 Summary</u>

The theme Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflicts was derived from four categories: (1) students require substantial support, (2) multiple pressures drive initiatives, (3) completion has financial benefits, and (4) concerns for lower standards, loss of college experience. The theme addressed RQ 2: What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF? Data suggested that administrators perceived that initiatives were influenced by beliefs that students require substantial support, external and internal pressures drive completion, and that completion has financial benefits. The pathway metaphor for college—used by multiple participants, found in documents, and observed by the researcher—appeared to be a dividing line between benefits and concerns related to the push for student completion.

<div align="center"><u>Theme 3: The College Way: Be First, Be the Best</u></div>

The College Way theme relates to the research question of administrator perceptions of customs that influence student success initiatives. Initial coding of interview data identified statements that reflected expressions of rituals, ceremonies, and symbols. The statements were grouped into four categories: (1) sense of collaboration, community, (2) pride, (3) success celebrations, and (4) hiring process. Table 22 shows each category related to the theme and an illustrative statement that reflected the category.

Table 22

Theme 3 Categories and Statements

Category	Participant	Statement
Sense of collaboration, community	Participant G	So I think, honestly, and that might not be the answer you're looking for, but I think that helped. I think the fact that I had a good rapport with them [faculty senate members], and they trusted me, I think helped.
Pride	Participant G	You know, there's, we have this saying that is '"We are [college name],"' and which sounds really, you know, cocky, and it's intended to sound cocky.
Success celebrations	Participant C	I do think that slogan that we have used, success, one story at a time, does, does speak to me a little bit. Because it is about that individual student and what that student has learned and how that student has grown, and how that student has progressed.
Hiring process	Participant J	You know we value completion, we value the outcomes. It's making sure they [new faculty] understand that and the ways that we can get from point A to point Z.

Sense of Collaboration, Community

In implementing initiatives related to advanced PF, data indicated customs related to collaboration and community influenced initiatives. Data indicated faculty involvement was perceived as important in the initiative process. Participant A noted that with implementing cohorts "what we tried to do with the promotion is, number one, it has to be faculty-driven." Participant F noted that the first step in implementing early alert was to ask a group of well-respected faculty to test it. Four participants recalled presenting initiatives to faculty senate. Participant G presented the early alert initiative. The participant noted that personal connection with faculty played a role in acceptance of early alert. Participant G stated:

> I think for the majority of the people in that room or at least for some of the key people in
>
> the room, I knew them pretty well. And in fact, right before the meeting, I went in there
>
> and I thought, '"I know all these people. I've worked with them on projects. I've helped

them with students. I've, you know, I've worked with them in registration. I've, I have a good relationship with many of the people in the room.'" There are a few that I didn't know. There was a couple of people who were pretty new. So I think, honestly, and that might not be the answer you're looking for, but I think that helped. I think the fact that I had a good rapport with them, and they trusted me, I think helped.

Participant F described team-building activities at a strategic planning retreat. Participant F stated, "We hula-hooped and did team-building exercises and I don't know, human knots and stuff like that." A photo from the 2013 strategic planning retreat illustrated collaboration. Faculty and staff in the photo were wearing matching yellow or blue T-shirts, lined up in a formation, and smiling and waving at the camera.

Participant J stated that deans meet on a weekly basis. According to Participant J, the meetings were a "way we can come together and discuss common concerns." Participant J described a typical session:

> Here may be a mandate from TBR, voice your concerns now because once we leave this room, this is a mandate that we are going to be in support of. And we all have to agree on that. But what are some things that you might encounter, some challenges, some ways to address it?

College administrators also have established cross-functional committees to coordinate completion initiatives. The researcher attended a meeting of the retention and completion task force and a meeting of the retention and completion committee. As a sign of the quick pace of initiatives, the task force struggled with identifying its purpose. After some discussion, one member commented that the task force was "not trying to take on the world but just trying to

make sure something gets done." Participants also mentioned an adult learning task force, a now-defunct graduation task force, and corequisite remediation task forces.

Sense of collaboration and community was illustrated in the story of an academic department that was cut when corequisite remediation was implemented. Department faculty taught all learning support courses. A participant stated that when corequisite remediation was mandated, the learning support department was shut down, and its faculty were moved into departments within their disciplines. Participant E stated, "There was a grief process that they definitely went through." One participant arranged an icebreaker activity to welcome the assigned faculty. Efforts were made to accommodate schedule requests of the reassigned faculty and to integrate all faculty into teaching learning support sections, not just the former learning support faculty.

Some collaboration-community rituals were informal. Participant J shared stories from when he joined the college staff 2 years after the CCTA. Participant J said he noticed "a real caring and, and that's something that attracted me to it [the position]." He recalled informally meeting faculty and staff in hallways and that they excitedly told him of college initiatives. Participant J was particularly impressed by an advanced manufacturing instructor who taught physics and calculus to his students because of their application in advanced manufacturing. Participant J recalled:

> Never did I hear, "'Gosh I wish we didn't have classes on Fridays. I wish I didn't have to work so long and, and we don't get paid enough.'" Never hear that kind of stuff. And you do at other institutions. So it was just that common kind of focus.

Participant F described meeting regularly with a lunch group. "We talk a lot about what it's gonna take for them [students] to be successful," Participant F stated. "They get riled up over

students." During a meeting of student success coordinators, the group was lively. The room was abuzz with chatter, and committee members greeted each other warmly. Table 23 shows additional participant data related to the sense of collaboration and community

Table 23

Participant Statements on Sense of Collaboration, Community

Participant	Statement
Participant H	But it's still an, an environment where people enjoy working. Even, if you, 10 years ago, it was that way. I mean, it's interesting. We don't have people that leave a lot. You know, you have, when you consider the millennial generation, and the Y generation, they're, they're ones that'll, they'll come and do a job for a little while and then they'll go somewhere else, you know. They don't have as much loyalty to their employer as say the Baby Boomers did or, or even those of us that are sort of on the edge of the boomers. But here, that doesn't seem to necessarily be true. I mean, people really do want to work here and, they stay, you know, once they get here and things like that. But I think, you know, we complain about people not getting along, but when you look at other institutions or other places of business, we're pretty collaborative here.
Participant E	Well, I have wonderful colleagues, at every point where I would run into, trouble (laughs). So, [colleague name] in [building name] was the magician that created those corequisite classes.

Although the research data predominantly indicated collaboration, there were exceptions. Faculty senate minutes from February 2014 stated that senators expressed a perception of being disenfranchised from decision-making. The minutes stated that senators perceived programs as being "handed down." A we-versus-them mentality was listed in a 2013 strategic planning document as a practice the college should stop. In another meeting observed by the researcher, body language was passive. One committee member was silent throughout the discussion. Two meeting leaders talked the most. After the meeting ended, the two leaders stayed, engaged in lively discussion of student success initiatives, and were then informally joined by others who also participated in the discussion.

<u>Pride</u>

Six participants expressed institutional pride as a factor influencing their work to implement student success initiatives. Three participants used the term "The [College] Way." Asked to define "The College Way," Participant F stated, "There's this thing called the [College] Way, and [college name] has evidently, traditionally prided itself on leading the pack." Participant G said she noticed the climate when she first started at the college. Participant G stated:

> You know, there's, we have this saying that is '"We are [college name]"' and which sounds really, you know, cocky, and it's intended to sound cocky. There is a climate here, and I noticed it when I first came here almost eight years ago of '"I want to help students."' I, you know, let's help. Let's do our best. Let's, you know, let's help students succeed. We might not agree on how to do that, but there is a climate here of that. And so I think that helps, of course.

Asked how she came to know The College Way, Participant G told a story of her early days at the college and being impressed that faculty participated in new student orientation. "That sends a big signal to a new person on campus that, gosh, people care," Participant G stated. "People really care here. So I think that was one of the big things that I noticed." Participant G said the climate was a factor in faculty senate's acceptance of the early alert system. Participant G said, "I think the fact that many of, many of the people in that room, probably all the people in that room, want our students to be successful and are willing to try things to make that happen"

In addition to Participant F and Participant G, four more participants expressed a form of institutional pride. Participant I noted pride in the college's lean structure and flexibility

compared to four-year universities. Participant J stated the college "took a major lead" on corequisite remediation when asked by TBR leadership to explore it. Participant H stated, "We want to be the best."

When asked how one comes to know that being the best is the expectation, Participant H noted observing the hard work of colleagues and mentioned the college's faculty lecture series. Asked to describe what the faculty lecture series represents, Participant H stated, "I think it's, symbolic of the intellectual capacity of our faculty and the college, and that we value learning and sharing what we've learned, and that kind of thing." Participant C used the term The College Way, describing it as a desire to be the best. Participant C cited The College Way as an influence on college implementation of corequisite remediation, stating:

Well, one way I was sold was and, and this has been true my whole career. If TBR or SACS says you got to do something, then you've got to do it. So, I mean I, I, none of us saw that we had any choice really. And you know so what you do is you complain about it for a few days. And then you get down to work and say we are going to make it the best we can. I mean that's sort of the [college name]. We call it The [College] Way.

Regarding the expectation to be the best, Participant C said, "I don't think you can work at [college] very long and not come around to that sort of mentality." Participant C said she learned of the expectation to be the best from observing department leaders when she was hired. Participant C stated:

So the [college] way is, is, is working very hard to help students. But to help them meet those standards. And you, how do you get it? You, you get it because you're here. And you see everybody else doing it.

In addition to institutional pride, participant data indicated individual pride as influencing completion initiative implementation. Seven participants made statements that reflected personal commitment to excellence as a factor in their efforts to implement initiatives. January 2013 faculty senate minutes stated that a senator emphasized the need for assessment due to "government and community expectations" and then remarked that assessment "is something that we all do as part of our personal process of improvement," Additional data related to pride in work are compiled in Table 24.

Table 24

Participant Statements on Pride in Work

Participant	Statement
Participant B	So, I disagree with the TTPs. But that doesn't mean that I'm not going to make them the very best I can.
Participant D	Part of it is because I'm very task-oriented. And you put a task in front of me, and I'm gonna figure it out. It's the same way with students.
Participant F	You know, I chase rabbits a lot, you know. . . . But now I'm motivated as a human being because I draw a paycheck at the end of the month, and that's the job I'm hired for. This is interesting work.
Participant A	Well, that's just my personality (laughs). I wanted to do this. This is important to the adult student coming in here. And I knew that.

Success Celebrations

Ceremonies of celebration and recognition were also indicated in the data as customs that influenced initiative implementation. During a committee meeting, members discussed hosting a celebrations at all campuses for students who reached credit hour milestones. Ideas included giving commemorative pins to students and taking students' photos. The purpose of the celebrations was to encourage students to return to finish their degrees. Another participant described a celebration for cohort students who completed their program

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Although not formal ceremonies, celebration was observed during meetings. In one meeting committee members were excited about early results of corequisite remediation. "That's outstanding, that's really good," one member said. A participant stated that faculty who helped implement corequisite remediation received a round of applause at a department meeting.

