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Leadership Perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers

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Leadership Perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers: An Exploratory Study

by

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Abstract: Leadership in student affairs continues to be a challenging enterprise for universities. Colleges are expected to help students succeed while providing for abundant needs through graduation. Chief student affairs officers have increasing demands of students and faculty amid decreased funds. This exploratory study took an in-depth look at the leadership perspectives of 19 chief student affairs officers at 4-year, public universities across the Midwest. The researcher sought responses on common leadership perspectives, challenges faced, and opportunities encountered. The three emerging themes were elements that inform leadership, knowledge and skills, and mindful leadership outlook. These emergent themes formed the basis for a Student Affairs Leadership Model of best practices that may provide a basis for future research.

Dedication

Someone once told me that when you get your PhD, your spouse earns it with you. There is much truth in that, thank you to my lovely wife Rachel. Without your support, I would not have made it through this journey. I love you and look forward to many more journeys together.

To my kids, Alara and Caleb. Alara came to our home as I was getting ready to apply to the program and Caleb was born during my first semester after being admitted, I can hardly believe I have been in the program this long! It's amazing how this process coincided with becoming your father. I used to think having kids made this journey more challenging but learned that having you in my life made me more determined. You may not know it, but you were a huge encouragement along the way. I love you both.

Acknowledgements

To my parents, seeing your success and educational attainments likely helped set the path for me to strive for this degree. Thank you for your love, support, and encouragement along the way.

To the Chief Student Affairs Officers I visited. Thank you for allowing me to drive to your campus and talk about your leadership perspectives. Your stories were enlightening and I think of them often.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Student affairs is the administrative unit charged with helping students with various aspects of their college experience. These complex organizations require stable leadership in order to exist within the larger context of the university setting as well as manage the departments who assist students with diverse needs and interests. The challenges of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) are vast with demands coming from the president, administrative units, faculty, staff, students, and parents. They are expected to demonstrate leadership while being mindful of institutional goals, budget policies, and the ever-changing nature of higher education in our complex society. While different philosophies and values shape the field of student affairs (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011), this study seeks to explore the depths of experiences and challenges faced by CSAOs.

Origins of student affairs date back to the early years of Harvard College when faculty were called upon to assist students with needs that reached beyond the classroom (Sandeen, 1991); Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Throughout the past couple centuries, colleges and universities have continued to learn more about the needs of students in order to provide appropriate services as well as stay competitive in their recruitment processes. Organizationally, student affairs divisions consist of multiple campus departments focused on elements concerned with "educating the whole student" (Dungy & Gordon, 2011, p.64). This generally refers to any part of the college experience that is not directly related to being in the classroom. Leadership within divisions of student affairs continues to play a significant role in shaping these experiences in order to help students succeed.

Many organizational and leadership theories exist that can help inform best practices in student affairs (Astin & Astin, 2000; LePeau, 2015; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011; Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). However, as higher education evolves, theory is perhaps becoming even more important in providing foundational practices to help CSAOs make decisions in spite of all the challenges they face. We know that in the field of student affairs there is high turnover (Evans, 1988; Frank, 2013; Wilson, Liddell, Hirschy, & Pasquesi, 2016), and leaders are asked to manage a number of issues that face faculty, staff, students, as well as other aspects of higher education. Professional organizations exist in order to help student affairs professionals understand best practices and valued competencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

While organizational theories and competencies are necessary for the field of student affairs, a study that looks at the richness of the CSAOs experiences can add to our understanding of how practice plays a role in these theories. A targeted inquiry into the practical experiences of CSAOs can provide future researchers an opportunity to test theories in conjunction with the challenges that are common occurrences. If the field of student affairs is to continue evolving, it is imperative that leaders anticipate how the field may grow and change in a manner that meets the needs of students and the demands of the institution.

Researchers have used multiple organizational theories (Kezar, 2001, 2011; Kezar & Eckel, 2000; Renn & Patton, 2011; Manning & Munoz, 2011; Astin & Astin, 2000; LePeau, 2015) and leadership practices (Campbell, 2015; Oh, 2013; Smith, 2013; Tull & Freeman, 2011; Whitt & Schuh, 2015) to study student affairs administration. Organizational and leadership frameworks in student affairs help leaders to understand how all the moving parts work together in an institution. Higher education consists of complex organizational environments that involve exploring multiple leadership roles with various academic and institutional goals. By exploring

the reality of the CSAO experience, I will contribute to what we know about leadership within student affairs.

Although there has been a significant amount of research on student affairs administrators, there is a high need for qualitative data from multiple CSAOs in order to better understand the complexities and challenges they face. Recently, researchers conducted a large qualitative study with two primary research questions; (1) "what troubles you?" and (2) "what keeps you going?" (Porterfield & Whitt, 2016; Roper, Porterfield, Whitt, & Carnaghi, 2016; Roper & Whitt, 2016; Whitt & Carnaghi, 2016). Faculty, staff, and administrators hold opinions of how they think a university should progress; CSAOs have the responsibility both to create a vision for how to move their divisions forward and to respond to unforeseen challenges. They must know how to create a vision, how to align goals with the university president, and how to navigate the multitude of layers both from various leaders and consumers of their institutions. In order to know more about the perspectives of CSAOs, in-depth research must be undertaken.

Operational Definitions

Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO): Refers to the individual in charge of all units of student affairs within a given institution. This term is often synonymous with Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAO), Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA), and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs.

President: Refers to the head administrator with a specific university. Often referred to as chancellor.

Chief Academic Officer (CAO): The leaders who is the head administrator of the academic affairs unit. Works closely with faculty. Sometimes referred to as Provost.

Midlevel Professional: Student affairs professionals who are generally between the vice president and those who are doing work within a department. In many cases these are directors of departments.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership perspectives of chief student affairs officers at large, public institutions. I sought to understand how the leaders of student affairs divisions practice their leadership amid numerous challenges and responsibilities. Facing challenges on the job includes both how CSAOs handle problems as well as what makes their job the most difficult in meeting their goals. Another goal of this study was to get a better understanding of opportunities that come along with being a CSAO. Understanding more about the expectations that CSAOs face when providing leadership for individuals both within and outside their institutions can inform practice and expectations of the position.

Leadership perspectives may be held by a CSAO when they begin their positions and often they have to lead by responding to situations as they arise. Aside from challenges faced by CSAOs, I wanted to learn about opportunities available to CSAOs. In other words, why would a person want to be a CSAO? Or, how do personal or professional opportunities present themselves? As changes occur, research can document practices and expectations of CSAOs as leaders of their organization. Exploring the practice experiences of CSAOs can help to formulate new ideas for leadership among this group of leaders (Reason & Kimball, 2012). The results of this research study will inform current CSAOs of best leadership practices, people interested in pursuing the CSAO position, university presidents, student affairs staff, and other individuals who regularly work with a CSAO such as the Chief Academic Officer (CAO).

Research Questions

The research questions were intended to get a holistic perspective of experiences and practices of the CSAO position and served as the centerpiece in understanding their perspectives. Three research questions guided this study.

1. What leadership perspectives are necessary in order to be a successful Chief Student Affairs Officer?

2. How do Chief Student Affairs Officers perceive the challenges associated with their position?

3. How do Chief Student Affairs Officers perceive the opportunities associated with their position?

As higher education continues to evolve, the field of student affairs needs to be deliberate in how it prepares and selects leaders. As with any leadership position there may be assumptions as to what constitutes effective leadership in a student affairs division. However, a CSAO often deals with unforeseen challenges due to the unpredictable nature of students and situations within a university. From the general public and students' perspective, CSAOs are often defined by how they handle challenges, such as a campus crisis. The day-to-day duties are also important as directors, managers, staff, and other university constituents rely on the CSAO to manage the typical responsibilities that are defined within the job description, such as managing budget and personnel.

Rationale of the Study

The field of student affairs is primarily oriented toward quality practice (Kimball & Ryder, 2014), thus, qualitative inquiry can best document those practices directly from the leaders of student affairs divisions. Much of the research on CSAOs is quantitative or focuses

more specifically on case studies; only one study was found that revealed specific challenges and opportunities of CSAOs (Whitt, Roper, Porterfield, & Carnaghi, 2016). A CSAO is a unique leader; it is imperative that administrators in higher education are directly informed from the leaders who work and practice in this field each day. This research study yielded findings that are informative to practice in student affairs. Practice is partially informed by learning more about the nuances and experiences that are faced in the field daily.

The results of this study represent an exploration of leadership qualities based on practical experiences of the top administrators of student affairs at large, public universities. Student affairs practitioners are expected to understand competencies in the field (Eaton, 2016; Randall & Globetti, 1992) yet there is also a need for "practical wisdom" (Dalton & McClinton, 2002). Having an appreciation of student affairs practice involves many different elements (Kinzie, 2015) and right now there is a need for using research to influence practical application in the field (Perna, 2016).This can be done by investigating the leadership perspectives of the CSAOs and knowing more about how they are situated within higher education. I interviewed professionals leading student affairs divisions with the aim of learning about their experiences and perspectives as a leader. Since every individual is unique, different perspectives were discussed by all CSAOs; however, all of them shared common themes of leadership and practice.

Multiple layers of challenge confront CSAOs. Some challenges are more related to the problems that face all public institutions such as budgetary problems (Gansemer-Topf & Englin, 2015; Romano, Hanish, Phillips, & Waggoner, 2010), campus crisis situations, and common issues that tend to impact people regardless of location (Roper & Whitt, 2016). CSAOs work closely with their president, manage a large budget, and must be a fellow colleague of other university administrators (Sandeen, 1991). In addition, they work with other university

constituents such as faculty, staff, and students who have expectations about getting needs met that they believe are important. They are expected to have expertise of the entire institution (Parry, 2013) as well as make decisions that are morally sound (Richmond, 1989). While the CSAO has to work with a multitude of individuals, there are also very different types of challenges that he or she could face. These challenges may be increasing diversity among the students or increased tuition costs; a concern of all institutions. Challenges include the constant changes within the field of higher education such as a growing number of for-profit institutions, online courses, a growing demand for graduate education, or rapid changes in technology. Research on leadership in higher education has primarily focused on college presidents, but a critical look at other university administrators is also appropriate because there are several key individuals who make important administrative decisions (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

In order to better understand leadership of CSAOs this study needs to focus on more than just challenges. This can be difficult because often times it is easier for leaders to concentrate a great deal of their thoughts around issues that are hard to solve (Roper & Whitt, 2016). However, leadership is more complicated than just dealing with challenges on the job. It involves a comprehensive understanding of what is needed for the student affairs division within it institution through collaborative leadership approaches (Kezar, 2001). This study also looked at what student affairs leaders considered to be opportunities both on a personal or professional level. Furthermore, often times challenges in the field of student affairs are mirrored with potential opportunities for growth; this is also a component of the findings for this study.

Delimitations and Limitations

There were several limitations of this study; however, I took several steps to overcome many potential obstacles. Interviewing leaders in university settings run the risk of not getting responses that are truthful. Also, my participants may not be representative of the experiences of all chief student affairs officers whether there be regional or institutional differences. The study includes 4-year public institutions with over 10,000 students so there are bound to be some differences when attributing my findings to 2-year colleges, private institutions, or smaller campuses. Strategies I used to overcome these limitations were driving to every university and meeting the CSAO in person. This allowed them, as a participant, to be more comfortable in their own space and helped me build trust and reciprocity. I tried minimizing regional differences by traveling to eight different states, all of which had their own unique characteristics and challenges. Other differences among CSAOs were hopefully marginal as many of them brought backgrounds from various types of institutions across the country. And many of them are members of professional associations (e.g.; ACPA, NASPA) where they share similar networks and practices as other CSAOs from across the country.

Significance of this Study

While previous theories and research studies provide useful information about leadership in student affairs, I have not found any studies that provide opportunities for CSAOs to talk freely about their experiences using interviews as the primary form of data collection. This study allowed me as the researcher to ask open-ended questions where they expressed their own leadership perspectives. Most qualitative leadership studies on student affairs administrators are either bounded by preexisting theories or use quantitative means (Campbell, 2015; Oh, 2013; Smith, 2013; Tull & Freeman, 2011). However, this research study is unique because more

research needs to be done that is grounded in the experiences of the CSAOs, allowing them to

talk openly about lessons they have learned in leadership or unique challenges they face.

It was important that a research study be conducted in order to inform best practices of a

CSAO; partially because there is still a need for more research on leadership within higher

education (Kezar et al., 2006; Perna, 2016) and because many leadership theories have stemmed

from areas outside of higher education (Birnbaum, 1988). People who either hold the CSAO

position, or have an interest in holding the position, will benefit from these findings and what

they can expect in this role. The findings can assist current CSAOs, and help them to feel a

connection with other individuals who share similar struggles and experiences; the information

may help them think about how to best approach their jobs. Other leaders in the university may

also benefit from the results of this study such as a president, provost, a vice president, or student

affairs practitioners. While college presidents are concerned with multiple aspects of the

university, it may not be easy for them to understand issues encountered by CSAOs. Chief

academic officers may also benefit as there are needs for more collaborative efforts among the

divisions of student affairs and academic affairs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; Kezar, 2003; Whitt

et al., 2008). Such information may assist administrators when hiring incoming CSAOs, and help

them to know more about competencies and qualities they can expect (Randall & Globetti,

1992).

The results of this study make a unique contribution to the pre-existing literature by

looking beyond some of the traditional theories. However, the literature was used as a means to

develop the goals and outline for this study. Using inductive methods between data and analysis

helped me to take the perspectives directly from CSAOs and develop a framework. CSAOs need

to have many talents in order to do their job successfully (Sandeen, 1991). It is also important

that they understand there are different ways of approaching their style of leadership within a complex organization (Kezar, 2011; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Birnbaum, 1988). CSAOs stress the importance of having high levels of integrity (Campbell, 2015) and working well with their staff (Oh, 2013; Smith, 2013). If they are to create change within their institution they need to know how the pieces fit together while also practicing patience in the process (Kezar & Eckel, 2000).The data collection was primarily driven by interview methods, I also used prior theory and research to help construct this exploratory research study.

Conclusion

Higher education in America is constantly changing and the services required to help students be successful requires leadership that is prepared to take on the challenges. Student affairs is often referred to as the division within a university that is in charge of everything that is not directly happening in the classroom. In order to be prepared for the unforeseen challenges it is important we understand the essential elements expected of a CSAO in order for the field to best prepare future student affairs leaders. This research design provides suggestions based on the open-ended data obtained directly from the CSAOs.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research study focused on the leadership perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAOs); the literature will provide a more in-depth rationale for the study. There has been much research conducted on leadership within student affairs, both from the perspective of the CSAO, as well as other student affairs leaders within an institution, such as directors (Oh, 2013; Smith, 2013). Leadership perspectives from CSAOs have been studied using quantitative instruments (Campbell, 2015; Tull & Freeman, 2011); however, little research has been conducted that looks at their in-depth leadership experiences. In order to help build a theoretical framework for this study, I begin the background of literature by defining the role of a CSAO. Then, I provide an overview of how organizational theory has been used in student affairs. Following the overview of theory, I highlight former research studies that helped guide the framework for this study.

Defining the Role of the Chief Student Affairs Officer

As leader of a student affairs division, the CSAO must work closely with many university constituents. Sandeen (1991) said the CSAO needs to be a manager, mediator, and educator. As manager the CSAO must understand the university is an organization that has many complex parts; it is important that he or she manage the departments and be "accountable for the programs, facilities, and financial resources of the entire division" (p.89). Beyond the typical managerial skills, many people look to the CSAO for different needs; "their ability to handle controversy, resolve conflicts, and foster cooperation among competing interests is equally important to their success" (Sandeen, p.120). The foundation of any academic institution is focused on education; CSAOs know that their role is also that of an educator. Being an educator

may or may not include activities in a classroom; but, at the root of many of their decisions CSAOs must consider educational outcomes (Jones, Harper, & Schuh, 2011).

The CSAO holds a position regarded as high-authority within the institution. Often times, he or she reports directly to the president, and works as one of the administrators, who govern multiple divisions. Because they work closely with the president, a CSAO must remain cognizant that there may be demands placed upon the president, from either the trustees of the university or members in the state government, such as the governor or state legislators. However, the CSAO also must be mindful of the needs of the student affairs departments that directly serve the students; they must work closely with the directors and be ready to respond to problems that students face on campus.

Outside of the organizational structure within student affairs divisions, there are also other entities that could influence their leadership perspectives. In many states, the government may make decisions that have significant impacts on how student affairs divisions function as a public institution; such as tying funding formulas to student performance (Hanushek & Lindseth, 2009). In some cases, college presidents inform legislators of the institutional needs, and often make decisions that will appease elected officials. Beyond elected officials there are boards of trustees and coordinating commissions that often provide their own goals on what should be the direction of the university (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003). Making decisions based on these outside constituents may influence how a CSAO leads.

Faculty members originally held the roles assisting students outside of the classroom in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Throughout the 20th century, assisting students has developed into its own professional field (Dungy & Gordon, 2011, Sandeen, 1991). The first dean of students was a faculty member at Harvard who was named into the position in 1890 (Dungy &

Gordon, 2011; Sandeen, 1991) and the focus of "educating the whole student" became part of the institutional fabric (Dundy & Gordon, 2011). Positions were developed that would become part of the student affairs field where professional staff would oversee disciplinary issues, student housing, and other aspects of the college that were not directly related to academics. As a result, the need for practitioners dedicated to providing the services and opportunities to help meet the diverse needs of students has continued to grow.

Academic Relevance

Student affairs professionals are sometimes questioned in the role they play in achieving the academic mission of the institution (Penn, 1993). As a result, there is a strong push for having more collaborative efforts between administrators in student affairs and in academic affairs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001; LePeau, 2015; McKee, 1993; Penn, 1993). Faculty have been encouraged to take roles in working with student affairs offices such as housing and first-year orientation programs (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). However, this is often deemed as being one-sided, since student affairs professionals are generally the officials within the university who need faculty to assist them, not the other way around (Bourassa & Kruger, 2001). Different cultural philosophies between student affairs and academic affairs often plague the potential for stronger collaboration on student services (Engstrom & Tinto, 2000).

The leadership within student affairs programs may struggle with institutional demands that place high priority on issues related to academic affairs (Penn, 1993). Forming and cultivating strong relationships across campus is important for the CSAO (Ellis, 2009). This includes relationships with the chief academic officer and the rest of the student affairs leadership in their institution. In a business setting, one could argue that the primary goal is generating revenue, the process of making money may vary but the end goal is still the same.