When asked about ceremonies or celebrations of student success, participants generally remarked that recognition was an area in need of improvement. Participant J noted that he has submitted student success initiatives for national awards and supported sending faculty to national conferences. "It's so very important to recognize and acknowledge those successes. And again I think that's an area we can certainly stand improvement on," Participant J said.

One participant shared the experience of receiving a major award for her work on a student success initiative. The college's employee recognition program includes awards for teaching, innovation, and vision. Each major award has a monetary value of $1,000 or more. In addition to the three major awards, the college also presents awards for outstanding faculty, adjunct faculty, and staff. Participant A received one of the three major awards. "I've never won anything," Participant A stated. "You know what I'm saying? Yeah, it was really cool . . . it's, you're proud of, of yourself." Participant A also showed the researcher an article written about the initiative.

When asked to discuss symbols celebrating student success, participants generally reported symbols as having limited influence. A statement from Participant I illustrated the overall sentiment on symbols. "And the symbols change and all that," Participant I stated. "I mean they're good and they're, they're great catchphrases, and they're great for the moment. But, 3 years from now it won't be there." An exception was a college anniversary campaign with the theme One Story at a Time. The campaign involved sharing student success stories as support

for the theme that the college benefits students one story at a time. Four participants mentioned the campaign by name. Participant C stated:

I do think that slogan that we have used, success, one story at a time, does, does speak to me a little bit. Because it is about that individual student and what that student has learned and how that student has grown, and how that student has progressed. And you know, whether or not that student graduates you know if you want to talk about the completion agenda, a lot of students learn a lot, and don't graduate. Yeah, it's great if they graduate. I'm all for that. I want them to graduate. But it doesn't diminish what they've learned if they don't have a degree, you know. It doesn't diminish that they have, you know, I have talked with students who have overcome all kinds of barriers and, and obstacles and you know drug addiction and homelessness and all that sort of stuff. And, and if whatever they've learned here enriches their lives, then that's, that's good.

Hiring Process

Participants indicated a connection between the custom of the hiring process and cultural changes related to student success initiatives. Participant F stated the college president had in the hiring process "looked for people that can carry out his vision." Participant F said, "Now, we have naysayers, like everybody, but he's got the right people in the right positions to build the culture, I think."

Participant A and Participant I also expressed statements related to new personnel bringing new ideas. Participant I, a longtime college employee, described the change through personnel as greater acceptance of completion as a value that does not conflict with academic standards. Participant I stated:

And it's taken, you know, people retiring, people changing that, "'No, we're not just pushing people through.'" They've still got to, they've still got to acquire, a knowledge base. They've still got to, they've still, we're not changing out here. If you're graduating in nursing, that you've got to have, learn these skills. That didn't change. It's just how we go from here down to here. And then now when you're hiring people it's, it's, the culture is changing. It's in the hiring process. You know, are you supportive of, of these programs? You know, your ideals or your input on programs to keep these kids in school.

 Multiple participants described the college's new faculty academy, a year-long process designed to teach new faculty about the college, its culture, and its values. Participant F stated that the academy begins with a 2-day retreat attended by college leadership. Asked about the connection between the academy and completion, Participant J said, "You know we value completion, we value the outcomes. It's making sure they understand that and the ways that we can get from point A to point Z." Participant J also said the academy breaks down barriers:

> You know because unfortunately in an academic sometimes there's a we-versus-they mentality. So first thing I want them to know, you know is see [college president] and I for want of a better term, in shorts. So that way it's not you know the suit behind the desk, and I'll only see them when there's something important that we need to talk about. But it, it's that kind of open door. It was important for us to build a cohort, talking about cohorts. Build a cohort with the new faculty academy so they build that sense of connection not just with each other but with the institution as well.

Theme 3 Summary

The theme The College Way: Be the First. Be the Best addressed RQ3: What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF? Data suggested that the

college followed formal and informal customs that led to a sense of collaboration and community. Participants perceived that a sense of collaboration and community influenced initiatives, particularly in acceptance of initiatives.

Data also indicated that institutional pride, symbolized by the expression The College Way, influenced initiatives. The College Way epitomized an intrinsic desire to "lead the pack." The College Way was accompanied by a sense of personal pride in work, which participants perceived as influencing initiatives. Data indicated participants perceived celebrations as having less influence on initiatives. The prevailing sentiment was that celebration and recognition were areas that should be improved. Administrators have proposed a celebration for students reaching credit hour milestones. Lastly, the custom of the hiring process was perceived by some participants as now tied to the completion agenda. A year-long new faculty academy was designed to educate new faculty about college values, including commitment to completion and student success.

<u>Theme 4: Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum</u>

The theme related to the research question of administrator perceptions of changes in values, beliefs, and customs as a response to the implementation of advanced PF. Initial coding of interview data identified statements that reflected perceptions of change. The statements were grouped into three categories: (1) core beliefs, values well-established, (2) PF as symbol, and (3) initiative fatigue. Table 25 shows each category related to the theme and an illustrative statement that reflected the category.

Table 25

Theme 4 Categories and Statements

Category	Participant	Statement
Core beliefs, values well-established	Participant B	I would say that our faculty have not changed. That their dedication to our students has not changed one bit. That our faculty's love for our students and their, their disciplines has not changed a bit.
PF as symbol	Participant J	I found it very refreshing when I got to Tennessee is that, we're actually being funded based on our outcomes.
Initiative fatigue	Participant B	I've grown a lot in a lot of ways, but it's also been extremely challenging. I've said since 2011, many times, Complete College is going to kill me.

Core Beliefs, Values, Culture Well-Established

Data from the development of themes related to values, beliefs, and customs indicated some changes in each area. Data related to theme 1—Students Come First— suggested focus on completion represented a change. The story about eliminating final registration—a last-minute push to register students before fall semester— represented a shift in focus toward completion. Participant I summarized the elevation of focus on completion as a value in response to advanced PF. Participant I stated:

I think the focus is much better now in that we're saying not only, not only are we going to do things, you know, the initiatives to get you in the door, but we're going to get you through the process and get you graduated.

The value of support for student success appeared to indicate stability and change. The stories participants told about helping students, multiple statements about the college's commitment to student success, documented increased investment in student instruction and support, personal statements expressing the altruistic nature of community college work, and comments about recognition of leadership support for student success suggested student success

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was a long-standing value. One change appeared to be a shift from student failure as a sign of rigor to student failure as a source of concern. A comment by Participant F best reflected this change. Participant F stated:

> The ship has sailed when you can do this, but you know, you still have a few that says, "'I teach it, and it's the student's job to learn it.'" Those days are over. It is how do we build in the kind of support so these students can learn it, and you give them every opportunity to learn.

> Data analyzed in the development of theme 2 indicated a change in beliefs related to views of the purpose of college. The change was embodied in the metaphor of "pathway" or "track." Data indicated a tension between views of college as a path to be rigidly followed versus college as a place for exploration. The pathway metaphor was a dividing line between views on college support, student learning, and student success. Document and interview data suggested the pathway metaphor was perceived as originating from the CCTA and state pressure.

> Administrators perceived belief changes related to the level of support required by students. As Participant C stated, "But there's a lot of, there's a movement in higher ed to see every single way we can support students." The belief that multiple pressures drive initiatives indicated not so much change but awareness of external pressures on higher education. As participant G stated:

> I mean every conversation we have somehow goes back to Drive, all the things coming from TBR go back to Drive to 55. All the things, the initiatives we talk about on campus come back to Drive to 55. I mean it, it's just all comes down to that because it's, the focus is so completely on getting people to complete credentials.

Data indicated that administrators did not perceive changes as related to the belief that completion has financial benefits. Although participants acknowledged the resource implications of advanced PF, traditional enrollment revenue was perceived as equally, if not more, important. Participant F stated, "So, you can't just say, you know, 'We're not worried about enrollment anymore.' Yes, we are. That's what keeps doors open."

Data analyzed in the development of theme 3 indicated participants perceived changes in customs related to the hiring process. Participant A, Participant I, and Participant F indicated a connection between the custom of the hiring process and cultural changes related to student success initiatives. Participant I stated, "And then now when you're hiring people it's, the culture is changing. It's in the hiring process." Participant J indicated a purpose of a year-long new faculty academy was to make new faculty aware that the college values completion. Data indicated administrators did not perceive changes in customs related to collaboration and sense of community, pride, or success celebrations. The term The College Way, a cultural expectation that the college should be the best, appeared to have a long history at the institution.

Therefore, data analyzed in the development of theme 1, theme 2, and theme 3 indicated some changes cited by administrators as a response to advanced PF. A question specifically about change was asked of participants ($N = 7$) with at least 10 years of experience at the college. The question was a scenario: Suppose you had lunch with a college who retired 10 years ago, and the colleague asked you how the environment at the college had changed, what would you say? Responses were labeled "Yes" if a participant's initial reaction to the question indicated change. As shown in Table 26, four responses were labeled "Yes" and one as mixed. Of the yes responses, one was related to leadership and one was related to student issues. Two yes responses (Participant H and Participant I) were related to completion.

Table 26

Response to Questions on Institutional Change

Participant	Initial reaction	Initial explanation
Participant A	Yes	I think our culture here has changed probably with [president name], versus, you know, maybe our past administration.
Participant B	No	I would say that our faculty have not changed. That their dedication to our students has not changed one bit. That our faculty's love for our students and their disciplines has not changed a bit. What has changed in ten years? Wow. So much has changed in ten years (laughs). I don't know what I would say to them, but in my mind, as I'm communicating to you, I can just see the list of initiatives, those first initiatives that came through, "'oh, we do cohorts, now, we're focused more on adult students now.'"
Participant C	Mixed	I would tell them from 10 years ago, I would say it's mixed in terms of good and bad. I think our president is fabulous.
Participant D	Yes	Our students have changed. There's, and I think, again, it's a cultural thing.
Participant E	No	All right let me think, okay, how has it changed? I'll tell you how it's similar, you know it's still, [college name] has always had an attitude of, you know, that we want to be, the best and the most successful, in a good sort of way, for the students really.
Participant H	Yes	Well, a little bit in the last couple of years, you know, it's kind of been an environment of change with the Complete College and all of the new initiatives in terms of completion, so a little bit of that. But it's still an environment where people enjoy working. Even, if you, 10 years ago, it was that way. I mean, it's interesting. We don't have people that leave a lot.
Participant I	Yes	I would, I really think it's better. I really think. It's different now. And I'm not saying it's not different. But I really believe that this is, this is, we're more on the right track of what we should be doing. I really believe that. It just, like I said it's different. You know, and, but I think we're doing it the right way.

The data in response to a uniform change question appeared similar to the data from

which themes 1-3 emerged. Some changes have taken place, but core values, beliefs, and

customs have not changed in response to advanced PF. Participant D and Participant E have been

at the college more than 10 years. Each expressed sentiments that dedication to students had not

changed. Regarding commitment to students, Participant D stated, "It's part of our DNA. It's part of our culture." Asked whether the values currently driving an initiative were different than the values that drove an initiative 10 years ago, Participant E stated "Mmmmm, are they different? Hmm, (pause) no, not really, it's just the process that's changed. Not the, not the heart."

Three participants noted that student success initiatives had been implemented before advanced PF. On the preinterview forms, a college self-study conducted in 2006, 4 years before the CCTA, was named as a driving force behind initiatives related to intervention with at-risk students and improvement of advising. One participant stated that the college's use of student success coordinators and student success mentors originated from the self-study. Participant D described the self-study process as a comprehensive, grassroots endeavor. Participant D stated, "And we had 120 some people on those committees doing this self-study, which they told us, at the time, was really unusual. We had janitors. We had everybody." A decade after the self-study was completed, many of the initiatives remain in place, Participant D said. Participant D explained:

> But of all the five things that we decided, seven, eight years ago, we're still doing them all. Some in a little bit different way, but I think that's kind of unusual. But I think part of it was because you had buy-in from everybody. They're the ones that said, "'This is what we need to do.'" Nobody was saying, "'You shall do this.'" So I think that's part of the secret.

The self-study included initiatives in four areas: (1) best practices, (2) common academic experience, (3) connections, and (4) academic momentum. The purpose statements for each area illustrated values of commitment to excellence, student success, and student support, all of which

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emerged in analysis of interview data related to implementing initiatives in an advanced PF

environment. Table 27 shows the self-study purpose statements associated with the focus areas.

Table 27

Self-Study Focus Areas and Purpose Statements

Focus Areas	Self-Study Purpose Statements
Best practices	Our college-wide focus on Best Practices in Teaching and Learning will enhance our effectiveness in teaching first-year students and will provide worthwhile professional development opportunities for faculty and staff. The Best Practices program will include workshops, publications, opportunities for interdepartmental support and communication, and the development of shareable resources such as a Best Practices database. The program will be designed to provide faculty and staff with useable, innovative strategies for working with students in their first year at [college name].
Common academic experience	By offering our students a common academic experience, we hope to help first-year students recognize the connections between disciplines and to see the benefits of participating in a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities. The central element of the common academic experience will be a common text utilized in English 101 0, developmental reading and writing courses, and other courses where meaningful connections can be found. The common text will also serve as a springboard for a number of co-curricular and extracurricular activities including conversation cafes, film discussions, and author visits
Connections	Students who establish relationships with each other and with us are more likely to persevere through the unknowns and the unique challenges of the first year of college. Their academic success is directly influenced by the strength of these connections. Our emphasis will be on establishing focused and coordinated communication with our first-year students that is consistent, timely, and accessible. Early and intentional connections with faculty, staff and current students help first-year students make the transition to college, understand our expectations and their own motivations, set goals, find resources and create their own networks of support to achieve personal and academic success.
Academic momentum	We will refine and expand our system and supporting processes for helping students avoid and recover from academic difficulties. New strategies to identify and address issues common to first-year students will be developed. The goal of this effort is to assist students in establishing patterns of achievement and in disrupting cycles of failure through early feedback, warning mechanisms, and accessible support services. Primary emphasis will be given to the first semester and the transition from first to second semester.

<u>PF as Symbol</u>

The role of the PF formula as a symbol is related to the question of changes in values, beliefs, and customs as a response to advanced PF. Two data tools provided insight into the role of advanced PF as a funding source in initiative implementation. Participants were asked, "If performance funding went away, would you keep doing this initiative?" Nine of 10 participants responded that they would keep initiatives even if advanced PF was discontinued. One participant stated she did not know whether an initiative would continue without PF. Table 28 show reasons participants provided for keeping an initiative regardless of advanced PF.

Table 28

Reasons to Keep Initiative Regardless of Advanced PF

Reason	Frequency
Initiative worked	2
Leadership supportive of initiative	2
Student retention	2
Values/right thing to do	3

According to the data 90% of participants involved in implementing initiatives in an advanced PF environment would continue the work even if the funding formula was discontinued. Reasons given for keeping initiatives, as shown in Table 28, appeared to focus on benefits to students, leadership, and values. Table 29 shows illustrative statements related to the reasons that initiatives would be retained without advanced PF.

Table 29

Illustrative Statements on Keeping Initiatives Regardless of PF

Participant	Statements
Participant J	I think what we're doing, we're institutionalizing these initiatives. And, and by doing that it becomes part of the college culture that even if funding for that goes away that we still have a culture that embraces the student success by using these intrusive advising techniques or, or by using, you know the block scheduling techniques. So I, I can't imagine that that would go away.
Participant G	I hope so. I would. Because I think it's [early alert] the right thing to do.
Participant H	Because even before we moved into that whole performance funding issue with the outcomes, I had said, you know, we should be thinking about what we're doing for retention. I understand we're about access, but even still, you know, I would prefer to bring back the ones that we have and not have to work so hard on the other end to get new ones in. Plus, I mean, wouldn't you rather have a student finish?
Participant I	I don't think you would, it would take a lot of years before you would go backwards I think.
Participant F	Well again, I think that goes back to the president. I mean he's got absolute buy-in to student success. Absolute buy-in. And he wants these students to be successful. He wants to transfer a bunch of them to [nearby university]. He wants to see them go and get placed in the job field or whatever, you know, after an AAS degree or whatever. So I think he would continue to drive student success, but you know, I've never really, I mean I've only been two colleges, but I have friends that work at other colleges. I mean, I really do think that the majority of people who work in these colleges want students to be successful, and if this is a tool that works, then I think they would have adopted it. I mean I think they have in the past, way before we had funding formula, when we were just dependent on enrollment. They, you know, colleges did master advisor programs. They did, you know, they've always been interested in scholarship funding, piece, so I think it would go forward even if there wasn't.

The reasons given for initiative continuation regardless of advanced PF indicated an

acceptance of the completion agenda as a vision, of which advanced PF is a symbol. As

Participant J stated, "I think what we're doing we're, we're institutionalizing these initiatives."

Participant F stated:

But, you know, the funding formula just put, sort of, on outcomes, let's, whether we're

talking about funding formula or performance funding, on outcomes, and we needed to

go there. I mean it was the next generation of education, so to speak, and to go to an

outcomes-based thing. Now, we can argue all day over how it's calculated. You know,

we have a unique population, blah, blah, blah. But in the end, are we not here to see

students be successful? What does that mean?

Preinterview form data supported the concept that the vision of completion, embodied in

advanced PF, is influential. Participants were asked to describe the "driving forces" behind

initiative they were involved in implementing. As shown in Table 30, funding was listed in only

2% of responses. However, 23% of responses mentioned the CCTA, the statewide completion

agenda, or Drive to 55, all of which are related to advanced PF but represent a vision of

completion as a unifying goal for higher education.

Table 30

Percentage of Driving Forces Noted on Preinterview Forms

Cited as Driving Force	Occurrence	Percentage
Internal practice/values/goals	36	38.71%
Statewide completion agenda/CCTA	14	15.05%
TBR	11	11.83%
Drive to 55	8	8.60%
Lumina grant	5	5.38%
National trend	5	5.38%
Complete College America	4	4.30%
College self-study	3	3.23%
Funding	2	2.15%
Accreditation	2	2.15%
Workforce demands	2	2.15%
Tennessee promise	1	1.08%

Note. *N* = 93.

Interview data also suggested that funding alone had a minor influence in terms of implementing completion initiatives. Five participants stated advanced PF was an afterthought in terms of its influence on the values and beliefs that guide their work. Table 31 presents participant statements related to advanced PF as a minor influence.

Table 31

Participant Statements on Advanced PF as Minor Influence

Participant	Statement
Participant D	It's not a driving force for me. I want do a good job, because, I think, if we do a good job here, then our students do a better job. And that's what, that's what it's about. It's not about, '"Are we gonna get more money from the state?"' If that helps that, well, whoop dee diddle. I'm glad about that (laughing). But that's not the driving force.
Participant B	And, so, I guess, the funding formula part of it is beyond my purview. And, I understand it, but it's the initiatives and that student experience all along the way, they're not, they have no experience with the funding formula. They don't under-, I doubt they even know we, most of them don't think about the funding formula. So, I guess I don't think about that. I don't, I don't work with the 15 and 4. I don't work with how to try to push students to take more credit hours. That's not part of what I do.
Participant G	Well, I mean, at least for me personally, it's not about, hey, we'll get more money if we do this.
Participant F	I mean, it's just being driven, and they link money to it, but like I said, I don't think the money's the driver as much as, you know, we just don't want to lose money, because we're in the middle of the list.
Participant A	I really don't even think about it. I guess. I mean I never, I mean for me, um, no. I, you know, I think for me I was an adult student going back to school. I went back as an adult student. I worked here. I finished my degree as an adult student. I never think about that. I mean I just, for me I just like working with them [adult students] and I like helping them. And I want them to see them succeed.

Data indicated that advanced PF as a funding mechanism had minor influence on participants. Data also indicated, however, a degree of pride in operating under a funding

formula that emphasizes student success outcomes. When describing the enrollment-based

funding pre-CCTA, participants tended to tell the same type of story. Enrollment-driven funding

was symbolized by "getting students in the door" or "getting students into seats." The

connotation was negative. Table 32 includes participant stories of the "old way" of funding.

Table 32

Participant Stories of "Old" Funding Model

Participant	Statement
Participant I	You didn't, when you were looking budget wise, you weren't looking out here, "'Well what can we do to get that student graduated?'" You were looking at, "'What can we do to get that student in the door?'"
Participant B	The focus that we had before Complete College was how many students can we get in the seat. And so the joke was, let's go out on the parkway and pick up some students so we can have them in our enrollment numbers. You know, the focus was on getting students here, not on completing them
Participant H	So, for a long time, enrollment was a big thing, because funding was based on FTE, and then of course tuition dollars, and that kind of thing. So, enrollment was the focus. And, as long as we were enrolling more students than we were losing, (laughs), it seemed like we were okay.

In contrast, interview data suggested a degree of pride in being funded based on

outcomes. Five participants made statements that expressed pride in outcomes-based funding.

Participant B told a story of driving to Nashville on a snowy day for one of the first meetings

related to the CCTA. "I was the only person there besides Chancellor Morgan to talk about the

Complete College Act," Participant B said. "Because I believe in the Complete College Act."

Participant B added, "So, Complete College and the focus, helping students reach goals, and

putting resources to helping students reach goals, I buy, I have bought in 100%." Participant I

described having more satisfaction in his work under advanced PF. He stated, "You know, the

logic of it is, is I think that's why it's sweeping the country and everything else. The logic of it is right. You know?"

Participant J said, "I found it very refreshing when I got to Tennessee is that, we're actually being funded based on our outcomes." Participant H said PF caused "people to rethink how they thought about what we do generally as community colleges, in a good way, in a good way." Participant G said advanced PF "justified my sense of the right thing to do." Participant G also described the college environment when the state made the transition to advanced PF. Participant G stated:

> There was sort of this, you know, you always have, any time there's transition, there's kind of this confusion stage. It was almost like happy confusion, like this we're all talking now. We can talk. You know, what are we going to do? We're going to talk about planning. What are we going to plan? (laughs). There's increased communication. So there was, and any time, again, any time you have transition, you're going to have some confusion. So we had a bit of confusion, but not in a, I don't, I wouldn't say it was negative confusion at all. But then, of course, this laser focus on completion.