The goal for student affairs programs is to serve students, however, with so many different leaders involved at various levels of the institution; student affairs administrators have multiple facets to consider when determining their own success (Reybold, Halx, & Jimenez, 2008; Smith, 2013; Whitt et al., 2008).

Organizational Theory in Higher Education

The role of student affairs leaders has expanded in recent years as technology, campus violence, and tuition costs have continued to increase (Garland & Grace, 1993). With increasing changes to the field, CSAOs need to continue to evaluate their roles as leaders. There are multiple theories that have been used to look at leadership in student affairs; they may range from comprehensive organizational theories to organizational change (Kezar, 2001). In higher education, the use of theory is necessary in order to provide frameworks for leaders to work together and accomplish the missions of their institutions (Broudy, 1981). It is advantageous for college administrators to view their tasks through either a theory or philosophy (Broudy); understanding multiple theories can enhance a person's ability to lead. Tull and Freeman (2011) stated that "By using multiple frames, individuals increase their ability to express a heightened intuition, understand human-dynamics, and improve their decision-making abilities" (Broudy, 1981, as provided in Tull and Freeman, p. 34).

In recent years, many colleges and universities have moved from a traditional approach for its leaders to a more pluralistic approach (Kezar, 2001a) which involves collaboration across campus. Some leaders have attempted moving toward a model of servant leadership where faculty, staff, and administrators within a university are encouraged to assist one another; the outcome can be greater regard for everyone's opinions regardless of position title (Kezar). However, changing to a new model of leadership is not without its challenges; institutional

leaders need to spend time understanding various leadership preferences and styles of their

university constituents. Applying theory to organizational structure on a college campus requires

an understanding of the environment and utilizing a model that fits with the mission and culture

of the institution (Renn & Patton, 2011).

Kezar (2001) has written extensively about many leadership and organizational theories

in higher education including servant leadership, pluralistic leadership, and multicultural

leadership. Additionally, Kezar (2011)has looked at how campuses can move from a more

traditional organizational approach that strongly values institutional hierarchy toward a model

that is more like a learning community for faculty and staff. She did this by comparing the four

frameworks of leadership by Bolman and Deal (1997) to Birnbaum's (1988) four frames of

higher education leadership model (Kezar, 2011) . The four frames of Bolman and Deal are (1)

structural, (2) human resource, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. Birnbaum's frames are (1)

bureaucratic, (2) collegial, (3) political, and (4) anarchical. These frames help leaders to practice

"multiframe thinking" (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kezar, 2011) which requires thinking "beyond the

narrow and mechanical approaches for understanding organizations" (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman and Deal (2003) stress that understanding each of the frames is ideal and that

leaders cannot be expected to have the right answers in all situations. The four frames provide

leaders new ways in which they might choose to lead. Alternatively, the context of the

organization may influence how the frames can help them make decisions. Structural involves a

leadership style that is focused on rules, policies, and goals. The human resource frame looks at

the needs, skills, and relationships of the individuals who report to the leader. Political is

concerned with power, conflict, and competition while symbolic focuses more on culture,

meaning, metaphor, and ritual. Each framework provides leaders new possibilities for how they might approach different situations.

The frames by Birnbaum (1988) are more specific to a university environment. The collegial institution is one where power is shared and individuals are considered equal. The second is the bureaucratic institution based more on rationalized structures of hierarchy when it comes to decision-making. A political institution is the third frame where cultural norms are more competitive in the quest for resources. Finally, the anarchical institution is where members of the community operate more individually and according to "vague goals" and "unclear decision-making" (Birnbaum, 1988, p.154). Birnbaum's frames are valuable in helping someone understand why universities are complex organizations. He provides context for common rules within an institution while pointing out the endless nuances in university politics. Kezar (2011) made a case on how multiple frames in organizational leadership are helpful in navigating the "unique characteristics and cultures of higher education" (p.240). She said the frames, "can help student affairs educators more quickly capitalize on complex thinking within organizations to inform decisions" (p.240).

Other theories discussed in higher education settings include those that deal more with the specific environment of the institution (Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2011). Renn and Patton (2011), used ecological theories to provide insight in how campus experiences vary from one institution to another. One might assume that the goals a small community college in a rural town are different compared to that of a large, public, research institution in an urban area because the two environments are not the same. The campus ecology is critical when assessing the institution as an organization. Similarly, in Berquist and Pawlak's (2008) six cultures of the

academy theory, there is not a single culture that is "right or wrong;" an assessment of the culture and any valuation depends on the university that is being analyzed (Manning & Munoz, 2011).

While theories can be useful when assessing postsecondary institutions, CSAOs must be aware that their leadership style, as well as the surrounding culture of the institution, play a role in how one is perceived as a leader. Drawing from existing theories and possessing a deep understanding of the organizational culture and values are necessary in order to be effective (Davies, Hides & Casey, 2001). Another way to demonstrate these traits is through transformative leadership, which allows all members to engage in the process of change (Astin & Astin, 2000). Components of transformative leadership include collaboration, empathy, self-knowledge, authenticity, commitment, and disagreement with respect. Within this definition "leadership is a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change" (p.8) as opposed to a management style that is more authoritative. In this case; basic assumptions about leadership are concerned with fostering change, are inherently value-based, view all people as potential leaders, and make the change as a group process (Astin & Astin, 2000). In other words, transformative leadership needs to take place across the entire institution, not within the individual silos of certain administrative offices or departments.

Relevant Research

The various theories that have been examined with regard to higher education are generally defined in one of two ways; either the leadership of an individual or within the context of the organization. Campbell (2015) found that theoretical literature in student affairs involved "effective leadership, the context of change, and a connection to the institutional mission and culture" (p.39). There is also some written about the change process in an organization which is often looked at either through the lens of leadership or organizational theory. In this section I

provide background of some of the more recent and significant studies that directly involve

leadership on chief student affairs officers. One exception is the study by Smith (2013) and Oh

(2013) who did a study on leadership of directors within student affairs divisions. While it does

not directly assess leadership of CSAOs, it relates to the nature of student affairs leadership

which I consider valuable to the theoretical framework of this study. This section ends with a

more recent study conducted on leadership perspectives of CSAOs that was published during the

time the study was taking place (Whitt et al., 2016). Their methods and findings compliment the

study well, so I have a section that describes the nature of their study and findings. All of the

following research summaries give credence for the study on leadership and CSAOs; my

approach is unique but still informed by each of them.

Kezar and Eckels's (2000) study on institutional change shows how the use of

organizational theories can assist understanding the change process. They studied six institutions

using Berquist's 1992 institutional archetypes of culture and Tierney's 1991 unique institutional

culture (cited in Kezar & Eckel, 2000). Participating schools were drawn from a pool of 23

institutions that were participating in the same transformative leadership program. The

universities had similar initiatives in order to conduct institutional transformation; however, each

institution had diverse characteristics (e.g., private research university, public doctoral

university, and community college). They concluded that change happens best when it is done as

a cultural process, indicating that it does not take place quickly nor is it up to one person to

decide the changes. Change strategies generally need to fit the context of the institution; Kezar

and Eckel suggested future research for instances when leaders might need to violate cultural

norms in order to implement change.

Kezar and Eckel (2000) used multiple theoretical frameworks in their study. One limitation was that they looked at very different types of institutions. Change processes are bound to be different between institutions with dissimilar core missions such as a community college and a large public research institution. They visited these campuses twice a year over a four-year period. A strength of this strategy is they analyzed the true nature of cultural change which is generally slow on a college campus. Looking at change across an entire institution is useful but their findings provide little evidence to see how leadership in student affairs is impacted. They acknowledged another limitation in their study did not look too in-depth at any particular "subculture" (p.11).

Campbell (2015) created the Chief Student Affairs Officer Critical Skills Inventory (CSI) that assessed leadership perspectives of CSAOs. This quantitative instrument was adapted from an instrument that measured leadership behaviors, attitudes, skills, and knowledge (BASK) (Davis, 2002). Campbell received responses from 441 surveys of SSAO's (Senior Student Affairs Officers) from around the country on their leadership perceptions. An important note, over half of the individuals held the title of "Vice President of Student Affairs" but many of them held other leadership roles within the student affairs division. Among her participants, Campbell found that integrity in the decision-making process was deemed as most critical for leaders in student affairs divisions. The item ranked least important was publishing or presenting at conferences, a reasonable expectation given that student affairs is primarily focused on practitioner experiences versus research (Reason & Kimball, 2012). This study was useful in analyzing the primary effects of the CSI instrument. Another major purpose was to focus on comparing gender, racial, and LBGT differences among CSAOs.

The study by Campbell (2015) was useful for the development of the study, because, it further develops an understanding of leadership perspectives from student affairs leaders. However, Campbell is unable to answer some of the deeper questions of leadership. For example, if integrity in the decision-making process is important, when might there be moments where a leader has to demonstrate integrity? When might integrity specifically be challenged in student affairs? In the study, I acquired information from fewer leaders, but the questions I asked of produced more in-depth data specifically from chief student affairs officers.

Smith (2013) and Oh (2013) examined how senior-level student affairs professionals (directors, not CSAOs) used leadership practices in developing their student affairs departments. (p.20). Data were collected using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) at two-large institutions in California, one public, one private. The LPI consists of five sections on leadership practices: (1) challenging the process, (2) inspiring a shared vision, (3) enabling others to act, (4) modeling the way, and (5) encouraging the heart. Of the five sections, enabling others to act was the leadership characteristic that had the highest reported practice. This category had high marks for six questions which included (1) developing cooperative relationships, (2) actively listening to diverse points of view, (3) treating people with dignity and respect, (4) supporting decisions other people make, (5) giving people a choice about how to do their work, and (6) ensuring that people grow in their jobs (Smith, 2013). Understanding these perspectives is helpful in gaining insight into how CSAOs approach their own style of leadership as well as the challenges they encounter.

The study by Smith (2013) and Oh (2013) was useful in finding that student affairs leaders value the leadership perspective of "enabling others to act." However, this study only looked at two universities, both located in California. There is a risk that the leadership

perspectives are only representative of institutions within one state. They also did not look

directly at chief student affairs officers, but instead, individuals who were at the director level.

Directors were in charge of many different units such as housing, student activities, LGBT

office, campus recreation, and more. As a result, their findings are unable to indicate if there are

different viewpoints between the directors within their respective universities. The study looked

at the top student affairs administrator, across many different universities, which is attributable to

more institutions that focuses on a specific level of leadership.

Tull and Freeman (2011) conducted a research study that informed leadership among

student affairs administrators (CSAOs). They used the frames of reference (i.e., structural,

human resource, political, and symbolic), offered by Bolman and Deal (1997), in an effort to

understand how organizational culture influenced institutional perspectives. Additionally, they

used an instrument that assessed Spector's 1982 locus of control (i.e., motivation, performance,

satisfaction, and turnover). Locus of control measured how much the administrators believe they

control their own leadership behavior based on factors internal or external to themselves.

Findings indicated that CSAOs had the highest preference for the human resource frame, which

consists of leading in a more caring manner to help align the organization with human needs

(Bolman & Deal, 1997). This should come as no surprise, many student affairs professionals go

into the profession as a means of helping students. Their interest in being helpful to other people

reflects their preferred frame of leadership. Additionally, those who took the survey preferred an

external locus of control; (i.e., they have to depend more on other student affairs professionals

when making decisions). They were surprised about administrators' preference for external locus

of control. But they did recognize leaders in student affairs oftentimes "forfeit control in their

work setting" in order to work collaboratively. As leaders, it is important that student affairs

administrators consider the use of all frameworks when leading (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Kezar, 2001; Broudy, 1981).

The study by Tull and Freeman (2011) is one of the few that looks specifically at chief student affairs officers. This study helps to understand the nature of leadership from the development of using "frameworks." Also, the divergence of leadership with locus of control demonstrates that Tull and Freeman believe that outside factors influence leadership. The findings helped build the framework for my research by informing me of leadership perspectives common among CSAOs. However, the nature of their study was deductive because they were testing hypotheses from pre-existing frameworks of leadership. The study built theory through understanding perspectives of leadership through interviewing.

A Different Look at Student Affairs Leadership

The field of higher education is ever-changing and the need to know how student affairs is situated continues to be important. In the fall of 2015, four administrators in higher education conducted a study on leadership in student affairs. They set out to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges of chief student affairs officers from around the country (Smith, 2016). This study demonstrates the importance of gathering in-depth information from chief student affairs officers. The following section consists of a summary of the four articles included in this study (Porterfield & Whitt, 2016; Roper, Porterfield, Whitt, & Carnaghi, 2016; Roper & Whitt, 2016; Whitt & Carnaghi, 2016).

In their study of chief student affairs officers, one of the goals of Carnaghi, Porterfield, Roper, and Whitt (2016) was to create a document that could be useful for student affairs leaders (Smith, 2016). To begin, they sent an email to 70 CSAOs asking these open-ended questions about their position; (1) "What troubles you? What keeps you up at night?" and (2) "What

excites you? What keeps you going?" They got 53 responses from CSAOs at both public and

private institutions. Each of the questions were split into two different articles with an additional

article discussing implications of their findings.

Roper and Whitt (2016) addressed the question related to issues that trouble CSAOs, and

what keeps them up at night. Of all the responses gathered, approximately two-thirds of the data

was geared towards answering the first research question (Smith, 2016). Some of the challenges

mentioned were, "insufficient resources, increased scrutiny on institutions, increased

litigiousness, the burden of state and federal mandates, mounting tensions related to diversity,

and intensity and complexity of students' needs and expectations" (p.19). These open-ended

responses contributed to the six themes that troubled CSAOs; (a) affordability and access, (b)

student health and well-being, (c) diversity and inclusion, (d) regulations and compliance, (e)

technology and media, and (f) student affairs leadership. Authors concluded that there is a

significant need for strong leadership in student affairs. Roper and Whitt said:

> The responses to this survey question suggest that student affairs administrators are
> presented with an awesome challenge of finding effective ways to organize and
> pursue their work in a climate where many are functioning with insufficient
> resources and inadequate institutional understanding and support. (p.36)

Whitt and Carnaghi (2016) reported on items that "excite" CSAOs. Their stated that their

findings were "reassuring and affirming" (p.39) about the primary reasons why chief student

affairs officers enter the profession. They identified six themes: (a) students, (b) making a

difference, (c) collaboration and community, (d) leading and facilitating change, (e) learning,

data, and scholarship, and (f) the work. The authors pointed out that while the discussion on what

"troubled" CSAOs (Roper & Whitt, 2016) were important, those findings were also

"incomplete." The ability to help students succeed is an important element in the role of CSAOs.

And despite the insurmountable challenges, they confronted them "with an abiding commitment to making a difference for the students who are at the center of their work" (p.51).

The fourth and final chapter of this research summary consisted of the "tensions and inconsistencies" (p.55) across the data (Roper et al., 2016). This is a result of opportunities that arise because of challenges. One example they gave was the challenge of "social media and digital technologies." Even though the increase in technology has made CSAOs jobs harder, it has also provided them more opportunities to communicate and reach out to students. The approach the researchers took in this article was that of "Janusian thinking," borrowed from Kuh & Whitt's work, developed in 1987. This way of thinking reflects an ancient Roman god named "Janus" who "was the god of transitions and beginnings; he typically was portrayed as having two heads looking in opposite directions, one to the future and the other to the past" (p. 54). The "two-headed" approach was used a means to describe their findings that involved experiences of the past while also looking toward the future.

There were a few suggestions by Roper et al. (2016) which began with student affairs leaders "revisit[ing] core values and contemporary challenges" (p.57). This includes, identifying ways to deal with challenges in the field and not defaulting with "simple solutions to complex problems" (p.59). One idea they had, is to use the reframing model, offered by Bolman and Deal in 2013 as a means to use new and innovative approaches to problems. This can help CSAOs to "make meaning of their experiences" (p.62). Roper et al. created a list of ten declarations that could be made by student affairs leaders in order to think about the core goals of their positions (p.63). The ten declarations they stated are too lengthy to list in this section. However, they are provided to help leaders consider the purpose of student affairs, while also encouraging discussion among campus colleagues about their own declarations of leadership.

The study by (Whitt et al., 2016) provided a strong argument of the need for more research on student affairs leadership. They pointed out a blog post that discussed how universities have done a poor job of adapting to the changes in our society (Shirky, 2014) and that the problems in students affairs are not getting any better. While I did not read about this study before I began my interviews, it provides further evidence of the need to know more about leadership in student affairs. They looked at challenges and opportunities of chief student affairs officers, which is also reflected in the study. However, there are some distinct differences in the methods. Their study had 53 participants compared to 19 in the study. They had invited 70 participants, therefore, there might have been some self-selection bias.

Their CSAOs came from a mix of both public and private institutions and the study only looked at public institutions. They did not reveal the size of the institutions that responded or where they were located. My institutions all had over 10,000 students and were located in the Midwest and central portion of the U.S. They did not conduct any interviews with their participants. All their data collection and communication was done via email. By not conducting interviews, they were unable to ask follow-up questions or clarification of meaning on any of their responses. They obtained a total of 40 single-spaced pages of data from the CSAO's in their study. My 19 interviews provided 229 pages of single-spaced data, all of which were conducted face-to-face.

Finally, there was another significant difference between their study and the study. Their study was dedicated to learning about challenges and opportunities associated with helping students. Their data was specifically reflective on the field of student affairs and how those challenges and opportunities present themselves within the higher education context. The results in the study paint a different picture that looks more closely at how CSAOs lead within their

university. It also provides further rationale on the importance of researching at this line of leadership.

Conclusion

The framework for the study was created utilizing previous research and theory within higher education. Each of the theories and research studies point out their relevance as to why leadership in higher education is important to study. I also provide evidence for why the field of student affairs specifically needs to be researched given the ever-changing nature of higher education. There have been many theoretical frameworks applied to research in higher education and student affairs, but few of them have applied inductive methods to construct a foundation of knowledge on leadership from the ground up. In chapter three, I will lay out the methods and explain how they were used to conduct this qualitative study.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership perspectives of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) at large, public universities. In this chapter, I present the research design and accompanying procedures, the research questions that guided the study, the population and sample details, the instrument for gathering data, the procedures for data collection, and an explanation of the data analysis and safeguards associated with the research.

Research Design

Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest that when doing exploratory research, the best analysis is to use inductive methods by conducting in-depth interviews. This allows the researcher to develop a guide toward emerging themes. Inductive methods are intended to "build concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than deductively testing hypotheses" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.17). Research on chief student affairs officers has primarily focused on measuring outcomes and using deductive methods. This means ways of understanding their leadership have been forced into preconceived ideas (Glaser, 1998). In this study, I take a different approach, by asking CSAOs to talk about their roles on their own terms.

To meet the goals of this research study, I used an exploratory-qualitative approach. "Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 19). One reason to conduct qualitative research is to explore a problem. Another reason is to understand the complex nature of a problem that can only be understood by talking to the individuals who experience the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2013). Based on the evidence and literature in chapter two, I presented a case for the need to explore the holistic nature of leadership among CSAOs. The

design of this study follows the methodology of basic qualitative research with some reflections of grounded theory methods. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) said that, "a basic qualitative study would be interested in (1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p.24). The nature of the study appropriately fits the definition for this basic qualitative design.

Research Questions

These research questions were somewhat broad in scope, they were used to capture various experiences and perspectives of chief student affairs officers. There were three questions that guided the framework of that study.

Research Question 1

1. *What leadership perspectives are necessary in order to be a successful Chief Student Affairs Officer?*

My goal was to understand more about leadership from a particular type of leader that is found in virtually all institutions of higher education. It would not be appropriate for this type of study to use any of the aforementioned theories (Bolman & Deal, 1997, 2003; Birnbaum, 1988; Campbell, 2015;) because I did not want to force data into a preconceived framework. Open-ended questions allowed the CSAOs talked about their perspectives, along with the context of how their position interacts with other leaders on campus. This allowed me to focus on complexities within a university setting.

Research Question 2

2. *How do Chief Student Affairs Officers perceive the challenges associated with their position?*

Learning more about the day-to-day challenges faced by CSAOs was helpful in learning more

about the context for their position. This includes how they go about making decisions and

barriers that make their job more difficult. Obstacles can range from dealing with campus crisis

situations, personnel issues, or settings goals within the student affairs division.

Research Question 3

> 3. *How do Chief Student Affairs Officers perceive the opportunities associated with*
>
>   *their position?*

This research question focused on reasons someone would want to become a CSAO. Some

people seek this position because of their desire to help students while others may be filling a

vacant position. However, this research question is necessary for the exploratory nature of the

study as it provides balance to the previous question.

<div align="center">

Data Collection Methods

</div>

Data collection was done by interviewing chief student affairs officers at their home

institutions. Interviews were the primary form of data collection. In this section, I discuss the

nature of the interviews; this includes important considerations for interviewing someone in a

position of authority. Next, I explain how the interview protocol was constructed and how

participants were selected. I follow up with an explanation of how the data were coded and

analyzed for results. Due to the richness of data in answering research questions, I have devoted

a separate chapter for the themes that emerged from the study.

Nature of Interviewing

Marshall and Rossman (2011) discussed opportunities and challenges presented with

interviewing people who are in positions of higher power. They referred to this as "interviewing

elites," that is, interviewing people who are well-known either in the public eye or within their

respective fields. Marshall and Rossman conveyed that some people have busy jobs and may be difficult to schedule an interview. Another challenge is that they have scripted responses because they are used to answering questions that could be made public at any time. Also, a person in higher power may be used to "running the interview" and taking control. Both Marshall and Rossman (2011) claim that the researcher can compensate for this by covering a broad range of topics. A benefit of interviewing individuals with "power" is that they may have a more holistic understanding of how their institution compared to that of their colleagues.

During my collection of data, I found that most of the potential barriers to interviewing people of authority did not pose a problem. Fortunately, every CSAO that I invited for an interview accepted the request. Since I met my participants in person, I believe I developed trust and reciprocity in order for them to know that their responses were confidential. They appeared comfortable talking to me and seemed to be as ease sharing their honest thoughts.

Interview questions were a mix of structured and semi-structured. Structured interviews are when the list is "predetermined" and the researcher "want[s] everyone to respond to a particular statement or to define a particular concept or term" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.110). Semi-structured is when "the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored" (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 110). While I had a list of predetermined questions, I kept the structure flexible so I could follow up on interesting or potentially relevant ideas. Charmaz (2011) encourages the researchers to build in multiple questions if further interviews are not likely to occur. In most cases, I completed my entire list of structured questions while also asking follow-up questions. There were two exceptions, one interview had to be shortened due to a busy schedule. In another interview, the participant gave long responses, and we ran out of time.

However, this person ended up being my longest interview, and I obtained a sizable amount of data.

I conducted two pilot interviews to help with construction of my interview questions. Yin (2009) suggested that pilot interviews can be conducted based on "convenience, access, and geographic proximity" (in Creswell, 2013, p.165). They were useful as I refined my questions and reflected on the most appropriate wording for each question. Following the interviews, I asked the individuals for input on questions and procedures; then adjusted accordingly. The interview questions are in Appendix A, followed by the IRB protocol in Appendix B, and the approval letter from IRB in Appendix C.

Site and Population Selection

To select an appropriate sample, I used the Carnegie Classification for institutions that are large, four-year, and primarily residential (carnegieclassifications.iu.edu, 2016). Institutions had at least 10,000 enrolled students, 25-49% of degree-seeking students lived on campus, and at least half of the students attended full-time. My overall goal was to get 20 interviews. After identifying institutions that fit the criteria of the study I had to make adjustments for my schedule of travel as well as remove locations where CSAOs were interim. I decided to not interview any CSAO who was an interim because it is possible that their perspectives may be different from someone who held the position full-time. Since I had to remove some people from my invite list, I expanded the study and added some institutions there were a little farther away in order to meet my goal of 20 interviews. I scheduled all 20 interviews but one CSAO had to cancel the day before due to an emergency surgery. In all, I traveled to 19 institutions in eight states. All interviews were conducted over an eight-week time frame from mid-April to early June.

Interviews took place at institutions within the central portion of the United States, reaching as far north as Minnesota, as far east as Illinois, and as far south as Oklahoma. Visiting public institutions was a common feature which made data analysis more efficient. The reason for this was that funding formulas were more similar since there were no private institutions. This is because governing bodies between public and private institutions are governed and funded differently (Hirt, Amelink, & Schneiter, 2004).

Marshall and Rossman (2011) provided the 16-item typology, created by Miles and Huberman. I selected the typical case, where the criteria of the study is determined by the boundaries set by the researcher. There were nine males and ten females in this study; five participants were underrepresented.

Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossman (2011) encourage spending significant time with the data in order to get to know it very well. I conducted one interview with each person. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by myself. I then began with an open coding process; which is when "the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences and questions are asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The processes of coding allowed me to look for the "salient, grounded categories of meanings held by participants in the setting" (Marshall & Rossman, p. 215). Marshall and Rossman also indicated a researcher needs to "scrutinize" (p. 220) their own data and point out where they might hold biases or preconceived notions within the data.

Procedures

All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by the primary researcher. Listening to the recordings and then typing them out was helpful in retaining the content and

context of the interviews. After they were all transcribed I listened to the audio again when creating my first round of codes. Listening to the interviews three times (interview, transcription, and coding) proved valuable through multiple rounds of coding and analysis since it kept me close to the data throughout the entire process. The initial round of coding consisted of identifying themes or observations. Codes were created within word documents using the "New Comment" tab by highlighting various sections and then setting the code in the right-hand margin. In a second round of coding with each document I used In Vivo coding which consisted of using direct quotes of the participants.

After two rounds of coding each transcript, I organized each of the codes into separate word documents for each participant. New documents were then created for each participant with lists of their codes and emerging themes. Therefore, the 19 participants each had documents of organized codes that were unique to the interviews. After analyzing the participant documents separately, I combined the codes. Having separate documents for each participant allowed me to look at each of the themes as smaller units of data more suitable for consumption and organizing. I identified themes across each of the individuals when they were like one another. I continued to create documents that narrowed data down to 13 themes and subthemes. Upon creating these documents, I did an additional round of coding and analysis. The purpose of this round of coding was to see which codes were similar to one another and how many participants made comments that aligned with each code.

Validity

It is appropriate to demonstrate the role of validity in qualitative research. There are multiple perspectives on how one can demonstrate validity in their findings (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lincoln et al. (2011) said the

researcher should feel "sufficiently authentic" (p.120) in acting on the implications of the research. While each researcher likely holds their own inherent biases I tried to overcome threats to validity in several ways. To begin, in the following section I spend time talking about my background in higher education and in student affairs, which demonstrates my familiarity with the field. This should make a reader of this work confident that I understand how leadership can be heavily influenced by the complex dynamics of a university and the role of a student affairs model at a public institution. I looked at one line of leadership within a university system. Every participant in the study was a chief student affairs officer so while in some cases they may have provided conflicting responses due to their diverse perspectives; their positions all carried similar threads of responsibility.

Creswell (2013) recommended one way to overcome threats to validity is by getting close to participants in the study which can add "value or accuracy" (p.250), which is why I chose to travel to each of my participating institutions. It helped me to build trust with CSAOs as we first communicated via email (I either communicated with them or a staff assistant), and then, when I arrived to their institution, we visited for a few minutes before beginning the interview. This helped build reciprocity where they felt like they could trust me. Additionally, all but two of my participants held doctorate degrees, so for people who have previously written a dissertation, they seemed extra willing to help a fellow doctoral student.

<p align="center">**Role of the Researcher**</p>

Personal biography

I worked at a large, public research institution for eight years with a variety of responsibilities. For six of those years I worked in the office of undergraduate admissions where I had an assigned recruitment territory, helped program recruitment events, and managed a call

center where current students called to recruit high school seniors. The position was split with

responsibilities in our orientation program that worked primarily with freshmen and transfer

students. In the last few years of my position, I worked with international orientation programs

and then also began working in the office of fraternity and sorority life. During the first several

years of my employment, admissions was in the student affairs division but then eventually got

moved to the academic affairs division. Due to the connection between orientation and

admissions, orientation began to operate under academic affairs as well. My last two years, when

I moved over to fraternity and sorority life, I served half of my responsibilities, while the other

half was still with orientation. Fraternity and sorority life operated within the student affairs

division. I remained aware of potential biases from my background in student affairs during this

research.

Ethical and Political Considerations

There are several ethical and political considerations that I took into account. I obtained

some information during interviews that was sensitive or potentially identifiable. All information

shared with me has remained confidential and private. I will not reveal the names of the

institutions I visited or the names of the individuals I interviewed. When quoting individuals or

sharing their information, I have used pseudonym names in order to hide their identity.

Technical considerations

Before moving forward with the data collection, I anticipated potential problems

(Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Driving to each of these institutions, though time-consuming, was

important to build reciprocity with the participants. I had several participants tell me they

appreciated that I took time to drive to their institutions and meet in person as opposed to

conducting the interview online or over the phone. Meeting individuals face-to-face gave me a

better understanding of their environments and built trust, I could practice "emphatic listening"

(Josselson, 2013) where I could more readily react and follow-up according to the participant

responses. CSAOs were told, upon my invitation, and then again at the time of the interview,

that their identity and site would remain confidential.

Conclusion

Inductive methods were appropriate for the type of data I collected. The results of this

study have potential to inform leadership perspectives at several levels within university

administration by gaining insight into the complex nature of multiple units working together

within the campus community. I included CSAOs who work in institutions with structural

similarities both in the context of the origin of funding and in the students served.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAOs) at large, public institutions. I sought to maintain a comprehensive understanding of how CSAOs lead within the divisions of student affairs. Results answered the three research questions. This includes qualities of successful leadership, common challenges, and opportunities. Following is a listing of the results and identified themes. In chapter 5, I categorize them into themes that create a formal framework of leadership for CSAOs.

Backgrounds of Participants

Ten chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) began their careers in housing. Other areas in student affairs in which CSAOs had worked in their careers were student activities, Greek life, diversity programs, retention programs, advising, career counseling, counseling services, admissions, enrollment management, financial aid, orientation, and advising. Over a third of the participants served in a dean of students' role at some point in their careers. Some also worked as a director in areas such as housing, student activities, or Greek life.

Outside of the variety of backgrounds, participants were a mixture of people who had their careers only at public institutions as well as those who had some experience at private universities. There were two individuals who have spent their professional careers at the same university where they earned undergraduate and master's degrees. Three of the participants had been at their institution for 30+ years, two for 15 – 25 years, four for 8-12 years, eight for 3 – 6 years, one person was approaching his one-year anniversary in the position and another individual had only been a CSAO for a couple months. Two came from a faculty background

with no prior experience working in the field of student affairs. Three participants reported to a

provost or chief academic officer, others reported to the president or chancellor. All but two of

the participating CSAOs held doctorate degrees.

Participant Profiles

Participant profiles include background information that describes previous areas of work

within higher education and student affairs. This may include actual positions they held or areas

of responsibility with which they assisted in their careers. I have also included words or phrases

used to describe their leadership style. Profiles are intentionally not detailed in order to maintain

anonymity of the participants. Table 2 provides the pseudonyms used for each of the participants

as well as the approximate size of institution in which each hold a position and what level of

research activity was conducted there.

Table 1: Chief Student Affairs Officers Profiles

Name	Institution Enrollment[*]	Research Activity[**]
Alyssa	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
George	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Heidi	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Kevin	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Madeline	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Pamela	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Robert	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Spencer	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Ted	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Wendy	22,001+	Highest Research Activity
Ryan	19,001 – 22,000	Higher Research Activity
Elizabeth	19,001 – 22,000	Master's
Wayne	16,001 – 19,000	Higher Research Activity

Christine	13,001 – 16,000	Master's
Lynn	13,001 – 16,000	Master's
Mark	13,001 – 16,000	Master's
Barbara	10,000 – 13,000	Higher Research Activity
Keela	10,000 – 13,000	Master's
Steven	10,000 – 13,000	Master's

*Enrollment divided into 5 categories: 10,000 – 13,000; 13,001 – 16,000; 16,001 – 19,000; 19,001 – 22,000; 22,001+.

**Research Activity based on Carnegie Classification: Master's Colleges and Universities, Some Research Activity, Higher Research Activity, Highest Research Activity

In order to protect participants' identity, race is not included in individuals profiles. Interviewees consisted of nine males and ten females. Fourteen of the participants were Caucasian, and five were underrepresented. The five underrepresented participants consisted of African-American and Hispanic/Latino. Each participant is briefly profiled below.

Alyssa

Alyssa works at a large university and has a wide-ranging portfolio. Our interview was the only one that took place in a conference room; her building is located in a different location from most student affairs units on campus. She worked at several universities before coming to her current position and has multiple responsibilities in her position description. Her interest in student affairs began in graduate school, and, after working as a counselor for a couple years, she opted to return to higher education. Her university provided an opportunity to pursue her doctorate in higher education. Alyssa has been in her position about three years and describes her leadership style as "open" and "inclusive in decision-making and fact gathering."

Barbara

Barbara began her career at a small-private college working with students who were low-ability and needed extra attention. Working at a small school, she had the opportunity to work in

different areas of student affairs and had been the most "senior student affairs person" at another

small university. When the acting VP became ill at the small college, Barbara was served as

interim vice president as well as dean of students. She came to her new position approximately

three years ago and, after trying to use various formal "leadership styles," she tries to be an

"authentic leader." She has held a faculty line position with all of her roles in student affairs.

Christine

Christine had no intention of working in student affairs. After trying several majors in her

undergraduate career, and then earning degrees in other fields, she continued to find herself

working in housing roles and assisting with student affairs responsibilities. At her previous

institution, she served in a dean of students' role, an assistant to the vice president role, and then

vice president of student affairs. She has been at her current institution for eleven years and

describes her leadership style as being a "strong servant leader."

Elizabeth

Elizabeth's first job after college was a position that required traveling to multiple

universities in the Southeast. As her interest in student affairs developed, a mentor encouraged

her to earn a master's degree. Shortly after receiving her degree, she moved to a small-private

university to work in student activities; she was promoted from assistant director to director on

her first day. She describes her leadership approach as "team-oriented," and has been in her

position for three years. She has also taught as an adjunct faculty member at several universities

and was the first female vice president at her current university.

George

George was a first-generation college student. He has a passion for helping other first-

generation students to understand the dynamics of higher education institutions so that they

might be successful. He began his career working in a prep school. Going back into student affairs, he sought a PhD. At the time of our interview, he was serving in his second institution as a vice chancellor of student affairs. His leadership style is "fluid" depending on who he is leading, and he has been at his institution for six years.

Heidi

Over a nine-year period, Heidi rose through the ranks at a university in the Northeast. After serving in two director roles, she began as a CSAO at a small private school in the Northeast and then moved back to the Midwest. She was a vice president of student affairs at another institution in the Midwest before beginning her current role as CSAO ten years ago. Heidi describes her leadership as "having a broad direction" and then working to have everyone share her vision. She encourages others to get invested the best way they see fit. Her style has evolved; she declared that she used to ask staff to do things a certain way until she realized each has to own the process.

Keela

Keela worked in housing as both an undergraduate and graduate student and then worked in the dean of students' office during graduate school. After being in charge of first-year programs at one university, she came to her current institution ten years ago to serve as both dean of students and vice president of student affairs. Staff members describe her leadership style as a "slow burn" meaning she is even-keeled. She is process-oriented and tries understand the "entire picture" by getting feedback from her staff.

Kevin

At the time of the interview, Kevin was the least tenured CSAO, serving in his role for about two months. However, he had been at the institution for three years serving as assistant

vice president. He expressed difficulty at times answering some questions since he was so new to the position; many of his comments were consistent in how experienced CSAOs described their job when they first began. Kevin began his career in admissions and retention initiatives. He described his leadership style as being "collaborative," and he values communication across units.

Lynn

Lynn was one of two participants that began as a faculty member. After fifteen years in a faculty role, she had reached full professor and was then asked to become the vice provost of student affairs. The new president on campus wanted someone familiar with the academic aspects of the institution. Her high level of involvement with advising five student organizations accustomed her to the field of student affairs. Ultimately, the president decided that she was a good fit for the position. She indicated that it was a sharp learning curve in the beginning when she experienced all that falls under the student affairs division. She had been in her role for five years and described her leadership style as "collegial."

Madeline

Madeline began her career as a junior-high science teacher before becoming a residence hall coordinator. Beginning at a small private college, she moved to the university where she currently resides as vice chancellor of student affairs. Her original goal was to become a college president but, due to family commitments, she decided vice chancellor was a better fit. She tries to avoid being a "micromanager" and lets "people run their own shops."

Mark

As a very-involved undergraduate, Mark considered student affairs while in college. He initially tried working in the banking industry and then decided student affairs was where he

wanted to be. Out of all my participants, his career plan was one of the most well-defined. He strived for a lot of experience in order to move up the ladder. He had experiences in Greek life, student activities, housing and dining. He then served as an assistant vice president and dean of students. At the time of the interview he had been CSAO for just under a year and described his leadership style as "relational." He gets out of his office often and said, "I believe the desk is a dangerous place to lead from."