Initiative Fatigue

Participants also cited initiative fatigue as a change that has occurred as a response to advanced PF. Six participants mentioned initiative fatigue, all without prompting. Participant F noted how the volume of initiatives in an advanced PF environment could have cultural influences—a workplace once slow to change may have to move much faster. Participant F stated:

> And so, I don't know if going forward that we can continue to talk about things like buy-in. If we can continue to talk about buy-in, or do you just drive initiatives? And as new

faculty and staff come on, they understand- I mean, we're gonna have to move faster. We can't just wait and talk about it and take 10 years to change, or it's gonna pass us by. And so that's my big concern for us as a college, and I don't think we're unique, is how do we manage change at this pace with this staff and keep moving forward?

Despite expressions of initiative fatigue, data also indicated initiative acceptance. Participant F said she had 40 people volunteered for an adult learning task force. Participants reported that cohort programs, block schedules, and early alert systems were adopted. During a committee meeting, members showed a clear bias for action. A committee member presented a promising initiative at an out-of-state college. Committee members immediately wanted to plan a trip to the institution. One member joked about dealing with too many initiatives. After the meeting the same member was huddled with a colleague to discuss student success initiatives. Participant B described how initiative fatigue had, perhaps, changed customs to foster greater acceptance of initiatives. Participant B told a story about the initial faculty resistance to cohorts. Participant B stated:

But, they, after a while, they did calm down and see that it wasn't a plot to take over or to infringe on any academic freedom, you know. So, as the changes have come, there's been pushback against them. But I think that the more we keep throwing initiatives at them, at a rapid pace, so that we can barely keep up, they're kind of numb now. There's less much less pushback, "'Oh, you want us to do block schedules, fine. Milestones, no problem. Whatever, put me on a committee.'"

Participant F explained that a challenge is the potential for initiative fatigue to slow progress on completion initiatives. She stated, "So we've got 75 initiatives and people running in every direction and working themselves to death. I'm afraid there will come a point where it

stops. Progress will stop because of that." Participant J noted that some initiatives are internal while others are external. He stated that "it's important that we avoid that whole notion of initiative fatigue." To sustain momentum, Participant J said, initiatives must be approached incrementally.

Participant G expressed concern that the "constant flow" of initiatives from TBR may prevent the college from conducting its own research. Participant G stated, "It almost feels like there's really no chance for the colleges to do their own research and initiatives because there are so many coming from TBR." Participant G said she encourages her staff to attend workshops hosted by TBR and workshops hosted by college faculty. Participant G also hosts an annual staff retreat. She specifically mentioned a faculty member's initiative to raise awareness about working with students from impoverished backgrounds. Participant G addressed the tension between development of college-led initiatives and management of state-level initiatives. Participant G stated:

> But (sighs) I have to, I really, I personally sometimes have to struggle to remind myself
> that, yeah, we're all on board with this, we're all on board with this. Especially the stuff
> coming from the state level. There's so much coming in a, in a very, relatively short
> period of time. And I've, it's, I think it's a challenge to go from this environment of you
> at your college level come up with initiatives where you all generate the initiatives and
> you all are excited about the initiatives because you generated them. You know, just like
> the first-year experience thing that [college name] had done right before I came. You
> know, the people bought into that because it was a huge grassroots effort. So compare
> that to, okay, now we're being told we have to do this and I, I swear to God it's going to
> work and it's going to transform education. But, and we're going to tell you when to do

it. We're going to tell you how to do it. So I think that is a struggle. It's hard to get excited about something that's being fed to you that you had no part of developing, creating or anything.

Participant G did not question the merits of state initiatives. She said she was excited about a state initiative to encourage adults with some college experience to return to school to finish their degrees. Participant G said, "It's going really well. And I hope and pray that it gets people to come back to complete degrees, to reenroll." Regarding corequisite remediation, Participant G said she was "thrilled" that data indicated the model was successful. Instead, Participant G's statements on initiative fatigue expressed concern with the volume of initiatives and the pace of change. Participant G said of the success of corequisite remediation, "And now what I want to shout from the mountaintops is can we keep it now? Can we not in 3 years change it? And I don't have any faith that it won't change in a few years."

Participant G said of the statewide Completion Academies, "When those first started, they were great. I'll never forget that first one. It was a great experience." Participant G said the frequency of the academies "might be, at least for me personally, hindering the excitement about them." Participant G continued, "If they were the only thing going on, that might not be the case. But with all the other initiatives, it almost feels like, okay, here we go, another Completion Academy." Table 33 shows additional participant statements on initiative fatigue.

Table 33

Participant Statements on Initiative Fatigue

Participant	Statement
Participant B	I've grown a lot in a lot of ways, but it's also been extremely challenging. I've said since 2011, many times, Complete College is going to kill me.

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Table 33
(continued)

Participant	Statement
Participant C	In other ways, you know, I think one of the sort of negative or, or difficult challenging things is there's so much going on. There are so many initiatives. There's you know let's do this, let's do that like you know. And they are all, there's nothing wrong with any single one of them. It's just there are so many you get overwhelmed.

Participant H provided a narrative that summarized the cycle of initiative resistance, fatigue, and acceptance. Participant H said, "There was a period of time when we first started down this road of, of Complete College America and all of that, that things got a little negative." The "rumblings," Participant H said, were mostly related to concerns that standards would be lowered. Then came corequisite remediation, which Participant H described as an "upheaval." Participant H stated:

You get a little bit of initiative fatigue, a lot of times with, when you've got so much stuff going on. And people come to me and go, "'Do we have to do one more thing?'" You know, that kind of thing. But that kind of went away, you know, once we got started down this path, it kind of went away. So we've started to come back into our more reasonable minds (laughs). And you know the collaboration has begun again, and we've started to, to see results of some of the initiatives. And that, you know, it changes people's minds when they see that the results really are positive, even though, it was a lot of work to get there on top of a lot of other work. You know when you see results that are positive, it, it, it makes, it goes a long way. I think in, in adjusting those attitudes a little bit.

<u>Theme 4 Summary</u>

The theme Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum addressed RQ4: What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as a response to the implementation of advanced PF? Data analyzed to develop individual themes related to values, beliefs, and customs indicated some changes. Regarding values, data indicated a greater emphasis on completion and a shift away from student failure as a sign of excellence. Changes in beliefs included acceptance among at least some participants of the pathway metaphor for college. The pathway metaphor appeared to be a dividing line between views on college support, student learning, and student success. Administrators also perceived belief changes related to level of support required by students and customs related to the hiring process. Participants also perceived a strong awareness of external pressures on higher education.

Data also indicated, however, that core values, beliefs, and customs had not changed in response to advanced PF. Three participants with at least 10 years' experience at the college stated that dedication to students had not changed. A 2006 self-study included student success initiatives that remain in place. The self-study also outlined a value/belief system that was also apparent in data supporting themes 1-3.

Regarding the role of the advanced PF formula in changes, preinterview form data and interview date suggested advanced PF, as an embodiment of completion, has substantial symbolic power. Participants appeared to be proud to work under outcomes-based funding compared to enrollment-driven funding. Funding alone, however, appeared to have minor influence among participants. A comment by Participant G was typical of the formula-as-afterthought perspective. The participant stated, "Well, I mean, at least for me personally, it's not about, hey, we'll get more money if we do this."

Six participants, without prompting, mentioned initiative fatigue as a change associated with advanced PF. Initiative fatigue, however, included a tendency to be more accepting of new initiatives and move faster to implement change. Data indicated concern that initiative fatigue could slow progress on student success initiatives.

<center>Chapter Summary</center>

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new PF program. Qualitative analysis produced four major themes: (1) Students Come First, (2) Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflict, (3) The College Way: Be First, Be the Best, and (4).Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum. Overall, data indicated some influence of resource dependence, but not strictly from advanced PF. Data also indicated that a vision of completion, embodied by advanced PF, had cultural influences on values, beliefs, and customs.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's advanced PF program. The study addressed the following central question: In an advanced PF environment, what are the cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to PF? Specifically, the following research questions were used in the study:

1. What values do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

2. What beliefs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

3. What customs do the administrators perceive as influencing initiatives related to PF?

4. What changes in values, beliefs, and customs do administrators cite as responses to implementation of advanced PF?

Qualitative analysis produced four themes: (1) Students Come First, (2) Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflicts, (3) The College Way: Be First, Be the Best, and (4) Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum. Overall, cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing initiatives related to advanced PF appear to be limited. Data suggest administrators are influenced by multiple cultural influences such as personal values, sense of community, faith in leadership, belief in the purpose of community colleges, and personal and institutional pride.

Resource dependence is not absent. Data indicate that the administrators were aware of the formula implications of their actions and aware of external pressures for completion. Data indicate that administrators understood and worked toward the financial benefits of progressing

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students toward degree completion. It should be noted, however, that study data indicate that tuition is as much, or more, a source of resource dependence than state appropriations.

Rather than resource dependence, the power of advanced PF's influence appears connected to the vision and narrative it embodies. Substantial data within the study indicate administrators have embraced the completion agenda as represented by the Complete College Tennessee Act, Drive to 55, TBR leadership, and state leadership. Perhaps the most telling data point is that 90% of participants said they would want the college to continue completion initiatives if advanced PF were discontinued. The reasons administrators gave for wanting to keep initiatives regardless of advanced PF reflected the narrative of completion. As one participant stated, "I think what we're doing, we're institutionalizing these initiatives. And, and by doing that it becomes part of the college culture that even if funding for that goes away that we still have a culture that embraces the student success."

The narrative of completion embodied by advanced PF also appears to be a source of tension. Data indicate a dividing line among administrators related to the metaphor of college as a pathway. Findings suggest that pressure to produce graduates raises concerns about loss of the educational experience of college. Administrators appear divided, internally and among themselves, in the implications of college as pathway.

The study also suggests that administrators implementing initiatives in an advanced PF environment are experiencing initiative fatigue. Participants provided statements related to initiative fatigue without prompting by the researcher. Data suggest that initiative fatigue among these administrators was accompanied by an increased acceptance of initiatives. Administrators, it appears, have become accustomed to change. Data indicate, however, a concern that excessive initiatives could hamper momentum on promising student success efforts.

<u>Research Question 1: What Values Do the Administrators</u>

<u>Perceive as Influencing Initiatives Related to PF?</u>

The theme Students Come First addressed RQ1. Participant data indicate that the administrators perceived values of the importance of completion and emphasis on student success. Data also indicate that participants bring personal values and experiences into their work of implementing student success initiatives in an advanced PF environment. Participants expressed that the college's value system is reinforced by the college's president. Research by Dougherty et al. (2015) identified factors that aided deliberations related to the improvement of student outcomes to meet PF demands. Among the most important aids was organizational commitment and leadership, a finding supported by this study.