Pamela

Pamela began her career working as a counselor in a student health office at a university. After five years she decided to get a PhD and then work in residence life. She moved into administration before finding an assistant vice president role. At the time of the interview, she had been CSAO at her current institution for 16 years and described her leadership style as "collaborative" even though she does not believe any one thing describes her style.

Robert

Robert was one of two participants that began as a faculty member. His progression to vice president of student affairs began when he was asked to apply for director of a teaching center on his campus. After serving as associate provost for undergraduate education for seven years, he filled the CSAO position when left by his predecessor. He had aspired to be a faculty member but accepted the new roles as they were offered. His primary goal is to create a culture where he can provide a vision and get his units to work together.

Ryan

Ryan got his start in student affairs when he was asked to apply for a resident assistant position (RA) in housing as a junior. He earned a masters in history, and then found a full-time job in residence life. After receiving his PhD, he became director at a small-private institution for

student support services and minority student affairs. He then served as an associate vice

president at a large public institution in the Southeast. He believes in giving his staff professional

development experiences that will help them grow and take ownership of their programs.

Spencer

Spencer originally intended to either go to law school or get an MBA but was given an

opportunity to work in residence life. After being director of housing for a few years, he shifted

over to director of the student union. He had been a vice president of student affairs for 16 years

and was one of only two participants who did not have a doctorate. He describes his leadership

style as being "interpersonally based" and "situational" depending on the need identified.

Steven

Steven began his career at a small-public institution working in orientation, student

activities, career counseling, and academic advising. His experience included overseeing the

health center, counseling center, student judicial programs, and the career center before

becoming associate vice president at a very large institution in the Midwest. He's now been at

his current institution for several years as vice chancellor for student affairs and believes

"leadership emanates from what you believe, what you hold dearly, what you value." He

believes that "people hunger for meaning and purpose in life" so he aims to help staff develop in

a holistic fashion where they can "thrive."

Ted

Ted has worked at the same institution for 35 years. He began his career in student

activities and while working on his PhD at a nearby institution, began the enrollment

management program at his institution. He spent 20 years as associate vice president and has

been in his current role as vice president for student affairs for eight years. As a leader he works

to "empower the people" who work for him and believes this is necessary in order to make things work at a large comprehensive university.

Wayne

Beginning in enrollment management and admissions, Wayne now oversees both student affairs and enrollment management at his current institution. He was one of two interviewees who did not have a doctorate. Wayne described his leadership style as being "really direct" and shared that he does not like surprises. His experiences in residence life and admissions were in before coming over to the enrollment management.

Wendy

Wendy began her career as an admissions counselor at a small public college and obtained several responsibilities that included advising undeclared students and processing Pell grants. She then oversaw orientation and visit programs as the enrollment services coordinator at another university. She moved into her way up to the director position after eight years of experience, she became the associate vice provost for student success. As a leader she tries to "lead by example" while being direct in a tactful way.

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Research Questions

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Table 2 provides a quick overview of the following themes for each research question. A detailed analysis follows.

Table 2: Results to Research Questions

Research Question 1	Research Question 2	Research Question 3
Qualities of Leadership	Challenges	Opportunities
Lead to help students	Managing time	Title of CSAO
Learn culture of campus	Budget problems	Student Impact
Respect everyone	Policy overload	Personal and Professional

Be a team leader	Tensions across campus	Growth
Know thyself	Challenges with staff	

Research Question 1: Qualities of Successful Leadership

The first research asks "What leadership perspectives are necessary in order to be a successful Chief Student Affairs Officer?" Five qualities emerged, I label them "qualities" because they are characteristics that one might hope to see demonstrated by chief student affairs officers (CSAO). The qualities identified are: (1) lead to help students (2) learn culture of campus (3) respect everyone (4) be a team-leader and (5) know thyself. Data to support these qualities may be interchangeable, or they may help provide context for each other.

Responsibilities of CSAO positions were discussed in chapter 1. In most cases, the responsibilities were similar across cases among the 19 institutions. CSAOs primary responsibility were to oversee all units that supported traditional student services. The qualities that emerged from the data provide context for leadership particular to chief student affairs officers.

Lead to help students

College-level administrators often deal with issues that do not directly relate to the student experience. Conversations can become focused on specific goals or outcomes of different departments while the student voice is lost. Madeline pointed out that her title is unique compared to other campus administrators. "I'm the only person at that table that has student in their title. And so I have that opportunity to sort of be that voice." The importance of keeping students in mind was mentioned by all CSAOs. All understood that their role was to provide support for student success. They are the voice of students at the upper levels of administration.

Pamela spoke on how the role of her position has kept her focused on what is important, despite challenges working with other administrators:

> And instinctively and to my core, my job is to serve students. I may do that in a 1,000 different ways, but my job is to serve students; and I never forget that; but when I get this stuff, those sensitivities get bumped around a little bit. End of the world? Hell, no.

Ted mentioned the importance of serving students as "consumer" and the significant investment they are making:

> My vision begins with the student as a consumer that families pay our salaries and we're here to serve. And part of that service is to listen to the people who are in fact making a huge investment in higher education and want a return and that return often times is a job for their son or daughter or admission to professional school. And that we need to continue to understand that there has to be focus and a priority to do the best job we can in those areas.

Learn culture of campus

Learning about the culture of campus is significant to how chief student affairs officers provide leadership. Drastic changes should not be made when first taking over this position. Instead it is important to get to know staff and also learn about the priorities of the institution. Barbara said she encourages new CSAOs to map out their first 100 days. "But don't change things too quickly, you know, come in with some good ideas that you want to implement, the people you want to meet but take your time to really know the culture." She also stressed meeting people both within and outside the division of student affairs.

One aspect of learning culture is learning how to work with new leadership. CSAOs who have worked at their university for over a decade have adapted to working with multiple presidents. Madeline said a new president involves adjusting expectations for staff:

> [It's] real challenging to adjust to leadership. And you know if you can't adjust you gotta go. And I truly believe that. And, as I adjust, I have to get my direct reports to adjust. And I remember after [the last chancellor] came, he was very different than the previous chancellor, in fact he wanted stuff right away. The previous chancellor, you never knew, you know you could wait forever. So I

finally said to my directors, "if I ask you for information, I expect to get it back quickly because my boss wants it quickly."

Multiple elements make up the culture of campus, new leadership is one area where even long-standing CSAOs recognize they must remain astute.

It is important to reach out to meet people either in their office or on other parts of campus. Mark emphasized the value of talking to staff face-to-face, "I believe that the desk is a dangerous place to lead from…. I [go] in and out of the office 4 or 5 times a day. I'm a believer in going right to the source and right to the person." CSAOs may use different strategies for meeting people on campus but the value of understanding culture remains a priority.

Learning culture involves respecting the history of campus. Heidi said, "[It is] important to kind of stay connected with the history of what it was like here on campus, 10 or 20 years ago, and it really helps you have insight into what's happening today." Similarly, Madeline said that she often hears complaints from staff when new leaders step in, "They act like we've never done this before. And what that says to the person whose been working in the trenches is you have discounted all of the work that I have done."

Respect everyone

Respecting people on campus is the third quality necessary to be successful as a chief student affairs officer. Respect may look different when working with staff within the student affairs division compared to people outside but the core quality is the same. Spencer said, "Leadership boils down to relationships and trust." CSAOs often inherit their staff upon beginning their position so showing respect is important in order to establish trust.

Lynn got more in-depth about showing respect, "You will learn from students; you will learn from colleagues; you will learn from custodians; you will learn from individuals serving food in the dining hall…. all of those people are impacting the student experience." Similarly,

Spencer mentioned having "respect for every person" regardless of position on campus; he also

emphasized that being in a position of authority can negatively influence a leader's perception,

"You know the arrogance that can go with power and leadership…. I think, in most cases, [it]

eventually becomes detrimental."

Be a team-leader

When talking about leadership styles, participants used terms to describe their goals such

as promoting "open" and "collaborative" environments. Other words of similar nature included

"relational," "team-oriented," "communicator," "facilitator," and "interpersonal." All of these

words reflect a desire to have open communication among staff who hopefully feel valued. Lynn

described herself as being "a fairly collegial leader" and had no problem making decisions, but

she wanted information and different perspectives from other people.

Being a team leader consists of being a good listener. All CSAOs spoke of the

importance of listening. And that concept increased in value as they gained more experience as

CSAOs. Ted described his leadership style, "I empower the people around me…. I'm not a

micromanager. I believe very strongly in delegating responsibility and authority within my

overall vision." Beyond empowering, CSAOs stressed that directors are experts in their

respective areas. Robert gave an example of allowing his directors to be the experts:

> Most people in my position at least know counseling services because that's where
> they came from, or student activities cause that's where they, or whatever, I don't
> have claim on any of them. And I don't want to. I don't want to run those units, you
> know? So, I think that most of my direct reports would say that they have a good
> deal of autonomy in what they do.

Being a team-leader consists of CSAOs wanting success for the entire student affairs

division and university. Kevin reflected, "Leadership to me, is when people want the organization,

and they want you, to be successful. And in turn they want to be successful themselves." This was

a similar sentiment of Ryan who's emphasized helping his staff prepare for their next levels of leadership.

Know thyself

Knowing personal values was a common theme among CSAOs. The term "know thyself" was used regarding advice for a new CSAO. Spencer indicated, "I think the first thing is just to know thyself. You know again you gotta know what your strengths are and where your weaknesses are. You gotta know where your blind spots are." George talked about lessons that he has learned:

> I think over the years my leadership has developed because I feel more confident in who I am. More comfortable in my own skin. More certain of those deep values, beliefs, things that I hold dearly. And I think, because of that, you exercise a sense of leadership that's more authentic because it's who you are. You don't try to be somebody else; you don't try to emulate people who have different skills or abilities.

Mark said that after he earned his PhD, he thought he could be a CSAO. It took 10 years until he got a CSAO job, and he is now thankful it took so long. He says he would have gotten "eaten up" if he started too much earlier. Knowing where he stood as a leader helped him clarify if he was ready to become a chief student affairs officer. When asked if she ever considered becoming a CSAO earlier in her career, Wendy said, "Never. Not once. In fact, I said it was something that I did not want to do." Her attitude stemmed from a preconception of how she thought a CSAO had to lead, "Yeah, it was never on my radar because when you see people doing it, you feel like it has to be done a certain way." As she moved up the organization and acquired more experience through interim roles she realized, "I don't have to be the same VP my predecessor was, or [be like] the people who are across the country. I get to define it. And I don't have to sit in the same seat in the same way as the person did before me."

Five individuals stated the importance of needing a broad view when it comes to their leadership style. They had to learn to be more cognizant of the entire university and how all the

pieces fit together. Wendy described it as the "30,000-foot view" while others used terms like

taking a "broad view," "satellite view," or "looking out for the whole university." Spencer

summed up why he needs a satellite view when working with his staff:

> You know, I think we are only as good as the people that we work with and that we surround ourselves with. And being cognizant of what our strengths are and making sure that we've got people around us who compliment those strengths, I am an orbital person. You know I see the satellite view of things, I get lost in the weeds, I'm not a detail guy. I'm not the guy to figure out the minutia of something…. But, you know, the people that I surround myself with on my leadership team and my directors, we know our strengths, we know how we complement each other so especially, when those decisions come down that require a lot of thought and looking what the impacts are, I think it's ultimately the people around us that help us to make the best decision.

Research Question 2: Challenges

The second research question of this study is, "How do Chief Student Affairs Officers

perceive the challenges associated with their position?" There are certain challenges that anyone

in the field of student affairs might anticipate for a CSAO. And most of the challenges that fall

within this section would be and recognized in the field of student affairs. All of these challenges

relate to ways in which CSAOs struggle to help students because they hinder the ability for staff

to be supported. These were the responses CSAOs gave for challenges of their job: (1) managing

time (2) budget problems (3) policy overload, (4) tensions across campus, and (5) challenges

with staff.

Managing Time

Over half of my participants referenced challenges related to lack of time. Barbara

responded, "You know really the hours, I mean it is grueling. I work constantly." She indicated

that her days are full of meetings and that to feel like she's doing a good job she needs to have

contact with students. There were different ways in which managing time was a challenge. They

are, (a) getting to know students, (b) accomplishing administrative tasks, (c) managing staff, and

(d) too little time to make important decisions.

One strategy CSAOs used to overcome the challenge of getting to know students is by becoming an advisor to student organizations. The most common groups advised are student government and diversity or leadership groups. Heidi discussed her strategies for making time with students:

> You just have this advisory group of students, a cross-section of student leaders, fraternity and sorority leaders, culture center leaders, student government, college councils, so all the colleges here the colleges of liberal arts and sciences, the college of engineering all has student advisory boards or some sort of governmental type thing….So that's the thing you do, you just create formal and informal mechanisms for doing that.

A second challenge related to time is the inability to get all work done. Significant responsibility and competing demands make it difficult to prioritize. Spencer characterized the early years of his job as "eating an elephant," because he had so many responsibilities. Lynn offered this perspective:

> Time. Student experience and engagement at [this university] is huge. And so, having enough time to do everything I need to do. Because there's the administrative tasks of the budget and the staffing and things like that, but, then I feel that a large part in my responsibility is the students and having that face time with the students and being accessible to the students [is important].

A third example of lack of time was the burden for managing staff. Ryan talked about the challenge of having time to meet with staff; "How should I say this? If those around you, if they could take up every minute of your time, they will - plain and simple." Working with staff is a significant part of the job for CSAOs, but it is important to be diligent about spending time together when it is beneficial for both parties. One reason directors are "run their own shops" is because CSAOs do not have the time to check in more often.

Lack of time can make it difficult to make important decisions. Ryan said, "Sometimes you need to make a decision quickly, and there's no time to really, you know, sometimes you

just kind of think, 'Wow! I wish I had like a week or two or three before I make this final

decision.'"

Budget Problems

Issues with budget and budget process were major challenges. Budgetary problems are a

part of university culture. Six of the eight states to which I travelled indicated a serious lack of

support from their state governments. However, each place was unique in how university

officials confronted lack of state support. Ted said:

> In 2002, we began raising tuition to try to maintain; we were out of balance in terms
> of our cost of attendance, which was a reasonable discussion. In 2002, 55% of our
> total budget came from the state legislature, 25% came from the tuition and fees. In
> 2016, 55% of our overall budget comes from tuition and fees and less that 25%
> comes from the state. And yet our overall budget minus the CPI [consumer price
> index], is relatively the same. That's a crying shame.

The timeline that Ted referred to is similar to what Heidi said, "Money's been a big challenge in

higher education since probably 2000. Things kind of started turning in terms of the state aid to

education from my experience in about 2000 – 2001…. there are more demands and less

money."

Due to the decrease of state support to universities, several CSAOs talked about the need

to create new revenue streams, such as fundraising. Ted estimated that 10% of his job is now

fundraising; Barbara emphasized the need for additional revenue streams is going to continue to

grow in student affairs:

> You know officials are going to have to fundraise because their budgets continue
> to get cut, we're fortunate really in [this state], we haven't had so much of that but
> a lot of states are really, really, struggling, so I think that that will be one of the
> changes.

 Pamela said that while her university is undergoing a large campaign, her division will

continue to fundraise, "I'd like to have more resources to work with. We've had a million-dollar

year; I mean it's not like we're not doing anything."

Policy Overload

Federal regulations often address for higher education institutions. Two major federal

policies have been adopted in recent years. They are, (a) changes to Title IX and (b) the new

Federal Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The first deals with increases to Title IX regulations in

which universities have to investigate all reports of sexual assault. New rules imply that

individuals who are called, "Title IX coordinators" have to ensure the university-community,

including students, staff, and faculty, are educated on issues related to sexual assault. Every case

must be thoroughly investigated. Heidi gave a portrait of the importance of the issue:

> I've had parents tell me that their daughter was raped on my watch. That is was my
> fault that their daughter was raped, "Why didn't you keep my daughter safe? Why
> didn't you keep this student safe? Why?" So there's expectations. But yet there's
> less money. Title IX has created the need for more staff, more people are reporting
> which is good, we're happy about that. That leads to, I need more investigators. So
> more demands, less money.

Although CSAOs embrace goals that protect students, new policies require an increase in

funding.

The second policy recently implemented was the FLSA. Previously the law had required

employers who pay full-time employees $23,660 or less to provide overtime if they work over 40

hours in a week. As of July 6, 2016, that amount was raised to $47,476, which means that

universities will have to provide overtime to anyone who works over 40 hours in a week and is

under the salary cap. FLSA is significant in student affairs because lower level student affairs

employees are often under the new minimum amount; and many positions require them to work

over 40 hours in a week ("Final Rule: Overtime - Wage and Hour Division (WHD) - U.S.

Department of Labor," 2016). Barbara referenced challenges with both FLSA and Title IX:

> So the proposed roles would really have a huge impact on residence halls, for
> instance. And these things come down, and there's like 60 days until
> implementation. So what they're saying right now, and it's still in discussion,

> anybody making under $50,000 can only work 40 hours a week or be paid time and a half so what institution can really afford that? So there's just lots of different legislation that you have to certainly always be abreast of and then make the changes, and sometimes, they have a real financial impact, certainly Title IX has.

In tandem with all the budget cuts across his state, Spencer commented on the pros and cons of the FLSA:

> I personally celebrate the increase, I mean it's been a long time since there's been an increase, and ultimately, colleges and universities across the country have been built on the backs of $30,000 a year employees. And so, I think it's great, and it's good that we're going to start making sure that employees get more, but as you know, as a manager, it creates a whole set of issues that couldn't be timed more poorly with what's happening in our own state and with our own budget, I think, you know, we're pretty much at about a $40 million cut this year.

Spencer lives in a state where budget cuts were not as damaging as other states. The combination of intense budget cuts, Title IX, and the FLSA makes the jobs of CSAOs incredibly difficult when trying to provide more services with less money.

Tensions across Campus

Part of any leadership position within a university involves dealing with tensions across campus. They often result due to breakdowns in communication, different goals, or competing interests. The nature of student affairs varies when working with faculty and administrators versus students. I address these differences in two segments. The first is "second-class citizens" which demonstrates how CSAOs often feel treated. Then next tension CSAOs struggle with is meeting student needs. Leadership approaches often need to vary when working with faculty compared to working with students which is why there are two parts.