Administrator perceptions of values included the concept that student success initiatives are the "right thing to do," a finding that supported by prior research by Deupree et al. (2015). The values expressed by the data also contrasted with PF 1.0 research by Burke and Minassians (2002). The research indicated that PF indicators were primarily related to the policy value of efficiency. In more the 10 hours of interviews with administrators responsible for implementing initiatives in an advanced PF environment, the word "efficiency" was spoken three times. The data in this study indicate a value-based buy-in to a vision of completion.

<u>Research Question 2: What Beliefs Do the Administrators</u>

<u>Perceive as Influencing Initiatives Related to PF?</u>

The theme Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflicts addressed RQ2. Data suggest administrator perceptions that initiatives were influenced by belief that students require substantial support, external and internal pressures, and financial benefits of completion. The data also indicate that the pathway metaphor for college—used by multiple participants, found in

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documents, and observed by the researcher—appears to be a dividing line between benefits and concerns related to the push for student completion.

Data indicate ties to a finding by Prince et al. (2010) that raised the question of whether community colleges would adapt practices to compete for external resources if those resources are not provided. Data in this study suggest tuition, even in an advanced PF environment where nearly all state appropriations are based on outcomes, remains a primary influence on administrator efforts. The finding supports the question of whether state funding alone influences change.

Administrator concerns of lower standards and loss of college experience mirrored concerns expressed in a study by Banta et al. (1996) nearly 20 years earlier, revealing continuity between perceptions of PF 1.0 and PF 2.0. Dougherty et al. (2014d) also identified weakening academic standards as a potential unintended consequence of PF 2.0. The code of "academic concerns" was one of the top five initial codes identified by the research during analysis of interview data.

This study and research by Banta et al. (1996) contrasted in terms of student support beliefs. In the Banta et al. (1996) study, survey respondents expressed that retention goals did not properly account for the abilities of entering students. Data from this study suggest administrator belief that goals should be achieved, regardless of student factors, through robust student support structures such as intrusive advising. The beliefs articulated were that students require, and should be given, substantial support. This appears to support the budget analysis by Lampley (2015) that showed a nearly 16% spending increase among community colleges in the area of academic support operations and 7% increase in instructional operations.

The theme The College Way: Be the First. Be the Best addressed RQ3. Data suggest that the college followed formal and informal customs that led to a sense of collaboration and community. Participants perceived that a sense of collaboration and community influenced initiatives, particularly in acceptance of initiatives.

Data also indicate that institutional pride, symbolized by the expression The College Way, influenced initiatives. The College Way epitomized an intrinsic desire to "lead the pack." The College Way was accompanied by a sense of personal pride in work, which participants perceived as influencing initiatives. Data indicate participants perceived celebrations as having less influence on initiatives. The prevailing sentiment was that celebration and recognition were areas that should be improved. The custom of the hiring process was perceived by some participants as now tied to the completion agenda. A year-long new faculty academy was designed to educate new faculty about college values, including commitment to completion and student success.

The sense of collaboration and community indicated in the data supports work by Dougherty et al. (2015), which described structures used by public colleges and universities to respond to PF 2.0. Among the study's findings, all 18 institutions examined had clear structures for responding to PF, as was the case for this study's site. The authors categorized structures as general administrative (established bureaucratic processes), special purpose (such as task forces), and informal structures (such as grouping of like-minded faculty). The study found that community colleges relied more often on special purpose structures. Community college

administrators in the present study cited four task forces (not all currently active) designed to address completion initiatives.

Research Question 4: What Changes in Values, Beliefs, and Customs Do Administrators

Cite as Responses to Implementation of Advanced PF?

The theme Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum addressed RQ4. Data analyzed to develop individual themes related to values, beliefs, and customs indicated some changes. Regarding values, data indicated a greater emphasis on completion and a shift away from student failure as a sign of rigor. Changes in beliefs included acceptance among at least some participants of the pathway metaphor for college. The pathway metaphor appears to be a dividing line between views on college support, student learning, and student success. Administrators also perceived belief changes related to level of support required by students and customs related to the hiring process. Participants also perceived a strong awareness of external pressures on higher education.

Data also indicate, however, that core values, beliefs, and customs had not changed in response to advanced PF. Three participants with at least 10 years of experience at the college stated that dedication to students had not changed. A 2006 self-study included student success initiatives that continue to remain in place and outlined a value/belief system that was also apparent in data supporting themes 1-3.

Regarding the role of the advanced PF formula in changes, preinterview form data and interview date suggested that advanced PF, as an embodiment of completion, has substantial symbolic power. Participants appeared to be proud to work under outcomes-based funding compared to enrollment-driven funding. Funding alone, however, appeared to be an afterthought among participants, which suggests that the resource dependence power of advanced PF is

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limited. A comment by Participant G was typical of the formula-as-afterthought perspective. The participant stated, "Well, I mean, at least for me personally, it's not about, hey, we'll get more money if we do this."

Six participants, without prompting, mentioned initiative fatigue as a change associated with advanced PF. Initiative fatigue, however, included a tendency to be more accepting of new initiatives and to move faster to implement change. Data indicate concern that initiative fatigue could slow progress on student success initiatives.

Findings related the symbolic power of advanced PF contribute to a gap in PF scholarship. Dougherty et al. (2014b) and Friedel and Thornton (2016) noted the challenge of pinpointing the role of PF on organizational behavior. Community college participants in the study by Friedel and Thornton (2016) indicated that that several college initiatives to improve outcomes would have been implemented regardless of PF, a finding supported by this study. Three of the college leadership teams in the study by Friedel and Thornton (2016), however, noted that PF had "energized" improvement efforts (p. 199). The finding related to RQ4 that advanced PF has a symbolic role contributes to efforts to define the role of PF on initiative implementation.

<u>Recommendations for Policy</u>

Kotter (1995) identified eight steps to producing change in organizations: (1) establishing a sense of urgency, (2) forming a powerful guiding coalition, (3) creating a vision, (4) communicating the vision, (5) empowering others to act on the vision, (6) planning for and creating short-term wins, (7) consolidating improvements and producing more change, and (8) institutionalizing new approaches. Kotter wrote that for change to last it must be embedded in social norms and shared values. The observation aligns with Bolman and Deal's view that

beliefs, values, and customs shape organizational culture and organizational behavior (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Resource dependence perhaps establishes a sense of urgency. The findings of this study suggest, however, that resource dependence as a stand-alone policy would fall short of achieving the remaining steps in Kotter's model of organizational change. Administrators who participated in this study are, clearly, motivated by much more than resource dependence. If one were to think of a college as person and to consider Maslow's (2011) hierarchy of needs, resource dependence appeals only to the basic needs. Resource dependence likely does not, in Kotter's (1995) terms, have the capability to guide coalitions, create a vision, communicate a vision, empower others, etc.

For performance funding to be effective, it should be paired with a policy vision for higher education. Participants in this study often referred to the completion agenda, which has been clearly articulated by state political leadership and higher education leadership. The connection of the vision to advanced PF demonstrated state commitment to producing graduates. The study suggests community college administrators at the study site have, generally, embraced the vision. For policymakers considering performance funding implementation or revision, findings from this study suggest that such an effort must be accompanied by an equally powerful vision for higher education.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Practice</div>

The following recommendations for practice, based on the study's findings, are primarily intended for leaders of community colleges facing the pressures of operating under a robust PF formula. Recommendations may also be applicable for leaders working at the system level. The

study's findings suggest the following recommendations: (1) emphasize student success, (2) encourage self-study, and (3) celebrate achievements and scholarship.

Emphasize Student Success

Data in the study suggest participants were motivated by perceptions of leadership support for student success. College presidents and system-level leaders should, formally and informally, consistently express a vision of student success. When discussing outcomes in the PF formula, they should be framed not as funding sources but as measures of student success.

Encourage Self-Study

Although not a major component of this work, the self-study mentioned by some participants is an example of the value of challenging faculty and staff to study an issue and develop their own initiatives. Many of the initiatives created in the 10-year-old self-study participants are still in effect. System offices also need to be aware that institutional-level fatigue and resistance may result from mandated initiatives. Both college leadership and system leadership should encourage more self-study initiatives to reach completion goals.

Celebrate Achievements and Scholarship

In general, participants in this study found celebrations of success to be an area for improvement. Faculty and staff at other intuitions may feel the same lack of celebration. College leaders should consider hosting ceremonies that recognize employee achievement and showcase academic excellence. Recognition of successful initiatives, whether through awards or professional development opportunities, may offset initiative fatigue. Organizing purely academic events, such as the lecture series mentioned by participants, is especially important in an era of mandated, prescribed course schedules that follow the pathway model of college. Celebrations, such as a lecture series, reinforce the ideal of college as a place for exploration.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research include suggested studies that use different samples, timeframe, or focus areas. The present study was delimited to a community college. A similar study that includes multiple community colleges or community colleges and universities would add further understanding of the cultural influences of PF 2.0. Because many of the initiatives in the present study originated at the system-level (TBR), a study of the values, beliefs, and customs of system-level administrators operating under PF2.0 would also contribute to PF scholarship.

The study was also delimited to a high-performing community college. A similar study that used a different sampling framework would be a valuable contribution to PF scholarship. A researcher could explore cultural influences of resource dependence among community colleges performing poorly under PF 2.0 or among community colleges that have greatly improved under PF 2.0.

The timeframe for the present study was 3 months. The cultural questions raised in this study could also be examined longitudinally. For example, a researcher in a state that implements a robust PF 2.0 program could conduct a 3-year study of one college during the start-up phase.

A study focused strictly on advising would be of interest to college leaders and student services administrators. Many of the initiatives outlined by the CCTA fundamentally relate to advising. The issue of initiative fatigue also appears to be worthy of examination. Is that phenomenon widespread among PF 2.0 states? How do college leaders and system leaders overcome initiative fatigue within their organizations?

The metaphor of college as a pathway is also a worthwhile subject. When did college become viewed as a pathway? What are the implications of the pathway metaphor for higher education? Is it the right narrative for higher education?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Office for the Protection of Human Research Subjects • Box 70565 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707
Phone: (423) 439-6053 Fax: (423) 439-6060

IRB APPROVAL — Initial Expedited Review

February 11, 2016

Owen Driskill

Re: Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model
IRB#:c0116.16s
ORSPA #:

The following items were reviewed and approved by an expedited process:
- new protocol submission xForm, Pellissippi IRB letter, pertinent literature, PI CV, informed consent (ver 1-27-16), initial email/phone script, follow up email/phone script, pre-interview survey, interview questions, document review guide, study proposal

On **February 9, 2016**, a final approval was granted for a period not to exceed 12 months and will expire on **February 8, 2017**. The expedited approval of the study will be reported to the convened board on the next agenda.

The following **enclosed stamped, approved Informed Consent Documents** have been stamped with the approval and expiration date and these documents must be copied and provided to each participant prior to participant enrollment:
- informed consent (ver 1-27-16 stamped approved 2-9-16); email introduction (stamped approved 2-9-16); email follow up (stamped approved 2-9-16)

Federal regulations require that the original copy of the participant's consent be maintained in the principal investigator's files and that a copy is given to the subject at the time of consent.