Second-class citizens: Within their institutions, CSAOs often feel marginalized by other administrators. It is not uncommon for them to struggle working with presidents and chief academic officers. In most of the institutions I visited, CSAOs expressed opinions that the division of student affairs was a lower priority than academic affairs. They do not negate the

importance of the academic mission. Spencer said, "I'm a firm believer that….our core mission

is to support the academic mission of the university through co-curricular programs outside the

classroom." However, he is challenged because his division is less of a priority when it comes to

additional funding. Lynn had a similar sentiment, "I would say like almost all campuses,

certainly I think academic affairs is considered the priority because that's what the students are

here for." CSAOs vary on their reaction to being lower on the rung of priorities. Pamela

clarified her frustration:

> I think the relative position of student affairs given-if there's one dollar up for grabs
> is it going to go to student affairs? Probably not. And that's a hard thing, 39 years
> in the business and I've not really seen, I guess, the "rope" having all the money
> that we need or all the resources or people that we need to do our vision, to make it
> come to reality. So I think we're always the step-children on campus. We can't act
> that way; we need to be proud of who we are and what we do, and the difference
> that we make ,but it's a little bit hard. It's frustrating.

Pamela added that the provost is not afraid to say where he thinks the university priorities need

to be:

> And in that meeting we're talking about some resources and I was just really
> surprised because he essentially said, "Well I'll be damned if you're going to get
> the money before I do. Cause I'm trying to hire faculty to educate the students."
> So even somebody who is generally compassionate and aware of student services,
> if we're competing for the same dollar, I'm probably not going to get it.
>
> Many CSAOs talked about the importance of student affairs demonstrating their value.

Alyssa commented on proving the worth of student affairs:

> But for so long the focus has been education, and student affairs was kind of left in
> the background. So I've had to work hard to elevate it and say, "You know, we're
> more than fun and games or the place where you send your unruly students. We
> really are here about co-curricular learning and engagement and this is the impact
> that we have on retention, on graduation, and that we need to be viewed as stronger
> partners." That's for sure.

Proving that student affairs adds value often requires data and assessment, Christine said, "I

don't think we've done a good enough job in doing assessment, and providing data, and how

we're value-added, and what the return on investment is."

Part of showing value is the level of visibility a CSAO has with campus constituents.

Heidi described the challenge of campus presidents being unfamiliar with student affairs:

> But you know many of them really don't understand what we do, and the thing is
> that, in student affairs, if you're doing you're job your invisible. If you're doing
> your job, students aren't protesting. Students aren't taking over buildings. Students
> aren't committing suicide. Students aren't complaining because their sexual assault
> was mishandled. And all those things that I just mentioned can kill a president.
> Think about it? I mean, those incidents, those things that happen can kill you, to a
> president-and a chancellor had to resign at the University of Missouri.

The level of support by a president is significant in helping CSAOs to accomplish their goals.

Ryan said his president has made it clear that since the university had so many struggles with the

budget, the divisions of student affairs and academic affairs must work collaboratively. This

helped Ryan in his job, knowing that the top leader of the university values the work being done

in student affairs.

Working together is one way to help avoid the stigma of feeling like second-class

citizens. Wayne spoke about operating in "siloes:"

> I mean this campus is pretty, well, for the most part it's pretty siloed. So I have
> changed this division completely from a division that worked in silo's. And I've
> been in this division for 23 years, came in as a director of admissions, and we would
> sit around at the director's table and it was like, 15 different schools. And the
> university is like that, you have, when you're talking to alumni it's, "I graduated
> from the school of medicine." It's not that, "I graduated from the [name of
> university] school of medicine." So very siloed. And in order for us to be successful
> as a division, given all these budget cuts, and everything, that we're trying to
> accomplish and need to accomplish for our students here.

Similarly, as Barbara talked about working with academic affairs I asked if their goals are

coordinated:

I'd say it's more separate although I always go to provost's council and update them on things that are happening with me, I have lunch usually once a month with the provost so I think we're in good communication but we have different learning outcomes, and at some points, we're still siloed.

Student needs

Despite the fact that CSAOs have a responsibility to understand student experiences it is often those that they are trying to serve that cause some of the biggest challenges. Alyssa discussed some of the biggest challenges in her position:

Students. As much as I love them, students. And again each campus is different, and each culture is different. And so students here have been very, and it's not all students, but a handful of them that dominate, particularly our student government leaders, and Greek leaders, and our multicultural student organizations, and our cultural centers have become very adversarial in their tone.

There are many reasons CSAOs give for how students can make their jobs challenging. It may involve difficulties on campus or problems that existed previously.

One of the biggest student issues right now are problems associated with mental health. Barbara talked about challenges she faced in her position, "But a lot of students today really have a lot of anxiety, a lot of stress. A lot of pressure, mental health issues, and so we're constantly following students and trying to assist students to be successful and it's difficult." Divisions of student affairs are expected to help students with mental health problems, yet funding is limited for more counselors. The pressure to hire more counselors has been a growing problem.

Elizabeth said:

There's just not enough dollars to go around, so trying to negotiate how could we do things differently so for example our counseling center is way understaffed. According to national standards, we ought to have about 14 full time counselors, when I came we had four. So you know my job is number one to make the case to the president, to the budget committee over and over and over again about the risk associated with that.

Through additional funding by the president, and working with another department on campus,

Elizabeth hired two additional counselors. However, this still falls short of the national

recommendations for her campus.

This past year, issues with diversity were put in the spotlight on college campuses which

resulted in a great deal of attention by CSAOs. Many of the CSAOs made mention of the

situation that happened at the University of Missouri when the chancellor and president resigned.

It became a catalyst for assessing the campus climate on matters of diversity. One observation I

had was that the largest college campuses had the highest racial tension. Of ten universities with

22,001+ students, at least seven CSAOs spoke about a more strained environment when it comes

to matters related to diversity. On the nine campuses, where there were fewer than 22,000

students, two CSAOs mentioned demand letters from students. And campus demonstrations

seemed less prevalent.

CSAOs often work closely with their chancellor and faculty on campus inclusiveness.

George said:

> To have students come forward and say, "These are my list of demands," and
> knowing that 90% of that stuff is already being done. We're working on it to better
> understand it. But for them to hear from [faculty] on campus outside of student
> affairs, "Oh those are critical and you need to." Those [faculty] kind of put their
> own interpretation on what those students are looking for. So I think in some ways,
> it has been, not misleading, but students have been misled into believing the things
> that are happening are not enough, or that there's a bigger influence on it.

Several CSAOs said "demands" by students for greater are virtually the same goals as the

university. However, with the constant turnover of students, the conversation rarely moves

forward. Heidi talked about student turnover:

> I mean it's the good news and the bad news in terms of student activism. You have
> a new group of students every year. That's the good news, because they can't get
> too embedded in the protests because they move on, but the bad news is, you've

been working with these students, you've made some progress and now these students have no idea.

Staff challenges

Staff challenges was perhaps the theme I was most surprised by in terms of challenges. Challenges with staff primarily revolved around dealing with personnel problems and morale issues. Sometimes, CSAOs confront staff due to low job performance. They also must work to keep staff motivated as they often go years without a raise. Wendy discussed her surprises as CSAO:

> The amount of time I spend on staff issues. You just assume people are going to be grown-ups. Just come to work, do your job, be nice to people. That's not always the case. So that's sort of, yeah, really I have to go tell somebody, "no you can't talk to people like that?" So that's, I didn't expect to spend as much time on that.

CSAOs often struggle to confront staff and devise a plan for how they are going to approach low job performance. To help absolve these problems it is important that annual reviews take place as a means of communicating expectations. This way, CSAOs can express concern to their directors about their performance. When Elizabeth began her position as CSAO, she was told by several individuals that one of her directors was a problem. This was misleading because all the annual reviews from the previous CSAO had been positive. Elizabeth detailed the situation:

> To me, honest direct feedback is a gift, and a lot of people don't want to give that. Cause they don't want to deal with the crying or the begging or the negotiating…. So when they said, "Well I'm not going to do that, I guess I should quit." I said, "That's an option, and if you're not going to do what you need to do, then that's the option you should take."

Several CSAOs choose to take the developmental approach when working through conflict. Lynn gave this example:

> It's an important developmental process, and I try to approach it in a developmental way that, "Here are the expectations and here's how they're not being met at this

point in time, and so here's what we're going to do to facilitate your ability to meet these expectations."

Determining the appropriate timeline for firing staff is hard to determine. Scheduling meetings and documenting takes a great deal of time and energy. Alyssa tried to give directors ample time to improve their performance, "You know we give them some time to correct whatever is happening but after 2 – 3 years, you see no improvement then it's definitely time to let that person go." However, Heidi added that firing someone is not always the best solution.

> You know over the years, sometimes I'll say, "Gee that person is not very good," and I'll either move them out of the position or they'll leave and I'll say, "Oh that's good that they'll leave." And then you get another person, and you find that you know, they're not perfect either. And also, everybody has to do their job the way they would do it. It's not the way you would do it.

Perhaps the biggest aspect of staff problems is trying to keep the morale high. In almost every interview, budget cuts and salaries was a topic of conversation. Low morale is often a consequence of not being given annual pay increases. Christine said, "In this state, we have not seen any kind of pay plan or increases in salaries for almost six years. But we're also expected to pay more in our benefits." On a similar note Spencer elaborated:

> We are under an extended hiring freeze, so if anybody leaves their position regardless of why, we're not getting to fill those. So right now division-wide I probably have 25 positions that I'm not allowed to replace. I mean we're talking dishwashers, frontline clerks, and maintenance people, and mid-level managers…. we haven't had raises in 4 -5 years, we're already asking these people to do more, now we're going to ask people to do even more.

This can lead to people being unhappy as well as issues with attrition among staff. Some universities face the challenge of increased enrollment yet very little opportunity to increase staff. Kevin faced this issue:

> I think, overall, we have some morale issues here, and it's not, you know people love their jobs and they love what they do. We've got people that have been at [this university] for 10 – 20 – 25 years. But morale, because our enrollment has exploded over the last eight years or so and our resource staffing level has not matched that…. people are just very overworked.

One way to reduce costs in tight budget cycles is to leave positions open after people

leave. Some choose not to rehire a position and other times the university has hiring freezes.

CSAOs often use position openings to reassign staff responsibilities in order to provide

promotions which can result in a pay raise. Ted used this strategy when his associate vice

president retired earlier in the year.

Ryan acknowledged the challenges his staff had by not getting pay raises for the last

several years. However, he tried increasing morale by recognizing staff:

> I'm really big on professional development and so… if we can't give staff members
> pay raises, there are other things that we can do to support them as it relates to their
> own professional development and being able to move up career wise and so forth.

Ryan implemented an annual awards ceremony at the end of the spring semester as a way to

recognize staff. Mark applied the same strategy at his campus as well as a professional

development conference for his staff in the summer.

Research Question 3: Opportunities

The third research question is, "How do Chief Student Affairs Officers perceive the

opportunities associated with their position?" The main response categories were, (a) title of

CSAO, (b) student impact, and (c) personal and professional growth.

Title of CSAO. Many of the opportunities associated with the chief student affairs

officers related to their high-profile position. Wayne worked closely with community

organizations. He said, "I think the biggest opportunity for me is to have some impact on this

community. And one of the things that you know, when I was approached to go into this position

is really from that perspective." Madeline talked about helping to lead the university:

> I remember interviewing for this job, and I said to the chancellor. I said, "You
> know, you can hire all the people that can tell you all the theoretical stuff. But you
> better get somebody that can be a leader, not just in student affairs, but can help

you lead the institution." And I think that, for me, that's been the highlight of really feeling like my voice at the table as we make these changes.

Kevin discussed opportunities through his CSAO position:

> You know, just to be in a very high profile leadership role where all of the sudden you know I am responsible for a really big group. And so, the opportunity to really make a difference…. before I used to say, "Well let me check with the VP and I'll get back to you." Now, I occasionally check in with the president. My decisions have direct impact now, and so the opportunity to really make impact with decisions, with vision. You know with strategic initiatives.

Both Alyssa and Wendy pointed out that they appreciated the opportunity to implement policy.

Alyssa said, "I think the opportunity to influence change and policy, that can be a highlight. [To] interact with legislators on a regular basis if need be, those are some of the positives." Robert, who is near the end of his career, was direct:

> I might be the only of your respondents who says this, but I bet everyone believes it. It's cool to be the boss [laughter]. You know, it's just, it's just kind of fun to be in charge of stuff and have people to try and do what your wanting to get done, you know. When I do think about retirement, I think, "Remember that goes away the day you walk out the door. You know, your back to just a guy."

Robert referenced that students want to see him at certain events, but they are interested in seeing the person in "the suit." Being in a position of authority at a university often allows CSAOs to meet distinguished guests on their campus. Keela talked about it in the form of "positional authority," she said, "The position does carry some benefits, I'm not going to lie…. We had the president come visit. President Obama was here last July, and, you know, I was privileged enough to be involved in that."

As a component of being in a high profile position, several CSAOs talked about how they oversee diverse units on campus. Christine said, "Our former chancellor called me the mayor. You know I was the campus mayor, because the mayor knows everything that happens in the community, you know, and it's 24/7, 365." This description is the only one that used the word "mayor" but was not too different than some other examples. Pamela described it similarly:

> I run a city. I've got 25,000 members in my community in this city, and I provide health care, recreation, emergency support, counseling, you know, food, a place to be, a union. I run all that and so it's like running a city. And people say, "Well you have such a fun job." It is but I have a $74 million budget. I have 400 staff that I try to work with effectively to bring out their best to serve our students, you know the time and energy is significant.

Student impact

Other meaningful experiences surrounding the job as CSAO is when people say "thank you." This was brought up several times and it was in reference to both students and staff. Christine said there is a lot of "delayed gratification," sometimes receiving a thank-you, years after making an impact on someone's life.

When it comes to university leadership, the CSAO has a unique role in leadership, working with students. It is their responsibility to be the voice of students to leaders on campus, Steven describes his responsibilities with students:

> So we purport to do things in the name of students without often including the student voice or understanding the lived experiences of our students. Part of our job is to understand that, try to gather information through qualitative studies, assessments or whatever and then we get a better sense of students, and student cultures. And then share that information with the university at large.

Steven added he needs staff to help him understand students better, "Part of student affairs is to try and get a sense of what it's like to live here. I'm not here at 12-midnight, living in the residence halls. I'm not in our university center night after night, weekends etcetera, I'm not a student." Barbara described watching students grow:

> I think, really, the fact that you really get to develop relationships, you really get to have impact on students that you really get to see, and you get to see so much of a student and their growth from freshman year to when they walk across that stage. I mean, I think that that's the real positive of this position.

Madeline talked working with students: "The students that I know and that I work with are probably the cream of the crop. You know the president of the student body; you know the president of the organizations." Mark said:

> I get to engage students every day, I get to watch them grow and develop, I get to attend cultural events whether their free or whether they cost, I get to see great division I athletic events. There are so many intangibles to working on a college campus. I do believe even through all the things we struggle through as vice presidents or vice chancellors or directors, provosts, I mean we have some of the best jobs in the world…. We're preparing the future leaders of tomorrow, there's a lot of satisfaction.

Personal and professional growth

My participants talked about opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. The data revealed that growing as a person and as a professional are often intertwined. The position of CSAO is both a career and a way of life. Christine appreciated the impact on working with students but from the standpoint that she gets to work with other people who share her passion to help students through their college education:

> I think it's really allowed me to grow as a person and develop my leadership style and my administrative skills. I think it's also provided me with some of the best relationships in the sense of, you know, like-minded people that care about education and access, and affordability and student success.

> Lynn talked about a building project that took several years to complete. She has appreciated how she understands much more about higher education than what she did as a faculty member:

> I have a whole understanding of the higher education process that I never had before taking on this position…. when you start to throw in staff, all the administration side of things, the staffing, the budgeting and the university policies, the working with general council and all of the hand downs from the federal and state governments and that kind of stuff. This becomes a much more complex business than what you see as a faculty member where basically you are the expert within that discipline, and you go in and try to impart your expertise to a group of students.

Conclusion

Each of the research questions provide a comprehensive understanding of leadership for chief student affairs officers. The data inductively built an overall understanding of the common leadership perspectives, challenges, and opportunities of the CSAO position. The depth of this

data is unique and provides in-depth analysis into the complexities faced by CSAOs. In chapter

five I use the data to build a model for student affairs leadership.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS

Student Affairs Leadership Model

The goal of this research study was to get a comprehensive understanding of leadership

for chief student affairs officers. This chapter reveals a model of leadership based on the

emergent findings. The Student Affairs Leadership Model is an illustration that helps the reader

to understand the various working parts of how a chief student affairs officer leads. This chapter

brings the themes together in a way that utilizes the inductive nature of qualitative research.

There are three themes that emerged through the data analysis. They are, (1) elements that

inform primary leadership characteristics, (2) knowledge and skills, and (3) and mindful

leadership outlook. Figure 1 provides an illustration of themes and sub-themes.