Projects involving Mountain States Health Alliance must also be approved by MSHA following IRB approval prior to initiating the study.

Unanticipated Problems Involving Risks to Subjects or Others must be reported to the IRB (and VA R&D if applicable) within 10 working days.

Proposed changes in approved research cannot be initiated without IRB review and approval. The only exception to this rule is that a change can be made prior to IRB approval when necessary to

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eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects [21 CFR 56.108 (a)(4)]. In such a case, the IRB must be promptly informed of the change following its implementation (within 10 working days) on Form 109 (www.etsu.edu/irb). The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with ensuring the subject's continued welfare.

Sincerely,
Stacey Williams, Chair
ETSU Campus IRB

cc: Bethany H Flora, Ph.D.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

TITLE OF PROJECT: Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John Owen Driskill

Principal Investigator's Contact Information: driskillj@goldmail.etsu.edu, 423-552-1971
Organization of Principal Investigator: East Tennessee State University

INFORMED CONSENT

This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

A. PURPOSE:
The purpose of this research study is to fulfill the requirements for completing a doctorate degree in education. The intent of this study is to describe community college administrators' perceptions of their experience implementing initiatives related to Tennessee's performance funding model. Study results may be used to help inform college leaders regarding the implications of performance funding.

B. DURATION:
Participation consists of completing an open-ended form lasting approximately 30 minutes and a one-on-one interview lasting no more than 90 minutes. If clarification of your initial interview is necessary, you may be asked to participate in a follow-up conversation only to confirm the accuracy of the transcript of the interview and not to collect new data. Clarification of information will be done by telephone or email, based on your preference. Participation may also consist of being observed during events such as meetings. Data from observations will be generalized to avoid identifying the location or participants.

C. PROCEDURES:
The researcher will meet with nine staff members for one-on-one interviews regarding their experiences during the shift to Tennessee's new performance funding model. Prior to the interview, you will be asked to complete a form (Word document) and email it to the researcher. The Word document will be stored in a password-protected storage drive. All email will be handled through ETSU's email system.

Interviews will be audio-recorded. Recordings will be deleted from the recording device immediately after the file has been transferred to a password-protected storage drive. Recordings will be deleted from the password-protected drive when transcription is complete. Transcriptions will be in Excel documents kept in a password-protected storage drive.

You may be asked to participate in follow-up conversations if clarification of your initial interview is necessary. Interviews will be conducted in person, if possible, with follow-up conducted via email or telephone based on your preference. The researcher will also observe public meetings with permission of the meeting facilitator. During observations, the researcher will take notes describing proceedings, listening specifically for discussion of student success initiatives. In the qualitative tradition, the

APPROVED
By the ETSU IRB

FEB 0 9 2016

By _____
Chair IRB Coordinator

DOCUMENT VERSION EXPIRES

FEB 0 8 2017

TITLE OF PROJECT: Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John Owen Driskill

researcher will use thick description -- describing as much detail as possible-- when observing. Notes will be taken on a password-protected tablet computer and transferred to a password-protected storage drive. No identifiable information, including the location of the observation, will be included in the notes. Data from observations will be generalized to avoid identifying the location or participants.

D. ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES/TREATMENTS:
There are no alternative procedures except nonparticipation.

E. POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:
There is a risk of loss of confidentiality because interviews will be recorded (audio). There are no other foreseeable risks associated with this study.

F. POSSIBLE BENEFITS:
Your participation could help college administrators, faculty and staff better understand the implications of performance funding. Participants are not expected to receive a direct benefit.

G. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Your participation in this research experiment is voluntary. *You may choose not to participate.* If you decide to participate in this research study you can change your mind and quit at any time. If you choose not to participate, or change your mind and quit, the benefits or treatment to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Owen Driskill, whose phone number is 423-552-1971. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about continuing to participate.

H. CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions, problems or research-related questions at any time, you may call Owen Driskill at 423-552-1971 or Dr. Bethany Flora at 423-439-4430. You may also call the Chairman of the ETSU Institutional Review Board at 423.439.6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423.439.6055 or 423.439.6002.

I. CONFIDENTIALITY:
Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the Clemmer College of Education, Warf-Pickel Hall, Room 501 for at least 5 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the ETSU IRB, and John Owen Driskill and his research team have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as described in this form. Audio recordings (digital) of interviews will be transferred from the recording device to a password-protected storage drive. After transfer, the recordings will be deleted from the recording device. The recordings on the storage drive will be deleted after transcription is complete. Transcripts files (Excel documents) will not include identifiable information and will be stored in a password-protected storage drive.

APPROVED
By the ETSU IRB

FEB 0 9 2016

By _____
Chair IRB Coordinator

DOCUMENT VERSION EXPIRES

FEB 0 8 2017

Ver 01/27/16   Page 1 of 3   ETSU IRB   Participant Initials _____

TITLE OF PROJECT: Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John Owen Driskill

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understand this Informed Consent Document and that I had the opportunity to have them explained to me verbally. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that all my questions have been answered. By signing below, I confirm that I freely and voluntarily choose to take part in this research study.

_____   _____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____   _____
PRINTED NAME OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____   2/11/16
SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR   DATE

Ver 01/27/16   Page 1 of 3   Participant Initials _____

TITLE OF PROJECT: Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John Owen Driskill

Appendix C

Form Given to Participants

Directions

For each completion strategy, briefly describe specific initiatives that you are leading or are involved in implementing**.** Please include initiatives that are already in place and initiatives that are in the planning stages. In addition, describe what you perceive as the driving force behind the initiative.

Name: _____

Current position: _____

Years in current position: _____

Total years at the college: _____

Completion strategies	**For each completion strategy, briefly describe specific initiatives that you are leading or are involved in implementing**	**For each initiative that you are leading or heavily involved in, briefly describe what you perceive as the driving force behind the initiative.**
Improving student advisement		
Urging students to take a full-time course load		
Flagging at-risk students and intervening		
Reforming remedial education (learning support)		
Offering block scheduling and cohort scheduling		
Offering reverse articulation		
Improving faculty and staff knowledge of student success/completion strategies		
Using data to improve student success		

Appendix D

Interview Guides

Interview Questions A (academic affairs officer, curriculum director, advising director, academic support director, learning support directors, institutional research director, student affairs VP).

1. Describe the steps that led to the completion initiative. What was your role?
2. What barriers had to be overcome to implement the initiative? How were they overcome?
3. How did you get others to buy in to the initiative?
4. How do you measure the success of the initiative?
5. How do you celebrate the initiative? For example, is there special recognition of faculty who try it?
6. How do you promote the initiative to students, faculty, staff? Are there posters or events? For example, we had an event Operation Graduation to promote completing graduation paperwork.
7. Describe the connection between performance funding and this initiative. Do you have any sense of competition with other colleges, collaboration?
8. If performance funding went away, would you keep doing this initiative?
9. Suppose you had lunch with a college who retired 10 years ago, and the colleague asked you how the environment at the college had changed, what would you say?
10. Finish this thought for me. Student success at our institution is all about _____ what? Has that changed? How?
11. What symbols (slogans, emblems, etc.) does the college use to promote student success? For example, we use a common hashtag #accessandsuccess.
12. Overall, what values are driving institutional action regarding completion initiatives? How are those values different compared to previous efforts to help students succeed?
13. It's been an interesting time since performance funding and the Complete College Act. There have been Completion Academies and a lot of new initiatives. Describe for me what has changed here, at your college, in terms of culture. What's the atmosphere like here compared to a few years ago?

Interview Questions B: Financial Officer (FO)

1. Describe your role in student success and completion.
2. Regarding completion initiatives, what do you see as the college's priorities, based on how resources are allocated? What has changed since performance funding was implemented?
3. Reviewing the completion initiatives at the college, walk me through how they are handled in terms of resources. How were initiatives selected for funding? What were those discussions like?
4. From IPEDS data, we see the following trends through the last five fiscal years through FY 2014: academic support, total expenses up 19 percent; institutional support, up 31 percent; instruction, up 26 percent; student services, up 27 percent and public service, down 24 percent. Tell me about those changes. What's driving them?

5. Describe the experience of working with the performance funding model. How does it relate to completion initiatives and how you allocate resources? Do you have any sense of competition with other colleges, collaboration?
6. Suppose you had lunch with a college who retired 10 years ago, and the colleague asked you how the environment at the college had changed, what would you say?
7. Finish this thought for me. Student success at our institution is all about _____ what?
8. What symbols (catch phrases, emblems, etc.) does the college use to promote student success? For example, we use a common hashtag #accessandsuccess.
9. Overall, what values are driving institutional action regarding completion initiatives? How are those values different compared to previous effort to help students succeed?
10. If performance funding went away, would you keep doing these initiatives?
11. It's been an interesting time since performance funding and the Complete College Act. There have been Completion Academies and a lot of new initiatives. Describe for me what has changed here, at your college, in terms of culture. What's the atmosphere like here compared to a few years ago?

Appendix E

Document Analysis Guide

Type	Date	Values What language regarding performance funding initiatives expresses what the organization stands for, qualities worthy of esteem?	Beliefs In descriptions of completion initiatives, what assumptions or judgments are held to be true?	Customs What references are there to rituals, ceremonies, or symbols related to performance funding initiatives (celebrations of success, slogans)?

Appendix F

Observational Data Guide

What was observed:
Date:

Observation questions
1. When participants discuss initiatives related to performance funding, what values are indicated? What do participants indicate are qualities worthy of esteem?
2. What stories do participants tell about performance funding initiatives?
3. What metaphors do participants use in describing performance funding initiatives?
4. When participants discuss initiatives related to performance funding, what beliefs are indicated, what assumptions or judgments are held to be true?
5. When participants discuss initiatives related to performance funding, what rituals, ceremonies, or symbols are indicated?
6. What nonverbal communication do I observe?
7. In discussions of initiatives related to performance funding, what references indicate resource dependence?

Memos

Title: Observation of task force on retention and completion
Date: Jan. 22, 2016

This was my first observation and initially attendance appeared to be limited due to weather. However, staff were able to attend. Much of the meeting focused on logistics, when meetings would be scheduled etc., but there were some indications of values, beliefs and customs. The committee's leadership appeared to have a clear bias for action. When discussion came up about a company that could help students find assistance, the immediately reaction was to contact the company quickly and schedule a visit. The group seemed to be struggling with how to define itself and its purpose, indicating that it is a change and departure from previous committees. But, the phrase "get something done" was repeated. Participants did not want the committee to be one that did not accomplish goals. Instead, there was a sense of urgency. The energy level in the room seemed to pick up when discussing the success of the corequisite model. There was also some shock or disbelief that the previous model had been that bad. Going back to our main question, what do we see culturally? I see a sense of urgency. I see a clear bias for taking action, moving, not just meeting and discussing. I also see a search for definition and clarity of purpose.