Figure 1:

Student Affairs Leadership Model

ELEMENTS THAT INFORM LEADERSHIP

1. Campus constituents
2. Campus culture
3. Diverse leadership strategies

MINDFUL LEADERSHIP OUTLOOK

1. Sit on the porch with people
2. Willingness to learn
3. Moving wagons west
4. Hubris
5. Mindfulness of students
6. Attentiveness to crisis management

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

1. Fiscal understanding
2. Policy acumen
3. Student affairs role in higher education
4. Current student affairs issues
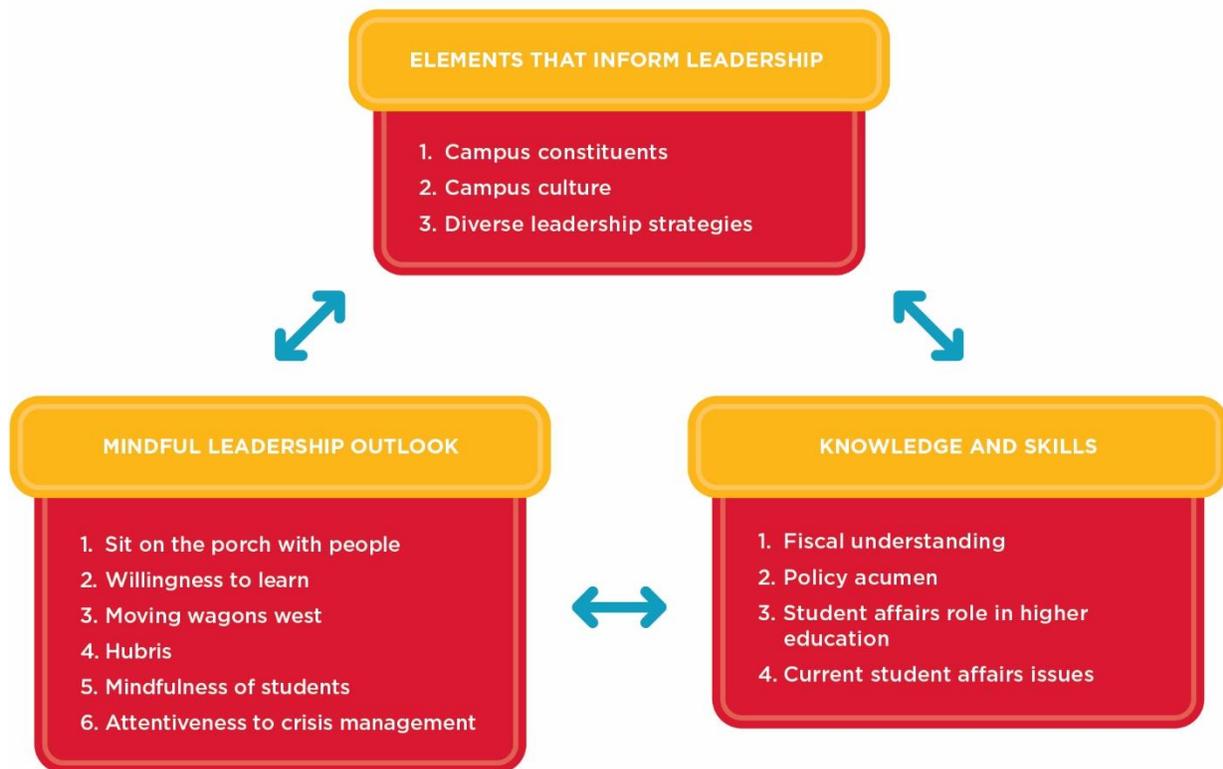
Elements that inform primary leadership characteristics involve the key people of who the CSAO has to interact with and campus culture. Each of these items are separate from the CSAO but influence how he or she is leads. The third part of the first theme is diverse leadership strategies where the CSAO is utilizes different approaches of leadership based on the situation and people involved. Overall this theme has components that the CSAO will have to filter when making decisions and situating himself or herself as a leader.

The knowledge and skills theme consists of what the CSAO is brings into the position based on prior knowledge and experience. A CSAO who has a base of knowledge involving fiscal responsibility, policy, role of student affairs, and current issues in student affairs will be much better off in moving the division forward and confronting problems. The final theme is viewpoints of leadership. These are viewpoints that could be practiced by virtually any type of leader but are really important for CSAOs in order to be successful. They are perspectives that many people in the field will expect of a CSAO; however, they are always a work in progress. Some of the sub-theme names will require further explanation when they are described later. They are, sit on the porch with people, willingness to learn, moving wagons west, hubris, mindfulness of students, and attentiveness to crisis management.

Theme 1: Elements That Inform Primary Leadership Characteristics

Leaders are bound to lead based on the rules of the environment in which they are situated. Elements that inform leadership characteristics involve the outside influences that impact the leadership of a chief student affairs officer. The elements that inform leadership characteristics are (1) campus constituents, (2) campus culture, and (3) diverse leadership strategies. Constituents consists of the president, vice presidents, and other administrators on campus. Culture involves the campus ecology which is made up of all people on campus such as

students, staff, and faculty; but may also include alumni and community members. The history of

the institution is an important component of what makes up the campus culture, something a

CSAO needs to be aware of. The first two are outside of the control of a typical vice president

which is why it is imperative that leaders be adaptable.

The final element within this theme is the diverse leadership strategies that can help a

chief student affairs officer go about making decisions. This involves being aware of theoretical

implications of their leadership and utilizing various leadership models. This could include

utilizing different frameworks by Bolman and Deal (1997) such as deciding to award staff for

great behavior which is a "symbolic" decision; but other times the "structural" framework will be

more appropriate when following policies and procedures. Diverse leadership viewpoints allow

individuals to consider alternatives to solutions in which they might not have otherwise

considered.

Campus Constituents

Being in charge of a division within a university means adhering to the expectations of

the president. At least eight of my participants have had new presidents within their university

since they assumed the chief student affairs officer position. As one of the top administrators, it

is important to work with the person in charge of the institution. Madeline indicated the

importance of learning to work with new leadership, "So that's real challenging to adjust to

leadership. And you know if you can't adjust you gotta go. And I truly believe that. And as I

adjust I have to get my direct reports to adjust."

Beyond working with the president, many CSAOs need to be ready to educate their

presidents on essential issues occurring in student affairs. Many college presidents do not have a

student affairs background and as evidenced by the two CSAOs who came from the academic

division, Robert and Lynn; they had to spend a lot of time learning what the division of student

affairs entailed. College presidents often have backgrounds as a faculty member or in settings

where they are likely not familiar with the complexities of student affairs. Heidi said that she is

often "invisible" until there is a campus crisis, therefore, she needs to work hard to talk to her

president about issues on campus. She mentioned crisis situations such as student suicides,

mishandling of sexual assaults, and students protesting. Presidents and vice presidents of

universities often do not know how to handle these problems:

> These things will kill you. A president, and a vice president and they don't even
> know. You know some of these presidents or chancellors come in and they don't
> even who you are, they don't even care. All they care about is academics and oh
> my God. It can kill them; it can bring them down.

Many CSAOs have to work with vice presidents of academic affairs units. Out of my 19

participants, 3 of them reported to provosts in charge of the academic divisions. One participant,

Christine, used to report to provost but in the last several years has been reporting to the

president. She said in the past that it felt like her words had to go through a "translator" when

reporting to the president and she wasn't always sure if her points were even brought to the table:

> If I had it all over to do again, this is the model [I want] and I don't want to report
> to a provost. And they've got enough to worry about on the faculty side you know
> so and that's where their usual alliances or preferences are and so it gets even more
> diminished, student affairs does.

On college campuses, CSAOs indicate they are often seen as secondary to academic

affairs (see Tensions across Campus, Chapter 4). It may be viewed this way because the

students' primary goal is graduating which is facilitated by academics. But our universities have

made the holistic well-being of students an important part of the college experience. Research

has consistently shown that student affairs plays a pivotal role in academic success through

engaging them on campus by means of involvement or living in residence halls (Astin, 1984;

Burch, Heller, Burch, Freed, & Steed, 2015). One way to help avoid the negative stigma of student affairs is learning to work on behalf of the entire university. Robert attributed some of his success to taking the entire institution into consideration when decisions are made, sometimes at the expense of the student affairs division. Robert said, "Right now I feel like both the provost and the president call on me regularly for things that aren't student life because I have demonstrated a concern for the whole university."

Wayne expressed struggles with faculty not understanding the added value of student affairs on his campus. He worked through this by reaching out to the faculty senate chair who had been there for 2 years, "She has been very inclusive and you know really supports a lot of the things that we do outside the classroom." However, the senate faculty chair prior to this one was not as receptive when talking to Wayne.

Depending on the nature of some budget cuts, student affairs does not always have to take the brunt of it since they rely heavily on student fees and vendor contracts. Mark was in a position to help support his provost after the academic unit had taken a large cut. Through the use of additional funding he was given $250,000 to the provost to put towards student success and retention programs. As a result, his school assisted student travel to conferences, hosted a research symposium, and sent engineering students to compete in national competitions. He added, "It takes an institution to recruit, and retain, and graduate a student…. It shows that academic affairs and student affairs are partners. And that we have the best interest of students in mind."

Working with campus constituents is critical to the success of a chief student affairs officer. It is important that CSAOs look at the big picture and work toward developing

relationships with the goal of benefitting the entire university. This requires efforts to educate top

administrators and maintain positive interactions with faculty units on campus.

Campus Culture

In 16 out of my 19 interviews, chief student affairs officers stressed the importance of

knowing campus culture. Elizabeth referenced that she "misunderstood" culture when she made

a decision that was not very popular among administrators. In most cases, CSAOs either talked

about unique features of their campus or the importance of getting to know the culture. Ted

referenced his campus as a "family." And George would advise, "Familiarize yourself with the

culture of campus."

Keela assumed that by working hard and being genuine, she would be take on the

leadership role of CSAO:

> I was naïve coming into it. I didn't know the adaptations that were needed, and I
> just thought you work hard, you listen well and be yourself and that'll happen, and
> that's not the case. You have to adapt to your environment in some way and figure
> out what your niche is and what the organization needs.

Even though a CSAO may understand the culture, it can still be difficult to implement

change. Lynn mentioned, "Higher ed is full of traditions, and routines, and practices, and culture,

and so anytime you're making change your going to be upsetting all that, which takes time."

Knowing about the campus culture is important whether making changes or situating oneself as a

leader on campus. Wayne also emphasized the importance of culture on his campus:

> [It is important to] really understand this campus culture and this community
> culture. The people that I see that get in trouble here from a leadership standpoint
> are the people that don't understand the two. And you cannot ignore one or the
> other.

Steven talked about why people have negative reactions to change on campus:

> Most people say they're not opposed to change. Have you ever had anybody come
> to you and say, 'I don't like change?' So there's a lot of reasons why people are

averse to change, partly number one they don't understand what's propelling it. They don't understand how it's going to impact them or if they do, they're fearful of it.

Making changes on campus is one aspect of understanding the culture. Another aspect of campus culture is gauging what other student affairs professionals expect of the CSAO. Kevin had been CSAO for only a couple months at the time of our interview, and he was learning about new expectations as CSAO:

> You know I'm the person that would say, "Alright we serving pizzas today? Let me role up my sleeves and I'll…[help]." People are like, "No, no. One we don't want our vice president to serve pizzas." And that's hard for me because the servant leader you know? And two, "You don't need to worry about it, we got this." You know because in their mind they might be thinking, "Oh is he evaluating the quality of the pizza that we're serving?" So I have to learn to step back and I still struggle with it sometimes.

Serving pizza on one campus may not be considered appropriate for a CSAO while on other campuses it may be perfectly normal. It is important for a CSAO to learn about campus culture so that he or she will know what has been the norm. If Kevin decided to serve pizzas next time, he may want to consider how it will be accepted by others.

Diverse Leadership Viewpoints

This final subtheme surrounding elements that inform leadership practices is informed by theory and practice. Understanding diverse leadership viewpoints is important in handling complex problems where decisions may be interpreted differently among various groups on campus. This subtheme is unique in that the CSAO is informed of making decisions based on previous frameworks of leadership. Understanding leadership theory can help a CSAO improve their understanding of leadership. This brings about an awareness of utilizing new approaches to complex problems.

Alyssa talked about the challenges she dealt with due to the structural differences at her

new university. This structure lent itself to being less supportive than what she expected based on

previous schools she worked at.

> When I first started I thought I had a little bit more support in the central
> administration than what I did. Meaning you know while I had a chief of staff, it
> wasn't a true chief of staff position. Did not have an assistant, did not have anybody
> to direct our communications whether internal or external…. And so I was not used
> to that in any of my positions that I ever worked in at [previous university] or
> [previous] University. I had all of those pieces.

Working with a diverse people is also important when it comes to approaching staff.

Pamela talked about the different needs her staff have in what they expect of her as a leader. She

doesn't specifically follow a leadership framework, but her approach adjusts with different

members of her staff:

> [Sam], director of university health services, needs a little reinforcement and an
> 'atta-boy' but I don't need to check in with him daily. But he needs a note every
> once in a while, to say, "That was awesome, you did a great job with this." So I
> think it's more, I hope it's collaborative, it's cooperative. You can ask the people
> that I work with, but I don't think it fits a particular model…. terribly well.

Being new to the position forces CSAOs to consider different leadership viewpoints as

well. Wendy talked about how it was different as a CSAO compared to her previous positions.

> So I have to balance between the thirty-thousand-foot view and the detailed view.
> And in the beginning it was getting myself to the thirty-thousand-foot view.
> Because I was used to being in the weeds so much but now I have to remind myself
> to come down, get in the weeds on some issues.

Diverse leadership viewpoints are necessary when the weight of decisions impact people

differently. The Bolman and Deal (1997) framework is one example of practicing leadership

from different viewpoints. They have the framework approach of; structural, human resource,

political, and symbolic. The examples provided could each warrant a different framework

depending on the situation. Alyssa would maybe want to be a little more political with other administrators in order to get a new chief of staff.

Pamela talked about giving accolades to a certain employee when they do well which is more human resource but perhaps symbolic in how she gives praise. Both Mark and Ryan started awards programs for their staff at the end of the year in order to show appreciation. This form of symbolic leadership seemed appropriate given the needs of their staff. These various forms of leadership can be beneficial to use as CSAO and different frames are appropriate in different contexts. It is most advantageous when a CSAO has an understanding of all frames to make decisions that are suitable for different needs.

<div align="center">**Theme 2: Knowledge and Skills**</div>

Upon beginning the position of CSAO, it is important to have knowledge of the fundamental issues in student affairs. While every campus may be different these subthemes consist of a base set of skills or knowledge where every chief student affairs officer needs to have some general understanding. It is not to say that all CSAOs were full of confidence in their knowledge and skills but they recognized the importance of continued growth. The necessary knowledge and skills are (1) fiscal understanding, (2) policy acumen, (3) student affairs role in higher education, and (4) current student affairs issues.

Fiscal understanding

Chief student affairs officers have to operate a budget that often ranges in the millions. And due to the current nature of most institutions dealing with tight budgets it is imperative that they can deal with large amounts of money. Barbara said:

> You know as I look back in my higher ed degree which I thought was really well done, you don't learn enough about finance. And to really understand all of the finances I mean all of the sudden you get this enormous budget that comes from so many different places.

An aspect of knowing how to work with large budgets in higher education is that sources of money have different restrictions. Barbara went on to say that they practice "Responsible Centered Management" (RCM) which means that the money they get is essentially the money that they make. So housing brings in money as an auxiliary as does the student health center and so on. Barbara said it is challenging to know, "where you can pull money from and where you can't pull money from."

Understanding budget can be complex given so many campus units. Pamela said, "I run a city, I've got 25,000 members in my community in this city and I provide health care, recreation, emergency support, counseling…food, a place to be, a union." Fiscal insight will always be important when working with a large number of people on campuses that run facilities with different sources of income. It is important for chief student affairs officers to continuously learn and pay attention to their fiscal responsibilities.

Policy acumen

Every university is going to be uniquely situated when it comes to policy. There are at least three layers to policy; institutional, state, and federal policies. Kevin was new to his position at the time of our interview and indicated that he feels less confident about student conduct cases. He wishes he would have been more direct with the dean of students when he was associate vice president and helped out more with conduct cases; "There are some cases now that are coming down the pike. And I'm going, 'Oh my goodness, I don't even know our procedures.'" Even though he has many years of higher education experience, Kevin has to work to learn more about campus policies and procedures. Barbara recommended chief student affairs officers learn about policy; "Study policy at the board of regents' levels, study policy at the university level and make sure that you're familiar with how everything works."

National policies have continued to make the field of student affairs more difficult to manage. Every campus is now required to demonstrate that they investigate all cases of sexual assault. As a result, there has been a required increase in "Title IX officers" on college campuses to increase education and investigations. Another federal policy, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) has required employers to pay overtime for any employee making $47,476 or less ("Final Rule: Overtime - Wage and Hour Division (WHD) - U.S. Department of Labor," 2016). CSAOs need to remain informed on federal requirements and then work with staff and administrators to make sure they are in compliance with federal regulations. In order to stay up-to-date on federal policies it is helpful for CSAOs to be involved with national organizations such as ACPA (American College Personnel Association) or NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education). Beyond the updates, these associations can help CSAOs network across the country in order to gain ideas on how to implement new policies.

Student affairs role in higher education

One way to help overcome the challenges in student affairs is for CSAOs to have a firm vision of what they believe their role is within their institution. This may look different among CSAOs and within universities. Ryan's president told him and the vice president of academic affairs that they need to work collaboratively. The president views all working parts of the university as essential for student success.

Both Robert and Lynn, the two CSAOs that came from the ranks of faculty revealed how little they knew about the student affairs division when they first joined. Robert discussed how he was not the expert in any particular area so it was important for his staff to be the experts. Lynn was surprised that student affairs on her campus had so many responsibilities such as working with hazardous material and emergency management. In her new role, she has spent

time with the dean of students, who shares stories of students with problems. Lynn contrasted her

views as a faculty member to her job as CSAO, "I certainly over the 15 years had gotten less

naïve about some of the things that students do when they're not sitting in the classroom but this

job opened up my eyes even more."

Successful CSAOs have a clear understanding of how their division adds value to the

university. Working with administrators is part of the job but proof often needs to be provided

through assessment and evaluation. Wendy even went as far to create a new director of

assessment position which was well-received among her fellow campus administrators:

> You need to demonstrate that you are contributing to retention, graduation,
> everybody, people want to know. And…. we keep insisting on assessment from our
> directors, do they know how to do real assessment other than, "Well, we had a lot
> of people show up for that program." That's not going to cut it anymore, so instead
> of hiring a dean of students, I hired an assessment director.

In order to have a clear idea of how student affairs is situated within the institution; a

CSAO must know how each department is contributing to the success of students. It also

involves feeling confident that the role the departments play is essential to the success and well-

being of the student body. This can be demonstrated through assessment and collaboration across

campus.

Current student affairs issues

Issues on college campuses are often a reflection of what is happening in society. When

big issues are occurring throughout the country, they are also dealt with among the student body.

Student affairs has to be prepared to address current issues that spill over from society into

higher education. Spencer referenced the current presidential campaigns; "Just look at what's

happening with our presidential candidates, that stuff can't swirl around up here and not have an

impact on our college campuses." In addition to current events in higher education, Steven

added:

> You know look at Missouri, Black Lives Matter, all this stuff that is happening in society, it's bleeding over into higher education in ways I've never seen in my career where people are clamoring for safe space. Well what does safe space mean? And then people asking institutions to insert themselves to handle situations from macroaggressions that occur in the classroom to you name it. Wide range of things.

> There is no doubt that the Black Lives Matters movement has created more work for

divisions of student affairs. As demonstrated in Steven's above comment, many CSAOs

referenced Missouri in their interviews based on the demonstrations that occurred on their

campuses this past year.

Assessing the latest challenges in student affairs is an ongoing process. Some current

challenges in student affairs right now are associated with mental health and transgender

policies. Elizabeth discussed how her university is was behind in the recommended number of

mental health counselors:

> According to national standards, we ought to have about 14 full time counselors, when I came we had four. So you know my job is number one, to make the case to the president, to the budget committee over and over and over again about the risk associated with that.

 She was got funding to hire two new positions. This required additional collaboration with

another student affairs unit on campus. George talked about challenges associated with facilities

for transgender students:

> How are we going to serve transgender students in male and female locker rooms? And how do you come up with a policy that works around that? I mean these are the types of things that I don't think you can prepare yourself for.

These two items were not mentioned in all interviews but they are a reflection of how issues in society must be confronted in student affairs. As these issues permeate onto college campuses, it is the role of student affairs to address them.

Theme 3: Mindful Leadership Outlook

One of the unique features of leadership is that it takes more than a specific skill level to be successful. It is important that a chief student affairs officer consider how their approach to leadership influences their role. The subthemes in this category are never static, they are a way of thinking and doing. These practices are how a CSAO may want to consider approaching their responsibilities as a leader. They include, (1) sit on the porch with people, (2) willingness to learn, (3) moving wagons west, (4) hubris, (5) mindfulness of students, and (6) attentiveness to crisis management. They are how successful CSAOs view and practice leadership. One of the benefits of these sub-themes is that CSAOs can begin utilizing these characteristics of leadership almost immediately. They are always being practiced and improved upon yet never perfected.

Sit on the Porch with People

This first leadership principle is about the ability and willingness to listen. Alyssa stressed the importance of not going into the position of CSAO with any "preconceived notions." She shared one of her philosophies, "Meet with as many people as you can, I believe that you need to get on the porch and rock with people a little bit you know that's what I say." The principle "sit on the porch with people" illustrates both the willingness to hear what other people have to say while also valuing their input. In 16 out of my 19 interviews, CSAOs talked about the importance of "listening." Leadership is not about knowing all elements of what is going on in student affairs, it is about allowing the knowledge and skills of other people to inform how decisions are made. Ted said:

I do believe I'm not the smartest person in the room so I try listen to others and then to make a decision, I'm confident in that decision that it's the best, it's the best choice, given the information that I have at the moment.

Keela was of the mindset to utilize this trait before she even started her CSAO position. Someone asked her what the first thing she was going to do as CSAO, "And I said, 'I don't know, I'm going to go learn about this place, I'm going to go listen and meet people and figure out what they need and how my skill set can support the community.'" This is an example of how the principle of listening can be a guide when beginning the position of CSAO. Steve also talked about the importance of getting to know staff:

Get to know your people first…. You have to recognize; who are your people? What are their backgrounds? And what are you going to have to learn from them? from their disciplines, from their work but also what can they learn from you.

Elizabeth expanded on valuing staff, "If you value their contribution and you're willing to listen and you know consider other people's point of view, they'll do just about anything that you want to do." Having the ability and willingness to listen is the backbone of many leadership traits. Many other principles of leadership can grow when working with other people, this is done by listening and valuing what they have to say.

Willingness to learn

Willingness to learn is a leadership principle is often a product of the first perspective. It involves taking information and using it to learn more about the institution. Pamela talked about holding back from making any big decisions:

I think when you're in the position, any position of power and that could be anybody. Perceived power or real power. That you need to shut up, listen, observe, learn, don't necessarily start by stirring the pot. And really learn about your environment and the strengths of people.

Much time was spent during my interviews where CSAOs talked about lessons they have

learned since being in their position. This perhaps is a necessary component of being in any new

position. However, it is important that a new CSAO makes him or herself open to learning new

lessons when confronting challenges or working with new people. Spencer shared perspectives

as a new CSAO:

> I think anytime you're in a new management or leadership position, I think your making both a calculation based what information you've got, both quantitative and qualitative data. As well as on your instinct on what changes you think you need to make or not make. And you know when I first came into this job it was overwhelming, it was like eating an elephant. And I had to just take it one step at a time.

> Leaders are in constant learning mode both about the position, as well as taking in the

environment of campus. Ryan discussed his leadership style, he began by saying how it has

changed:

> My leadership style, it's changed over the years. I'm definitely more focused on you know, how do I develop my staff and how do I provide for them in the way that they're able to do their job and do it successfully.

Discussing how his leadership style has changed demonstrates that Ryan has continued to learn

how to do his job better. This includes being more attentive to his staff and learning from his

mistakes. Willingness to learn goes beyond just finding out the needs of the division. It involves

self-reflection and continuous growth as a leader.

Moving Wagons West

Part of being a CSAO is figuring out how to get staff to move toward common goals.

Several CSAOs shared the importance of working with staff to help everyone move in the same

general direction. Robert gave an example that he learned from a colleague at another institution:

> She thinks of her job as the university is composed of a whole bunch of different wagon trains heading west. And she doesn't really care to much about which route they take, her job is just to make sure they keep heading west…. that's leadership,

it's keeping all the trains moving west. You know, if anyone will turn around and go east you got a big problem. And you know, if they're going just a little bit off north you know well that's okay you know, but you monitor real closely, [to] see if they're swinging further and further off.

Other challenges involve problems that get in the way with meeting these goals. Robert expanded on that at another point in the interview:

Yeah, budgets a challenge why? Budgets a challenge because I'm trying to get to the west you know and I got to figure out how to allocate the funds the best way that will get us there. Compliance is a challenge, why? Because it gets in the way of going west.

Meeting goals on behalf of the division can be a challenge. But without the support of staff those challenges will be compounded. Heidi gave a similar example to "moving wagons west" when she described her leadership style:

I would describe it is that I have a direction that I want to go and its really kind of a broad direction…. my job as the senior student affairs officer is to lead these…13 – 14 [departments], I don't know. To go in one direction, because they all do different things, I mean housing does housing and campus recreation does campus recreation, and the dean of student's office. And they're doing these tasks that are different but if we're all working towards this common vision, this common goal we can be pretty powerful…. So that's my job, so anyway, I guess I would describe my style as having a vision but then trying to influence people to share that vision with me and be excited about it and let them sort of get there the way they want to. Because I don't believe, especially in true transformational change that, I think people have to be invested.

Spencer described the satisfaction when everyone is moving in the same direction:

I mean that's, there's nothing more satisfying than sitting around a table with a huge problem and your all pulling on the same rope. And everybody wants to be successful and they want you to be successful. They want to be successful. You know I think that's very satisfying but ultimately that comes about creating that environment.

Moving wagons west is informed by the other leadership themes mentioned in this chapter. Campus constituents and knowledge and skills will all be important components when leading the division. However, moving departments toward common goals is something that

takes constant evaluation. Before establishing a common direction for the team, the CSAO must

follow the first principle in this list, "rocking on the porch with people" which involves the

ability to listen. Without listening to others, it will be difficult to get staff invested as Heidi

mentioned. Moving west is more than just meeting goals, it involves learning how to work with

staff and remaining motivated to work collaboratively.

Hubris

A successful CSAO possesses a certain level of confidence in order to do the job well.

The title of this sub-theme originates from my interview with Christine who had a way of

describing some of her views through a unique term. It seemed to embodied confidence, ego, and

self-esteem, "hubris." Her use of this word is perhaps a better descriptor than confidence as it

encapsulates multiple elements of confidence, doubt, and leadership perspective. Christine

elaborated:

> You know I think for me that has always been an area for growth and development
> is the confidence. I see other counterparts with a certain amount of hubris and that's
> just not part of who I am…. there is always that, 'did I do the right thing?' and 'did
> I follow through?' Really kind of trusting my own abilities…. So I don't think I've
> ever been 100% confident. I don't think I've always had that kind of hubris cause
> I know we're all works in progress.

Christine shared that her confidence has grown over the last 15 years by being well-prepared.

However, I asked her to explain more what she meant by the word hubris.

> You know when I think about certain individuals that have that certain kind of
> hubris, there is a certain amount of confidence and I'm not always sure that they
> really know what they're doing. But they're going to fake it until they can make
> it…. So no big deal so I kind of see that as a certain amount of ego as well. Where
> they have a healthy, maybe too healthy of an ego.

Interestingly, when asked what leadership trait she wished to could be stronger in, she

responded hubris. Co-workers of Christine have noticed the room for her confidence to grow.

She described how she wishes she could be stronger:

> I think that confidence, that 'hubris,' that ego. You know that's the feedback that I
> get. I think over time I've learned to be political but I wish I was a little bit more
> political. Cause sometimes I'll tilt to windmills as people will say.

Although Christine spent time defining this term and how it relates to her leadership, there were

other CSAOs who expressed viewpoints. Mark talked about advice he received from a mentor

and also how he was perhaps too confident when he was younger:

> He always talked to us about what the next five questions are….in any situation and
> so that stuck with me too in how to almost over prepare for a meeting or a function
> or a speech or something…. I was a little impatient as a young employee. Coming
> out of grad school with my doctorate in 2000 I thought I should have been a dean
> or vice president by then, I was interviewing for those jobs. I can tell you honestly
> I'm glad I didn't get them, I wasn't ready. I thought I was but after being all the
> places I've been and seeing all the things I've seen, I would have gotten eaten up
> and it probably would have burned me out. I would have died because I just didn't
> have the as we say, 'Sitting through the trials or sitting through the fires.'

This statement by Mark resonates with Christine's comment about hubris. Had he started in a

position with too little preparation, he would have been "eaten up." But by taking lower positions

of leadership and building his experience he built his sense of hubris as a CSAO. Mark talked even

more about why it was good that he did not become CSAO too early in his career:

> I'm glad I wasn't a vice president then, cause it would have eaten me up. I would
> have been too much about being liked and no one being mad and as a vice president
> or in any role of vice president, even a director but as a vice president, or president
> or chancellor people are mad at you pretty much all the time, no matter what
> decision you make.

> Heidi talked about the importance of confidence as a means to help keep staff confident:

> Confidence is really important because no decision is ever really perfect. You
> know, you're at a crossroads, should I go right or should I go left. No direction is
> really going to probably be the perfect one. You just go to the left and then you
> kind of make the best of it and you do the best you can going left or you go to the

right and you make the best of it. So being confident and going forward with a
certain amount of confidence gives everybody confidence. Makes everybody feel
like we want to make this work.

Heidi stressed that when the confidence in a CSAO is present, it is also going to be present

among staff:

Cause your attitudes are reflected by everyone. If your panicked, everybody is….
if you're not confident, nobody's going to be confident…. If you aren't confident,
fake it. Have you ever heard the term fake it 'til you make it? (chuckling) Just fake
it you know…. Cause people need to feel that you know you're confident.

Along with hubris. Another piece that informs hubris is age and the length of time into

one's career. Mark addressed this when he talked about needing experience, Robert talked about

it from the standpoint of getting ready to retire:

I don't have a retirement date picked out but you know it's not over the horizon
anymore. It's you know within view, and it's pretty much financially feasible now
and that last part is a big confidence boost. It's like I can say what I think and if it
doesn't work out see you later.

Age and experience play a role in how one develops "hubris." Many elements contribute to how

someone develops a level of confidence or ego. And in some cases it may mean you just want

people to believe you have hubris; such as Heidi suggested, fake it 'til you make it.

Mindfulness of Students

One thing that separates the way leadership is practiced among CSAOs compared to

other campus administrators is their mindfulness of the student experience. Madeline was proud

of the fact that as an administrator, only her title had the word "student." This is part of the title

that CSAOs carry proudly. Many CSAOs mentioned the importance of remaining "close" to

students. Keela said a CSAO can still make it a priority:

You don't have to lose touch of students in the flight of the administration and in
fact I was just in our provost's office, she just bought herself a graphic that said,
"It's about students." And she said, "I need to be reminded of this because it's so
easy to get distracted and not keep that at your heart."

One common way for CSAOs to stay in touch with students is to be an advisor to their

organization. This allows them to have time set aside in order to touch base with them. For

example, George met with his student government association weekly and was involved on

several committees that work with orientation leaders and RA's (resident assistants) in the

residence halls. Heidi emphasized that she was willing to meet with students at their request but

often times their needs are likely better served by someone on campus that works directly with

services. She is the advisor for several student groups and thinks it's important to have both

formal and informal ways to communicate with students.

Barbara is another CSAO that advises student groups. But she also tries to attend at least

one event a year in each type of activity that is available on campus such as sports and fine arts

programs. She also had the opportunity to live in the residence halls for two and a half years

right after she came to her current institution. This is far less common among older, more

experienced professionals. But she talked about her view on being around students:

> So right away I was around students and right away I knew that I wanted to continue
> to be connected to the students and so I've kind of worked like this since I got here.
> And I mean I worked a lot of hours previously as acting and interim and dean of
> students but just not at this level. And like I said it's by choice, the president doesn't
> say, "[Barbara] you have to be at everything." But I love to be at everything because
> then I see the students and then I can congratulate them and you know talk to them
> about everything that's happening in their life and I just find that to be so important.
> I just took a group of 19 to Ireland over New Year's so I just, I need that for me.

Ted summarized experiences of students on his campus. One aspect has to do with what

students say about the campus:

> So I'm constantly concerned about the word of mouth of what our students and
> families are saying about our school. I'm obsessed with that; I give out my home
> phone number to every single parent who comes through my school. There isn't a
> university administrator small or large that's been doing that for 40 years at their
> school. That's how committed I am….in terms of listening to very important

constituency, the current students as well, future students and their families. So it weighs heavily on me.

However, Ted also focused on the privilege he has of meeting with different groups of students on campus:

> As we're interviewing my students are coming across the campus waving at me [through his window]. What other school in America does anybody even know of a position that I'm in? Last night I went to BSU [Black Student Union] meeting, this morning I met with student government leaders, tomorrow, as I mentioned, I will be meeting, I try to meet with high school counselors throughout the state, once a year. Who does that? I have the greatest job in America. Are there challenges? Absolutely. Would I want to do something else? Absolutely not.

Being mindful of the student experience is imperative to being a successful chief student affairs officers. This aspect of leadership requires a deliberate effort to listen and understand their needs and work with appropriate constituents to maximize their experience. "Maximize their experience" requires collaborative work with administrators and staff as well as providing avenues to hear the student voice.

Attentiveness to Crisis Management

During Heidi's interview, she made the comment, "Cause in a place like this, there's crisis situations all the time." However, the importance of crisis management was talked about by several CSAOs. In fact, I was surprised that five of my participants referenced feeling the most confident during moments of crisis. Robert described that he feels most confident in moments of crisis:

> That's a day where a crisis is resolved effectively so I think of those days as days when I'm extremely executive, when I'm yelling out the door to my assistant, "I need 5 minutes with the president within the next hour." …. We're better off than we started. That's [when] I feel very confident, I've been able to marshal the resources, have the ideas, you know, convince the right people, all those kinds of things.

Madeline talked about feeling more confident in moments of crisis due to demonstrations on her

campus:

> I kind of feel like it's during the crisis, during a crisis…. that I'm probably at my
> best. People were screwing around and having a fit about the demonstrations and
> stuff and I was like, "Oh for crying out loud let's go out there and walk with 'em.
> Let's listen, let's figure out what's going on."

Crisis situations can come up at any moment and often times are dealt with among

student affairs officers. This often requires the CSAO working with multiple campus constituents

such as mental health counselors, residence hall staff, and faculty. It also requires keeping the

president informed and often times working with the media. Pamela's response about feeling

confident was:

> So times when I've felt more confident? I've gotten really good at crisis
> management. From lots of different incidents and from lots of training and so it's a
> horrible thing to say but when are, you know, [mentions tragic incidents], that's
> where I, unfortunately, feel very confident.

One reason it is important to have an attentiveness to crisis management is that it can help

improve aspects of the university. Spencer mentioned two crisis incidents on his campus that

were hard to deal with but, ultimately, made his campus stronger when it came to diversity

training and alcohol policies:

> Well I think from the outset with any major campus crisis there's an opportunity to
> make a change that meets relatively little resistance. So the president implementing
> a mandatory diversity program that we have now that just finished a year on, could
> that have happened in any other environment? Could he have gotten the faculty to
> go for it? Could he have gotten the students to go for it and what not? I don't know
> but it created a new opportunity. Likewise, [the student] death while tragic, created
> a unique opportunity to make this change.

Christine explained that in moments of crisis, confidence is necessary to work through problems:

> So it's something I have to work on but there are days that you're just going to have
> to be confident. Particularly in crisis. I think for me, I think that's a time when I
> really shine is when things are going crazy and we're in the midst of crisis. You
> know I'm able to mobilize those resources, I'm able to move us forward. Able to

recover from that, go into problem solving mode, articulate that with the media and whomever and do that in a confident manner. And I think a lot of that is due to the years of student affairs and living in [the residence halls].

Having confidence in moments of crisis is not a foundational quality that all CSAOs need in order to be successful. In fact, it was through crisis situations that many CSAOs often lacked confidence. Two individuals that I interviewed gave stories of divisive racial incidents on their campus and talked about how those were some of the hardest issues they dealt with in their careers. Even though their confidence was shaken, they had to work through the problems because it was their responsibility. A CSAO may benefit if he or she learns from crisis situations that occur on other campuses, in order to respond in a quick and reasonable manner.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed three emergent themes that develop the Student Affairs Leadership Model. The first is that leadership of a CSAO is influenced by several outside factors, campus constituents, campus culture, and diverse leadership perspectives. The second is the essential knowledge and skills that CSAOs must continuously improve on; fiscal understanding, policy acumen, the role of student affairs in higher education, and current student affairs issues. The final theme is how CSAOs view and practice leadership; sit on the porch with people, have willingness to learn, move wagons west, exhibit hubris, being mindful of students, and being attentive to crisis management.

There are many characteristics of leadership that people may look for in their CSAO. The second and third theme in the Student Affairs Leadership Model highlight areas of leadership that are preferable for any practicing chief student affairs officer. None of the items within each theme will be mastered by any CSAO. But instead they are areas of knowledge and viewpoints

that should be expected. CSAOs should have a base of understanding and continuously work to improve in each of these areas.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

The results from this exploratory study can be informative to the field of higher education. Understanding the viewpoints of leadership and what aspects aid in their development may be helpful for presidents to understand what qualities they might want to seek when hiring a chief student affairs officer. Additionally, since positions like this are high profile within a university the directors of the student affairs units have a vested interest in knowing what qualities are most appropriate when giving input to the person(s) selecting a CSAO. It is useful for them to understand what CSAOs are looking for within divisions in order for the directors to maximize their ability to lead their specific department.

Many of the theories that were talked about in chapter two could be used in conjunction with this leadership study. The literature provided a sound foundation for the framework of the study. In the following section I will briefly revisit the theories and research from chapter two and compare differences or possible linkages between findings. I will then discuss implications for who might benefit from the model. Following will be recommendations for further research.