Title: Observation of meeting of success coordinators
Date: Feb. 3, 2016

The room was much livelier than the task force on retention and completion. Participants included students and faculty. The discussion was guided by an agenda, but was mostly a free-for-all to discuss ideas. At times, there was great energy, but also a clear need to define roles and show the college what services are offered. Again, we see a need to find and identify. There was a lot of discussion of students and faculty not being aware of the services success coordinators offered. I also heard the phrase holistic used, especially in context of how software tools such as early alert may inhibit a holistic approach. Many made the point that students are helped every day without their situation being logged into a system. I also heard my first reference to PF when one member said it was important to share the work of the success mentors across the college because their work was connected to the college's success as a whole and to how the college is funded. I do not think this comment was made because I was there. My presence seemed to have been forgotten by that point and it just came up in the natural flow of conversation. What also stood out, this group emerged from a self-study conducted seven years ago, well before advanced PF in Tennessee.

Title: First round of interviews tell story of optimism, conflict
Date: February 17, 2016

I conducted the first round of interviews. I noticed repetition of some of what I have seen in the observations including a sense of urgency and what appears to be a genuine interest in student success. I also see signs of initiative fatigue, a palpable feeling of growing pressure to complete what seems to be a never-ending list of mandates to complete more students. I hear the first concerns of whether all of this -- completion, performance funding-- will eventually lead down the path of lowering standards to hand more students degrees. There does seem to be a sense of culture at the institution, driven by leadership. So far, funding does not seem to be the

top-of-mind response to the question "why are you doing, what you are doing?" Instead, leadership has apparently established a culture that student success is the college's purpose. I am also struck by how, in many ways, policies such as performance funding seem to assume that colleges do not want to get it right in the first place. I need to be careful not to steer conversations in that direction because that sentiment is a bias on my part. But, I will be interested to see if that sentiment surfaces in other participants without my prompting. I cannot help but be impressed by the passion of the people working on these initiatives. They are animated when they talk about them, both their strengths and weaknesses. Does the policy support their passion or restrain it?

Title: Final observation: Retention and Completion
Date: February 19, 2016

I attended a meeting of the retention and completion committee. As with the student success coordinators, this was a lively bunch, a lot of laughter and joking around. The main topic was how to implement a college-wide mentorship program that would provide students with a personalized team to help them through their first year or so. What stood out was that no one knew the numbers. Everyone was eager, but they kept asking over and over, how many students, how many faculty, how many advisors, how many financial aid, is that enough? They asked themselves for the same number multiple times. No one walked in with a spreadsheet or a chart on the board that show they had done the math on how many people it would take to make this work, and they struggled to figure it out. I would say this was a sign of that initiative fatigue that has come up in the interviews. The pattern might be something like -- here is an idea, mentoring for all students. Let's meet. Everyone get to the meeting excited. But no one has the numbers on how to make it work. I also noticed after the meeting the people who had asked hard questions about the numbers seemed to be almost apologizing for raising the question. I made a note to myself -- no one wants to be the naysayer.

Title: Optimism and the challenge of sustainability
Date: February, 19, 2016

After a second round of interviews, I see similar success and struggles. The administrators have a sense of competition, a desire to be the best. They all speak highly of their president and cite his leadership as the force that establishes expectations of putting students first. Culture is very much in play. I heard the phrase catalyst used to describe performance funding, a statement that fits into Kotter's model of change management. I need to be careful not to force that point, but I had theorized that the role performance funding plays is as a jumpstart. I also see the people, and I think performance funding may, as a policy, gloss over the people. I see an academic support director who moved heaven and earth to help a veteran reschedule his classes after his car broke down. I see a VP who started at a community college and clearly get nearly emotional when talking about her work. That's not something that comes from a formula. Again, I have to be careful not to steer conversations in that direction. Clearly, the formula is at work here. I also noticed that I see more refer to Drive to 55 or completion agenda or TBR rather the specifically the funding component. Again, we also see signs of initiative fatigue. How can they keep up this pace? How will they sustain it?

Title: The resource perspective
Date: March 2, 2016

Today's interview with the chief financial officer offered a different perspective on values, beliefs and customs. The CFO is not directly involved with initiatives. In fact, the CFO pointed out that his role is not really to judge the merits of an initiative. Rather, once it arrives on his desk, his role is to make sure it can be funded. He has an in-depth sense of where resources are used, and he emphasized that the college was moving resources into advising, tutoring and student engagement outreach. What stood out was that he shared, as have others, the mentality that it was the college's role to, as he put it, hold students' hands, and that hand-holding has an ROI. Even student clubs have an ROI, if they keep students engaged and happy and, therefore, interested in staying in school. The value system seemed to be similar to colleagues that deal more directly in academic or student services initiatives. The word focus seemed to come up frequently. The college must be focused. The student must be focused. Is there a downside to focus?

Title: Values, focus, and conflict
Date: March 3, 2016

Today completed the final round of interviews. Common threads seem to be repeating. I hear an ingrained commitment to students that appears to have existed long before performance funding. I hear an exhaustion with initiatives. I hear a conflict between efficiently moving students through a system and the broader purpose of education. I hear a push to change, now not later. Much of the discussion today dealt with the switch to corequisite remediation, one of the larger changes since the CCTA. But, it really came down to a mandate. Maybe the CCTA forced the mandate, but really, it could have been done anytime. As they said in Apollo 13, going to the moon wasn't a miracle, we just decided to go. Anytime, TBR could have decided to go, and the colleges would have done it. The conflict between efficiency and education is prevalent. In thinking of all the interviews, I see people of great energy in interviews. In meetings, though, we see the struggle to make the initiatives work with limited resources and time. I would imagine those themes will come through during transcription and coding, but I must be careful not to let those first impressions cloud the data.

Title: A culture of initiatives
Date: March 19, 2016

After one round of transcription, what stands out is the tension caused by the flurry of initiatives. I need to be careful about reading too much into conflict and tension, but it is something that has been apparent on various forms. I also see, to some degree, that much of culture and values were embedded before CCTA and in some ways, CCTA added strength to pre-existing values and beliefs, but again, I need to be careful not to reach too much into statements and stick what is actually in the data.

Title: The common thread of leadership
Date: March 23, 2016

In an interview with a leader of cohort programs, for maybe the ninth time, I've heard the importance of leadership as a drive. Again, I need to be careful about drawing conclusions before reviewing the data, but it's striking that each, or nearly each, participant has discussed the role of the president in driving change. I also see that sometimes the formula is an argument-resolver. We want to do X. Well, here's why it won't work. But, the formula …. OK. It reminds me of how we used to solve arguments in the newsroom. Inevitably someone would bring up, "but it's what is best for the reader" and if that was the case, that ended the discussion. I see parallels

here, the formula playing the role of a way to justify initiatives that perhaps the institution knows are important. I also again heard the initiative-fatigue syndrome. A good future study might be a look at initiative fatigue. Regarding setting, the participant had folders on her desk of students in cohorts and could tell you what was happening with each individual student. Her students were, literally, at her fingertips.

Title: Disruption and giving a voice to those who need it
Date: March 24, 2016

As I transcribe and code, I wanted to capture a few thoughts I've had, partly to get them down also to document the thoughts to recognize they are there and to consciously avoid biasing my analysis toward them. First, the phrase disruption comes to mind, in terms of culture. Outcomes funding, or Complete College, led to a disruption. Almost all participants have referred to initiative fatigue, indicating that there is more going on now than in the past. Also, a remark by participant stood out to me. The participant said something along the lines that the formula gave people permission to do things. It's pretty clear the values and beliefs were pretty well in place at the institution. A culture existed, a positive one. I wonder if performance funding in some ways gives a voice or a platform for those wanted to do things, such as cohorts. The desire to help was already there. The logic was there. The formula gave them a voice, a closing argument to actually get something implemented.

Title: Breaking down resistance
Date: March 27, 2018

This is a quick note to capture an idea, one to get it down and two, to make sure it does not cloud further analysis. One pattern, very early, that is emerging is that the college, because of the initiatives related to CCTA, is a place where resistance to changes is slowly wearing away. The CCTA is passed, which changes the funding, which changes what TBR focuses on, which changes how they want institutions to operate, which leads to initiatives, a lot of them, which eventually leads to an acceptance of initiatives that may not have been there before.

Title: The stories that stand out
Date: April 4, 2016

As I continue through transcription and initial coding, I wanted to document the stories that have remained in my mind at this point. I remember the story of the veteran administrators worked with to have his schedule moved to a different campus so he could keep taking classes after his car broke down. I remember the story that after a busy week, the college president still took time to spend the day at an off-campus site, a weekly commitment he had made. What stood out is that an administrator noticed that the president kept that commitment, even in a week when it would have been perfectly reasonable not to. I believe at this point I've had two stories of people helping homeless students. I remember the stories of administrators talking about their own experience as community college students. I remember the story of the Chinese visitor who felt we were moving toward inflexibility, which is what they were moving away from, and how an administrator believed PF was responsible for the shift. I'll need to pay close attention to the stories as I work on further analysis.

Title: The story of performance funding
Date: April 9, 2016

One comment that came up in discussion with my chair was the idea of the outcomes formula as a symbol. I need to be careful about reading too much into this too early in the analysis, but the idea is intriguing. As I listen and a look at the data, I notice how participants tell a similar story about the old way of funding of focusing on butts in seats. One joked about how the college would had a running joke that fall was time to get more students off the main Parkway. As I analyze, I need to pay special attention the story of the old formula, as told by the participants. Very early, I think there may be quite a bit of similarity in how they describe the old formula, and the values they ascribe to it, which is telling in terms of the symbolic value of the new formula.

Title: The similar differences
Date: April 17, 2016

As I completed transcriptions, a few more common links were evident from participant to participants. One, while participants sometimes disagreed on an issue, they tended to have a value-based rationale for their position. For example, one participant stated that the Tennessee Transfer Pathways were working well and benefitted students. They were worthwhile because they supported student success. Another participant disagreed with the pathways and observed that they sometimes failed students. These were two opposite positions on the same initiative, but the opposite positions shared a common foundation of values. I also think, I'd have to check to be sure, that almost all participants, without prompting, has named a metric used in the formula, but almost none of the participants cited funding, by name, on their preinterview forms. I'd have to check the forms to be sure. Also, I think all participants mentioned that they would continue various initiatives regardless of whether performance funding was maintained. The unanimity in that response indicates that these initiatives, from the view of the people implementing them, are tied to more than resource dependence alone.

Title: The vision of performance funding
Date: April 21, 2016

As I continue through initial coding, I am seeing more support for the formula as a symbol. If I were to make a policy recommendation to any state right now, it would be to start first with a collective vision for higher education, created with input from the colleges and universities, brand that vision, and then develop a formula that supports that vision. I continue to notice that participants view Drive to 55, the vision, as intertwined with PF. I think PF in Tennessee would, potentially, be less effective without the vision. In addition, a vision-based formula could tap into the varied motivation of the people who will ultimately be responsible for moving the completion needle.