Relating to the Literature

Leadership Theories

Theoretical lenses and research helped guide many aspects of this research. Theories are revisited in order to see how this study establishes itself within the literature. These results contribute to each of the theories on higher education (Astin & Astin, 2000; A. Kezar, 2001b, 2011); Renn & Patton, 2014)

As stated in chapter two, Kezar (2001) said many universities are moving toward a pluralistic approach in leadership where decisions are made collaboratively. Universities have also been moving toward a model of servant leadership where faculty, staff, and administrators

are encouraged to assist one another. There are many elements of data from this study that support Kezar's findings. Chief student affairs officers tend to practice a collaborative approach yet departments often operate in "silos." The strain between divisions of student affairs and academic affairs is still challenging to many CSAOs. Academic departments often focus their goals independently unlike offices in student affairs. One helpful tactic for college presidents could be following the example set by the president at Ryan's university; where he told student affairs and academic affairs that he expects them to be collaborative and supportive of one other.

Renn and Patton (2011) said applying theory to organizational structure on college campuses requires understanding the environment and culture. This is consistent with virtually every CSAOs perspectives on leadership when they stressed not making any drastic changes without learning the culture of campus. One may follow the advice of Barbara or Robert who each recommended mapping out the first few months and get to know as many people as possible. Mark learned culture by having meetings in various places on campus. After visiting 19 universities and I believe ecological theories of campus cultures is very relevant (Renn & Patton, 2011). While all the campuses I visited had over 10,000 students and were 4-year, public institutions, there were noticeable differences. The primary difference seemed to stem from very large campuses (22,000+) that were very high in research activity as opposed to those that were not. Very large institutions tend to have more strain when it comes to issues that involve racial tensions, political challenges of administrators, and the reality that being larger makes for a more complex organization. Competing interests become increasingly difficult on larger campuses. Heidi had previously been a CSAO at a mid-size institution before moving to her large-institution 10 years prior. She indicated the new CSAO job was more complicated at the larger institution where it took her about 5 years before she felt like she was on "solid ground."

This research contributes to Kezar's (2011) research on "multiframe thinking" with

Bolman and Deal's (1997) four-frame model and Birnbaum's (1988) four frames. Bolman and

Deal stated it is useful for leaders to be knowledgeable in all four frames of leadership which are,

(1) structural, (2) human resource, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. This is consistent with how

CSAOs expressed that they have to cater to different needs as situations arise. Multiframe

thinking is intended to help leaders consider alternatives in their approach to difficult situations.

Another area of research that has been looked at in the field of student affairs is

transformative leadership. This involves how university leaders and engage in change processes

within the institution (Astin & Astin, 2000). There are individual and group qualities of

transformative leadership that contribute to how changes take place on campus. While the

elements of transformative leadership appear to be relevant and useful for student affairs, the

recommendations by Astin and Astin are assuming idealistic environments where student affairs

staff feel empowered to work across divisions of the institution for change. They say that in

order for student affairs professionals to become "active participants," the transformative change

process must "create learning environments that are characterized by *commitment, empathy,*

authenticity, and *shared purpose*" (p. 51). However, the problem student affairs staff encounter

with changes on campuses is not from a lack of understanding the benefits of these learning

environments. The problem is that student affairs staff are already limited by their busy

commitments and low "stature" compared to academic affairs.

Relevant Research

The research I present provides a richer context to understanding more about leadership

about chief student affairs officers. My results add further evidence to the cases presented by

Campbell (2015), Smith (2013) and (Oh, 2013), and Tull and Freeman (2011). In those research

studies, quantitative instruments were used to garner an understanding of various leadership perspectives. Here I provide an overview of deeper understanding on CSAO leadership in relation to previous research.

Research has shown that change happens best when it is done as a cultural process (Kezar, 2000). My research concurs that change does not take place quickly or in a vacuum. Many CSAOs indicated problems occurred when the departments on campus operated in "silos." As a result, departments often struggle working on campus-wide initiatives. Change first requires leadership that can bring stuff together to share ideas. Working across campus units requires a deliberate effort by administrators working together to bring about change.

Kezar (2001) recommended research for moments when higher education administrators need to make changes that go against the norms of campus culture. I asked my participants a question related to this. In some cases, CSAOs said they make changes that go against the norms of culture all the time; others said they do not believe they have made any significant changes that go against the norms of campus culture. I think an answer to this question lies in the interpretation of culture. For example, Heidi stated that when working toward significant change, she tried to work within the campus culture so she may follow the values of the institution. Yet she practices different "change management techniques" when necessary. George iterated that cultural change is a very slow process.

Cultural change requires getting people to work together toward the same goals. Campus culture may be hard to assess since there are so many sub-cultures on college campuses. If a change is made that is generally popular but one person is vehemently opposed to it, does that change go against campus culture? It is difficult to say. An administrator may view that as going against culture because of the loud voice but it may not be against the values of the institution.

Overall, Kezar was talking more about the process of change as opposed to unilateral decisions. But CSAOs made it clear that most of the time when they make changes, they try to gather as much input as possible.

Campbell (2015) found that "integrity in the decision-making process" was rated highest among the "Chief Student Affairs Officer Critical Skills Inventory" (CSI). There were a total of 19 items on the instrument that measured, behaviors, attitudes, skills, and knowledge (BASK). The second highest rated BASK item was "demonstrating respect for others" (p.83). While the participants in the study would agree about the importance of decision-making, there was less mention about this objective compared to demonstrating respect for others. When talking about leadership perspectives, CSAOs often defaulted to talking about how they work with staff. They discussed topics that related to having respect such has listening well, allowing directors to manage their own departments, and avoid being a micromanager. Campbell's study identified the top BASK items, but the scope of her study does not discuss why it was the top-ranked item. Additionally, there was nothing about what it means to demonstrate respect for others. The study I conducted is able help further define what it means to show respect for others and how it relates to working in a university setting.

The leadership instrument that was used by Smith (2013) and Oh (2013) assessed how senior-level student affairs professionals practiced leadership. Out of the five sections, "enabling others to act" scored highest. There were six questions in their inventory that fell within the enabling others to act category. The six questions were: (1) developing cooperative relationships, (2) actively listening to diverse points of view, (3) treating people with dignity and respect, (4) supporting decisions other people make, (5) giving people a choice about how to do their work, and (6) ensuring that people grow in their jobs. The interviews with my participants compliment

this study because the six factors that affect enabling others to act were all discussed at length about their relevance. The other four elements of the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) were: challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. While each of them were talked about at various points in the interview, none of them were discussed in as much detail as enabling other to act.

Tull and Freeman (2011) did research looking at locus of control and the four frame model of Bolman and Deal (1997) on chief student affairs officers. They found that CSAOs had a preference for the "human resource" frame and an "external chance locus of control." They were not surprised with the human resource frame since student affairs administrators enter the field due to the high interaction with students and the helpful nature of the position. Tull and Freeman were surprised about administrators' preference for external locus of control. However, the notion of "external control" is consistent with how CSAOs responded in their interviews. Christine said "control is an illusion." There is no way as leaders, for CSAOs to possess control of all the "wild cards." It is a matter of learning to work with other people and knowing how to most effectively utilize resources. Tull and Freeman stress that the structural frame is becoming more important because departments are more likely to have "clearly defined mission and goals" and "stringent policies to guide their work" (p.39). CSAOs are constantly being pushed to understand and interpret new policies.

Comparing the findings of Carnaghi, Porterfield, Roper, and Whitt (2016) was interesting as there were some similarities to the study. One of the methodological differences in their study compared to mine is that was all conducted via email. Furthermore, the responses they received were primarily catered toward working with students. My responses were a bit more holistic of the leadership process, often oriented toward managing staff. However, since they had open-

ended responses that dealt with challenges and opportunities of chief student affairs officers, there were similarities. They reported challenges related to (a) affordability and access, (b) student health and well-being, (c) diversity and inclusion, (d) regulations and compliance, (e) technology and media, and (f) student affairs leadership. (Roper & Whitt, 2016). My results touched on most of these items; however, my data had very little on technology and affordability. My results presented more with respect to qualities of leadership and working with other people on campus.

Results on what "excited" CSAOs mostly had similarities to the study with minor differences (Whitt & Carnaghi, 2016). Six themes they identified were; (a) students, (b) making a difference, (c) collaboration and community, (d) leading and facilitating change, (e) learning, data, and scholarship, and (f) the work. My results reflected the opportunity of making a positive impact on students and growing both personally and professionally. Findings between these two studies would be interesting to compare for anyone who wants to investigate leadership in student affairs.

Limitations

This study had several limitations, some of which were foreseen during the proposal development phase and some that I did not anticipate until the study began. As a qualitative study, there were 19 interviews conducted at just as many institutions. Every single interview was held outside of my home state which meant that ample driving time was necessary as well as financial resources for travel. Without this limitation I likely would have gotten more interviews. However, I had enough interviews to saturate the data or the number seemed sufficient. Another limitation was lack of time for some interviews. I completed my list of questions with most participants. In some cases, we were cut off early and the list of questions had to be shortened. In

these situations, I asked questions that were more central to the point of each research question. I did not hesitate to ask follow up questions for more depth of experiences or insights into their leadership perspectives.

Three institutions were added from my original proposal after realizing that five universities on my original list had interim CSAOs. After considering the difference in leadership perspectives of an individual who is not technically the CSAO, I decided to drop any institutions out of the study that had people who were serving in an interim role. I originally met my goal of getting 20 interviews scheduled, but when I was traveling to multiple schools out-of-state I received an email that one CSAO had an emergency and could no longer participate. Since the school was far away and all the rest of my interviews were conducted face-to-face I decided not to reschedule.

Implications

This study was an original approach where CSAOs openly shared various aspects of their leadership. Leaders in these positions have not previously been interviewed in this capacity. The primary goal of this study focused on understanding views of leadership and the intricacies that go with it. Leadership studies on CSAOs have often used quantitative instruments to collect data. Deductive methods are useful when looking at preferred methods of leadership within a pre-determined framework. However, previous studies did not get personal with CSAOs and understand the depth of their experiences. This exploratory study let inductive methods lead the way for building a model of leadership.

Qualitative research is limited where CSAOs tell stories on viewpoints associated with their positions. This study can be useful for many individuals within higher education. This may include state legislators, boards of regents, university administrators, or student affairs staff. My

findings provide a comprehensive understanding of what it takes for someone to run a successful student affairs operation. While higher education leaders may have an idea of what student affairs does, they often don't see the holistic issues faced by this division. This often results in student affairs not being treated as equal partners since they are not as directly involved in the classroom. Administrators and governing bodies would benefit if they better understood the context of how student affairs assists in the mission of the institution.

People who are a step or more removed from student affairs, can often misunderstand the complexities that impact the division. For example, if a division needs to address issues related to mental health, there is more involved than just hiring counselors in the health center. It involves all units on campus having proper training for potential problems that might arise with troubled students. Often times student affairs divisions need to provide this training. Challenges with racial diversity is another example of issues that impact the entire college campus. The problems of society permeate onto campuses and student affairs is in charge of addressing the abundant needs of people that often get no pay raises.

As a function of understanding the complexities, administrators could benefit from this research when considering what elements are important in seeking a new CSAO. By understanding characteristics among CSAOs, it gives them a view into the culture of student affairs on what challenges are common. It may also help a president or search committee develop meaningful questions when asking how CSAOs will handle certain situations; particularly those related to crisis and working with staff. Another opportunity is administrators may consider how the divisions of student and academic affairs can work together since friction often exists among the two entities.

Chief student affairs officers will likely gain respect among administrators when they see that the well-being of the entire university is valued over an individual division. This is unfortunate because a vice president in academic affairs likely does not have to demonstrate the holistic perspective in the same way as the person overseeing student affairs. This study can help the field of student affairs to better define what should be expected of a CSAO. The challenges and opportunities are often similar across campuses mixed in with nuances that make every situation unique.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations I have for further research based on these exploratory findings. They involve further research on: (1) challenges associated with the CSAO position, (2) leadership control, (3) societal reflections in higher education, and (4) innovative practices for addressing budget problems. This is not an exhaustive list but brings in components that were frequently mentioned and relate to many of the results and findings.

Challenges

Challenges are plentiful in the field of student affairs. When Heidi discussed challenges she faced in her position, she spent a great deal of time talking and said with a laugh, "You have other questions besides challenges, I could on with challenges." I joked I could probably do the entire study on challenges faced by CSAOs. A big component leadership is dealing with challenges. One of the big challenges is the strain with competing interests. This is only amplified when dealing with tight budgets where difficult decisions need to be made about the future of departments on campus. Leadership as a whole could be looked at through the lens of constant challenges and competing interests which may provide more insight into effectively handling conflict. Different methods could be used surrounding challenges due to competing

interests and tight budgets. Quantitative analysis could compare institutions on where funding

has been allocated each time it is faced with new cuts. Additionally, the working relationships

among student affairs and academic affairs can continue to be researched with regard to setting

institutional goals.

Leadership Control

I really enjoyed the part in Christine's interview when she said "control is an illusion."

This reminded me of the findings from Tull and Freeman (2011) who found that student affairs

administrators have a preference for an external locus of control. Further research could be

conducted on how CSAOs "control" different elements of their position. At what point do they

feel they are in control? When do they feel like they lose control? And when it is appropriate to

delegate part of that control to other people?

Societal Reflections in Higher Education

Higher education is often a reflection of the issues occurring in society. Spencer and

Steve talked about societal problems as impacting students on campus. This can range from

issues in the economy to matters of social justice. Departments in higher education conduct

research in a variety of ways both nationally and internationally. The effect of these issues

directly impacts the student experience both during and after college. Leadership in student

affairs is often at the forefront of dealing with societal issues right on campus. The field of higher

education would benefit from a broader understanding of how leadership in student affairs can

position itself to help the diverse needs of our student populations.

Innovative Practices for Addressing Budget Problems

The more leaders on college campuses can learn about innovative solutions to budget

problems, the more empowered they will be. According to many CSAOs, fundraising will

become increasingly important. Several of them have already added fundraising to their portfolio and the amount of effort spent on finding external funds will be crucial in order for many student affairs divisions to meet their goals. Ted talked about the importance of fundraising in conjunction with raising money for scholarships. He emphasized that alumni are used to the idea of donating for new buildings, but investing in student scholarships would help offset the costs of tuition which are making it harder for students to go to school. Creating corporate sponsorships is another avenue for student affairs to raise money.

In light of the continued budget reductions from state governments, student affairs administrators may benefit from doing a better job showing their value. That includes using data to make informed decisions that help students succeed and then publicizing the information. This will not be the solution all problems but it is important that research and practice be used to help address the growing problems associated with budget cuts.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher education are all composed of various administrators that help shape the path for students and future leaders. It is imperative that leaders continue to work together while trying to keep in mind all functions of the university. Chief student affairs officers will make the biggest impact when they are willing to consider what is best for the entire university. Hopefully the student affairs leadership model can contribute to helping CSAOs have a better understanding of how leadership perspectives are influenced. There are many components to leadership that are outside of their control, but if they are informed and cognizant of the areas they can control, it might help them to continue improving. Every division on campus plays a role in the success of students, hopefully the findings from this study may contribute to the field of student affairs on best practices for chief student affairs officers.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. I would like to begin with a quick bio of the positions you have held previously within higher education or outside that have led you to the position you are currently in.

    a. Did you picture yourself becoming a chief student affairs officer?

2. How would you describe your leadership style?

3. How has your approach to leadership evolved throughout your career?

4. I would like to ask about any moments you have had where you have felt very confident in your leadership abilities as well as moments where you may have doubted yourself.
5. What are some of the biggest challenges you face in your position?

6. When making decisions, what outside influences do you have to consider?

7. Are there ever changes that you have to make that go against the norms of the campus culture?
    a. How did addressing this change on campus impact your perspectives as a leader?

8. Have there been any surprises about this position that you did not expect?

9. What advice would you give to someone who is new to a chief student affairs position?

10. What highlights exist that most people do not see?

11. What opportunities has this position given you?

12. What challenges exist that most people do not see?

13. Diversity issues have been a big issue this past year. How has that influenced your position?

14. Throughout your career what leadership traits have others demonstrated for you that you have tried to emulate?

15. What leadership traits do you possess that you have figured out on your own?

16. Are there any leadership traits that you wish you were stronger in?

17. That is it for all of my formal questions. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B

Participant Informed Consent Form

University of Nebraska – Lincoln

IRB#: 16019

Title:

Leadership Perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers: An Exploratory Study

Purpose:

This research project will aim to identify the leadership perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAO's) at large, public, 4-year institutions. You are invited to participate in this study because your role oversees the division of student affairs on your campus.

Procedures:

You will be asked questions about your leadership perspectives at the CSAO at your institution. Questions will involve your background in student affairs, your leadership perspectives, common challenges you face, overall challenges to any student affairs leaders, and other questions pertaining to your experiences in the field. The interview for this is scheduled to last approximately 1 hour and will be conducted at your institution in the space of your choosing. A private office or conference room is likely the best location for this study.

Benefits:

You will be able to reflect on your experiences as a CSAO and think about how your leadership and the organizational nature of your institution impacts your role. There is very little research that involves the in-depth nature of CSAO's in understanding more about their role and using the practice to help develop a theoretical model.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Audio Recorded:

Interviews will be audio recorded in order to be transcribed.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored on the investigators password protected computer and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for 2 years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data. Direct quotes may be used from you but will be attributed with a pseudonym. Also, data from your data will not be seen by anyone from your institution.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate, skip any questions, or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or your university, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your participation in the interview certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You are encouraged to keep the electronic copy of this consent form attached to the recruitment email for your records.

Signature of Participant:

_____   _____

           Signature of Research Participant   Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Jeff Beavers, PhD Candidate, Primary Investigator   Cell Phone: (402) 802-3056

Dr. Barbara LaCost, PhD, Secondary Investigator   Office Phone: (402) 472-0988

               Please save or print a copy of this informed consent for your records.

Appendix C

Official Approval Letter for IRB project #16019 - New Project Form

April 6, 2016

Jeffrey Beavers
Department of Educational Administration
431 Terrace Rd Lincoln, NE 68505

Barbara LaCost
Department of Educational Administration
127 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20160416019 EX
Project ID: 16019
Project Title: Leadership Perspectives of Chief Student Affairs Officers: An Exploratory Study.

Dear Jeffrey:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 04/06/2016.

o Exempt review categories: 2
o Date of Exemption Determination: 4/6/2016 o
Funding: N/A

1. Your stamped and approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant. Please use this document to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the document, please submit the revised document to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 402-472-6965.

Sincerely,
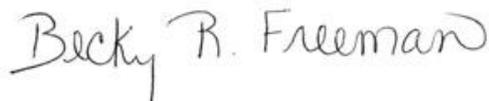
Becky R. Freeman

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IR

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