Title: About "right" and "pathway"
Date: April 23, 2016

During initial coding, I read the word "right" frequently. Right path. Right thing to do. Right track. Right program. Getting students in the right major. I wonder what the definition of right is now in education. Is right fast? Is right thorough? Is right rigorous? What's clear is that participants have a value, belief or understanding that rightness is in play here. That all of this, the initiatives, completion, performance, has something to do with right and wrong. I also read the word path a lot. Getting students on a path. Keeping students on a path. When did path become the metaphor for higher ed? Is it the right metaphor? What are the implications of what we might call path-thinking? Paths are good. They show us where to go. By following them we

get, somewhere. But by following a path we only ever get where someone else has already been. 100 percent of the time we follow a path, it ends where someone has gone before. Fifty years ago, I wonder if we thought of education, especially higher ed, as a path. Should it be a path? Should it be more like a canvas -- take as much as you want, expose yourself to all the classes you want, and throw it against the canvas and let's see what it looks like when you're done. Let's see where your learning takes you? Now, that's a helluva investment for a state to make. It's high risk. It's nebulous. It's saying we are going to just fund all the education someone wants and not worry about the job it leads to, maybe pairing that with rigorous education in the soft skills areas employers so desperately want. But I wonder if the return on that type of investment could be incredible because it's the students who get off the path that might well innovate and create industries we have not even thought of.

Title: Final analysis
May 12, 2016

I completed my analysis and wanted to share reflections that come to mind without looking back at notes. Consider this an impressionistic view of the funding. The college clearly puts students first. That is evident. It's a deeply rooted value at the institution. Perhaps some are only saying students come first, but almost all participants expressed that sentiment and the stories they tell and the stories relayed in observations suggest that students-first is a fundamental value. On beliefs, the core issue is what is college? Do participants believe it is a narrow path to be followed or a world to be explored? The state seems to view college as a track, a narrow path to be followed, which leads to pressures on administrators. On customs, there is some evidence of celebration related to PF, but primarily, an acknowledgement that more celebration is needed. The college also has a strong sense of community and pride, which is summarized in what people referred to as The College Way. Regarding changes in values, beliefs and customs, the cycle of initiative fatigue has become a custom, a ritual of initiative proposal, initiative resistance, and finally initiative acceptance. I also see the role PF plays as a symbol. It is used a change agent, a focus point, an expression of values, but also as an afterthought in terms of motivating individuals. Overall, though, the value and cultural systems were well-established before PF was enacted. PF may have refined and polished the pre-existing culture and value.

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Audit Trail

April 2015

     I am beginning this log to keep a record of critical decisions made during the research process. One of the first decisions was to select states for my sample. I wanted two state with a high-percentage of state funds based on outcomes, and two states with low percentage. For the high percentage states, I selected Tennessee and Ohio, which base more than 50% of funding on outcomes. For the low percentage states, I selected Illinois (1%) and Indiana (6-7%). The selection of Indiana was a compromise. Indiana has implemented a new performance-funding model that now appropriates base funding base on outcomes. However, the percentage is low. Performance funding may be a buzzword in Indiana because the formula is new. Ideally, I would have found a state that had a performance-funding model that had not changed in years, but most states that have them are revising them. Therefore, I have moved more toward a "high percentage vs. low percentage" definition of performance-funding rather than "new vs. old."

May 2015

     The community college system in Indiana is unusual in that it operates as unified system under one name, Ivy Tech. Academic planning is handled by regionally and through a central office rather than by campus.. In other states, I will select officers from individual campuses only. But for Indiana, because of the way the system is structured, I decided having regional perspectives and central office perspectives would be logical.

June 2015, Message to Chair

     After mulling things over the last few days, I wanted to write a note on where I am and where I think I am heading over the next few weeks.

     1. What you said about this being more of an art than a science stood out to me. I now understand why we had all these discussions on where knowledge comes from. I suppose this is the difference between reading about these issues and then wrestling with them for a real purpose. I think I am now more open to a let's-dive-in-and-see-where-this-goes approach.

     2. I'll hit the literature review pretty hard over the next few weeks. Tentatively, I have it broken down into five pieces.

     a. Brief history of performance funding 1.0, leading into ...

     b. Studies related to the effectiveness of 1.0, leading into ....

     c. Emergence of performance funding 2.0, more detailed than history of 1.0, leading into .

     d. Studies related to effectiveness of 2.0, which builds the case that this is a new arena for study, leading into ...

     e. Policy profile of Tennessee, which is where we look at TBR docs and THEC docs over the past five years, looking for any shifts. This will be kind of a baseline for our survey instrument and the line of questioning for the interviews.

     Overall goal here is to dig as deep as we can, but to still have the study centered on academic officers and the theme of change and adaptation so we keep our focus.

     That's where I am on a humid Monday morning

     Thank you

July 2015

I made a significant decision to focus strictly on Tennessee and Illinois and to add business officers to the sample. The rationale is that the study is really a question of examining cultural changes at community colleges in light of performance funding. Tennessee is the aggressive, higher percentage performance funding 2.0 state. Illinois is a low-percentage 2.0 state. This is criterion sampling with TN meeting the criterion of being a high percentage state and Illinois as a foil as a low percentage state with the difference between the two being the percentage of state appropriations based on performance, we examine, through qualitative interview interviews and document research, the culture of community colleges in those states. Do they appear to be similar or different? What does that tell us about performance funding's influence? I may pick the key areas listed in a state audit of Tennessee Complete Act and use them as a way to survey participants and, without mentioning performance funding, see if they naturally mention it when discussing those key areas.

This is a raw draft of clarifying the purpose statement

Organizational Culture of a Community College in an Era of High-Percentage Performance Funding. The purpose of the study is to describe organizational culture of community colleges operating under a high-percentage performance funding model that bases almost all state appropriations based on outcomes. Based on resource dependence theory, we should see signs of innovation, change, etc.

Plan of attack

Based on the state audit of Tennessee's Complete College Act, we have a breakdown of points of emphasis for colleges operating under high-percentage performance funding.

Improve advisement of students

Encourage full-time course schedule

Implement early alert systems

Reform developmental education

Provide block scheduling or cohort scheduling

Offer reverse articulation

Active study of completion strategies (such as TBR completion academies, Achieving the Dream)

To get at organization culture, we go behind-the-scenes in each of those areas. We survey academic officers at community colleges and ask them in an open-ended survey form to discuss what they are doing in each area and what prompted action in each area. We look at IPEDS data to triangulate whether anything is moving in these areas over the last few years (are more students going full-time? are more dollars being allocated to student support services?). We look at documentation such as agenda from the agenda from Tennessee completion academy). We interview academic officers about those areas, not about what changes they are making but what prompted the change. Based on the language they use, maybe something telling about organizational culture emerges. We triangulate the Tennessee academic officers with academic officers from Illinois, a low-percentage state, as foil to Tennessee. Are there differences? If not, what does that tell us about organizational culture in this new era of performance funding?

Big questions
1. Do we talk to more than academic officers? For example, do we ask business officers about academic policies? The idea is to get at culture, do we get two points of view (the person who sets academic policies and the person who works most closely with resources).
2. Do we try to talk to all 13 Tennessee community colleges, pick a random group, pick a few that seem to have done well in the funding formula?
3. Would a better approach be to pick one Tennessee community college and one Illinois college and work through multiple sources at each (Academic officer, business officer, advising director, learning support director?). Maybe pick a college in Tennessee that has done well in the formula (they should be very innovative and transformative as they adapt to compete for scarce resources, right?) and one in Illinois that has done well in their formula.

Here is my game plan, as of today. I will look at data related to performance funding in Illinois and Tennessee. From the data, I can develop a list of schools that showed increases in performance funds. From the top performers, I will select one to study. The one selected will not necessarily be the top performer, but will be among the top performers to preserve confidentiality. I will interview academic officers, learning support director, advising directors and business officers at each school because these people are most closely tied to the areas of emphasis in Tennessee, as outlined in the state audit of the Complete College Act. I will also look at IPEDS data to guide interviews. I will ask participants to complete a short survey before the interviews. The main focus is Tennessee. Participants from Illinois will be used to triangulate Tennessee. The different points of view of each participant will triangulate each other.

August 2015
We made the critical decision to focus only on a Tennessee college. The thought process here is a continuation of our efforts to make the study more focused and more in-depth. In addition, adding a second state or multiple state seemed like a stretch when dealing with the issue of culture, a topic that begs to triangulated through documents, interviews and observations. Observations especially would not be possible to an degree with an out-of-state site.

September 2015
The question keeps coming back to what is the phenomenon. For me, I think it comes down to how is this highly aggressive new performance funding model driving the conversation at colleges. Maybe culture is not the right word, although it includes elements of culture. I could see the phenomenon being the life experience of people managing this change, with a focus on how they perceive it as influencing their values, beliefs and customs.

November 2015
We are getting closer to identifying the phenomenon. As of now, it's the cultural influence of resource dependence in a high-percentage performance funding environment.

December 2015
I have increased the participants from four to eight, giving me two representatives each from the major areas of academic policies, learning support reform and advising, plus two to

offer a broad perspective on all initiatives. In addition, I have identified observational opportunities of a meeting of student success coaches and a meeting of a completion and retention committee.

January 2016
I also identified the VP for student affairs as a participant because the individual seemed very knowledgeable of success initiatives and could provide additional context related to the research questions.

February 2016
I wanted to write a brief note on contacting participants. In contacting participants and in observations, I've been open and clear about the topic of the study. I have not gone into great detail but succinctly describe it as a study on student success initiatives in a performance funding environment, viewed through a cultural lens. I had some concerns about the risk of whether this would bias participants, but decided it was better to err on the side of being open about the focus of the study, but not tell participants what I expected they might say or what I was specifically listening for in their answers. I believe this was the right balance. After interviews, some participants asked about the research, and I was upfront with them about the research questions. I strongly felt that I should err on the side of being open with participants, but there was a risk that some participants could share their interview experience with other participants during the normal course of working together at the same institution.

February 2016
Interviews and observations began. The interview schedule is tight, with nine scheduled over a total of 6 days (spread over two weeks). I used a tight schedule to avoid, as much as possible, participant bias as I talk to colleagues who know each other and, in some ways, to take advantage of the fact that my interaction with colleagues might prime participants to be thoughtful on the issues involved in the inquiry
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March 2016
Interviews concluded. An additional interview was added at the suggestion of a participant. Document analysis has begun along with transcription coding. The interview data will be the foundational data for the study, with data from documents and observations confirming or disconfirming the data. Regarding document data, I used meeting minutes because the purpose of the study was to evaluate perceptions of these initiatives, to get a sense of what people thought about them and what they said behind the scenes. Documents such as strategic plans are excellent for policy analysis, but that's not what this is. I also wanted to mention in listening to transcripts, my inexperience comes through, especially at times asking leading questions. In some cases, I did want to get participants' reactions to their own contradictions, but I also inadvertently asked leading questions at times.

April 2016
Transcription and initial coding was completed.

May 2016
Development of categories and themes was completed.

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